
Effects of Political Instability on Teachers' Work Decorum in Pakistani Universities: A Teachers' Perspective

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Abstract

The present study has been designed to find out the effects of political instability on teachers' work decorum during the year 2014. The said period was marked with several political movements and terrorist attack on APS, Peshawar. A mix method research design has been adopted to get in-depth knowledge from teachers about the effects of the existing political instability on their work behaviour. Five public universities of Lahore were selected for this purpose. A total of 100 teachers, twenty from each university, were selected for the study by using the convenient sample selection technique. Perceptions regarding the effects of political instability on work behavior scale (PREPIWBS) were developed and administered to sample teachers. Twenty statements were grouped into four categories, namely, instructional strategies, motivation, stress and building rapport with peers and students. Along with quantitative data, teachers were asked a few open-ended questions related to the causes and effects of PI. Data were analyzed by simple descriptive statistics and qualitatively as well.

Introduction

Political instability is a condition of political turmoil which a country is currently passing through. It may also involve the loss of property, destruction, violation of law and order and death of people within the country, and a change of administration or nature of the government. The economic progress of a particular country facing political instability often deteriorates. Political instability is not only a situation but rather a behavior and something that leads a country towards a crises or chaos. It creates an environment of disrespect of other's opinions and aims for achieving certain goals. This paper argues that political philosophies, beliefs, and dogmas of the nation are key components of democracy especially in those cultures, which have been undergoing a

democratic transition.¹ Political instability leads to a situation that is opposing to democratic values and practices. This engulfs all organizations including institutions of higher education.

Universities are service providing organizations, and teachers on this level are crucial stakeholders, helping to lead their universities towards development, growth and quality of education that is, creating a critical mass equipped with professional and intellectual skills and knowledge to become active and functional citizens. Whenever political instability appears, the organizations and society are affected by it more so adversely. Teachers like other members of society, are humans too, therefore any disturbance or upheaval in society, societal values and national policies has a direct impact on them. Overall we tend to argue that unstable and insecure conditions result in teachers' lack of rigor, innovation, enthusiasm, moral and ethical values, and a rise in frustration, low morale and turnover. It also leads to a decline in initiative, perseverance, commitment, passion, diligence, innovation, productivity, effectiveness and deliberation and eventually brain drain and loss of important human resources. Quality of education and enrollment problem emerge due to which quality of teaching and learning process faces a decline. This article, therefore, delve into understanding various solutions that could be offered to deal with such a tumultuous state of global and local politics. Important question is what must universities do keep faculty and students motivated despite negative behavioral environment within and outside the university?

The government of Pakistan and Punjab in particular have brought in laws and policies that gear to potent vulnerable fraction of the society. This is to ensure that organizations/universities and educational institutions can function without getting adversely affected by the political instability present due to diverse fatuous within the society.

Teachers' perceptions are vital factors in promoting high quality standardized education and in enhancing students' critical approach to learning. Their perceptions and attitudes regarding political instability are very significant because universities are at the top of hierarchy and here the art of refining and reshaping is practiced. Here students are not children but are adults. Work behavior of university teachers is quite different from those who teach at lower levels.

A review of related research links students' performance and their behavior to instructional, organizational and socio-emotional components of teacher behavior. In the process of delivering a lecture, a teacher exhibits instructional behavior, which intends to improves students' critical thinking, knowledge or skills.² Organizational behavior includes those actions of teachers which involve in fluid transitions between activities, minimized distractions and efficient use of

instructional time.³ It was opined that the socio-emotional behavior of the teachers may be exhibited at any time, during lessons in the class or outside the class, which is witnessed as a strong rapport between students and teachers, and encourages students' feelings of belonging as an important part of classroom.⁴

How can teachers' behavior be measured? Observations, students' perceptions and teachers' self-perceptions /reports are the main approaches to assess their behavior. Douglas opined that classroom observation requires ample funding and time although this is the norm for gauging teaching behavior.⁵ On the other side, Teachers' reports of their own behaviour is cost effective but it is considered inaccurate reflection of their teaching behavior. Classroom observations and teachers' self-reports have been criticized for their shortcomings. The third alternative approach Students' perception has been considered as the most feasible mode of assessing teaching behavior with least time and expense. Numerous models recommend use of student perceptions to judge teaching behavior for the reason that student ratings and considerations are more crucial for understanding and predicting their outcomes compared to other procedures related to teaching behaviors, even though they are more objective.⁶ It means teaching behaviour cannot be undermined when it is reported by students as it provides a deeper account of the scenario as compared to the sporadic observation sessions conducted with the intention of obtaining insightful data.⁷ Moreover, students are aware of the nuances and idiosyncrasies of their teachers, and are in a better position to give in depth responses, which a standoff observer may not be able to do. However, there is a dearth of research related which links students' well-being with the associations of students', teachers', and observers' ratings. Douglas and many others suggested that investigating teachers' behavior in relation to students' perceptions adds far greater value to the data, making it more rich and meaningful in understanding student outcomes, as compared to observations conducted by strangers or unrelated persons.⁸ The present study focuses on the self-concept theory which presents justification for people's self-perception and their interpretation

By summarizing conclusions of researches already conducted, teachers' behavior can be judged on dimensions like instructional strategies, motivation level, stress, and relationship with peers and students. Achievements and disappointments are greatly related to those behaviors which they have perceived for themselves and to their relationships with others. 'Instructional strategies' refers to the pedagogical skills teachers use to communicate the content of their subject area. Use of variety of skills and abilities by teachers in universities provide a base for healthy and effective teaching and learning environment where all students feel relaxed, mentally free and are sure of their academic and personal success. Now a days teaching in the universities has moved forward due

to innovative pedagogical practices which cater to improve knowledge skills and attitudes of teachers and consequently improved teaching and learning practices benefiting the future generations. Therefore, teachers are also entrusted with the responsibility of change and innovation, to challenge the status quo in terms of structures and practices that are not beneficial. They are constantly striving to foster improvements in their domain. As agents of the public interest in a democratic setup, teachers endeavor to contribute to the dialogue about preserving and improving society, and encourage young pupil to understand discourses and participate in current public dissertation. If they become frustrated and depressed due to any reason they cannot perform the expected role.

Teachers' pedagogies, motivation, stress and relationship with peers and students are key predictors of their work behaviour. Teachers' pedagogies are their instructional strategies in the classrooms. Use of variety of strategies, each at the right time for the right part of the curriculum is a sign of good work behaviour. Motivation is usually defined as the forces that account for the stimulating, assorting, directing, and maintaining of behaviour. Teachers' motivation affects their work behaviour. Stress is a spontaneous response to a treacherous situation. When people face an uncontrollable situation, it makes their body to produce hormones required in a situation of hypertension, rapid heartbeat, decrease in blood supply to the skin, interruption of digestive processes, excessive perspiration etc. McIntyre found that "stress may influence teachers' behaviour in the classroom, with prospective concerns for their students' behavior and learning."⁹ A definition of rapport given by Faranda and Clarke explained it as "the ability to maintain harmonious relationships based on affinity".¹⁰ Although learning is not a result of rapport, it help generate environments favorable to the learning process like high motivation level, increased comfort, and enriched communication. Similarly, learning is not an outcome of teaching. Like rapport, teaching subsidies learning. According to a review of related literature, there are five major factors which are associated with the rapport of students and teachers, respect, approachability, open communication, caring and positive attitude. Rapport or relationships can be developed by announcements. Our actions give birth to them. Traditional advice aspect of teacher student relationship is less significant than the emotional aspect on methods and techniques of teaching.¹¹ Effective and quality learning take place if students are encouraged to interact with teachers and class fellows which leads to more involvement, commitment, and interest.¹²

Rodabaugh reported that teachers' rapport with students help them to participate by asking questions, challenging the professor's interpretations, and

encourage uninhibited discussion. She pointed out that students usually respect teachers but they do not suppose they are their best friends.¹³

Gorham and Christophe added that sense of humor, appreciating student work, and engaging in conversations outside the class were particularly important in learning as were teacher authenticity, credibility, student encouragement and dialogue, and inquiring about students' viewpoints or feelings.¹⁴

Objective

To determine Effects of political instability on teachers work behaviors.

Hypothesis:

- Teachers' work behavior is not significantly affected by Political instability.
- Teachers' instructional strategies are not significantly affected by Political instability.
- Teachers' motivation is not significantly affected by political instability.
- Teachers' rapport with peers and students is not significantly affected by political instability.
- Teachers' stress is not significantly affected by political instability.

Methodology

For present study, a mix method research design was adopted to get an in-depth knowledge from teachers about the effects of existing political instability on their work behavior. The study was delimited to Lahore, being a center of learning and political activities. Five public universities, namely University of the Punjab, Government College University, University of Management and Technology, Lahore College for Women University and University of Education, were purposively selected. Twenty teachers from each university were selected by using convenient sample selection technique, making a total of 100 teachers. A prior request for participation in the study was sent to the teachers and informed consent was obtained. After developing the perceptions regarding the effects of political instability on work behavior scale (PREPIWBS) the questionnaire was administered to the sample teachers. Twenty statements were

grouped into four categories namely instructional strategies, motivation, stress and building rapport with peers and students.

Along with quantitative data, teachers were asked a few open-ended questions related to the causes and effects of PI. Data were analyzed by simple descriptive statistics and qualitatively as well.

Table 1
Category- wise break down of Perception Scale

Sr No	Categories	Statement	Analysis
1	Instructional strategies	1-5	Descriptive statistics
2	Motivation	6-10	Descriptive statistics
3	Stress	10-15	Descriptive statistics
4	Rapport with peers and students	16-20	Descriptive statistics

Limitations

This research is focused on political instability in the country existing from 1st June 2014 to 30th December 2014 in Pakistan. The study was limited to Lahore only.

Data Analysis and Findings

Table 3
Total Mean Perception Score Regarding Effects of PI on Work Behavior

Behaviour Indicator	N	Mean	SD	Scale Mean	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Effects on work behavior	100	48.46	11.84	55	-3.16	58	.002

To determine teachers' perception regarding the effects of political instability on the overall work behavior, the obtained mean 48.6 was lower than the expected mean. It shows a significant difference, on the basis of which it can be concluded that university teachers perceive that political instability affects their work behavior negatively.

Table 4
Total Mean Perception Score Regarding the Effects of PI on Instructional Strategies

Behavior indicator	N	Mean	SD	Scale Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Instructional strategies	100	50.46	11.81	58	-3.19	59	.002

When teachers' perception regarding the effects of political instability on their instructional strategies were analyzed, it revealed the obtained mean 50.6 was lower than the expected mean. It showed a significant difference, on the basis of which, it is concluded that PI affects teachers' use of instructional strategies. They often deliver single strategy lectures.

Table 5
Mean Perception Score Regarding the Effects of PI on Teachers' Motivation

Behavior indicator	N	Mean	SD	Scale Mean	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Teachers' motivation	100	38.46	17.84	55	-3.10	58	.002

The perception score was calculated by the component analysis method. The obtained score (38.46) was lower than the expected score (55). It is concluded that PI significantly influences teachers' motivation level. Teachers now feel less motivation than they were before PI.

Table 6
Mean Perception Score Regarding the Effects Of PI On Teachers 'Stress

Behavior indicator	N	Mean	SD	Scale Mean	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Teachers' stress	100	53.46	11.84	50	3.15	56	.002

Perception score was calculated by component analysis method for teachers' stress level. The obtained score (53.46) was lower than expected score (50). It is concluded that PI significantly influences teachers' stress level. Teachers now feel more stress than before PI.

Table 7
Mean Perception Score Regarding the Effects of PI on Rapport with Peers and Students

Behavior indicator	N	Mean	SD	Scale Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
rapport with peers and students	100	48.46	11.84	55	-3.16	58	.002

Mean perception score regarding the effects of PI on rapport with peers and students was calculated by using the same technique as given above. It is revealed that due to PI teachers' rapport with students and peers has become weak as the obtained mean was lower than the expected one.

Conclusions and Discussion

It has been reported that teachers' decision-making and actual classroom behavior is influenced by their perceptions, attitudes and beliefs.¹⁵ The present study indicates that university teachers in Pakistan perceive that PI affects their work behavior. They feel that during the period of political crises in the country, their motivation level has decreased while stress level increased. They notice that their ability to build relationship with peers and students is badly influenced. They report their less concern to the use of a variety of instructional strategies. This may be due to their high stress level, low motivation level and poor relationship with peers and students. Moreover, their competencies were also affected in terms of diverted concentration, wastage of time by initiating and participating in political debates in and outside the class, anxiety and depression due to the breaking news etc.

The university teachers perceived that non accessibility of justice, oppressive style of elected government, no respect for law, violence, joblessness, non-serious and corrupt bureaucracy and interference of external forces in political affairs were major threats for a stable and democratic government. Government and opposition both play a very important role in the growth, steadiness and sustainability of a political system. It is a well-known fact that hidden forces have been working for their own agenda. To attain their targets, they always try to create a conflict and difference between the ruling part and opposition. Opposition has remained their target, so they persuade opposition to agitate. Unfortunately, the opposition has been caught in their trap. In a lust of power, they have, consciously and unconsciously, been playing like puppets in hands of hidden forces. Their lack of political wisdom has been suffered by the whole nation. Only a free and fair judicial system can warrant the positive relationship between both. Political instability has been hindering Pakistan's economy whenever there is democracy. The flaws reported by the university teachers are not just their perceptions but are a true echo of the main social problems which require instant solutions. Members of provincial and national assemblies are not true representative of public often they belong to status quo that is why complications of common people are unreported and are not addressed.

The perceptions put forward by the teachers reflect their development and societal needs in Pakistan. They think that stable political system will provide base for the economic, social and moral development of people. Slogan of so called democratic rights is not enough to promote politics. Political wisdom demands political maturity and political sincerity which are lacking in our politicians. Just judicial system and uniform education system can put an end to PI.

Data indicate that interest rate in politics is increased during the present period of political crises. University teachers discussing about politics in classes and during work timings. They are unconsciously and consciously spending more time in discussing the insecurity, political gossip and searching latest news on different channels and in dailies. Instead of planning new research projects, conducting need -based researches and participating in conferences and seminars they waste their precious time in discussing newspapers, news websites and news channels. Their concentration on work and projects has been affected. The country's present condition has badly disturbed their collaborative and cooperative efforts. Their attention to their job has diverted, and without mental presence and satisfaction, quality performance cannot be expected from them.

The *dharna* (sit-in) and agitation politics in Pakistan has badly influenced the social, economic, political and psychological life of the country. Although the three month' practice has not paralyzed but diverted the state's concerns from the most important national and international affairs. People's social life was disturbed, and was in a state of complete disarray.

The country suffered a financial loss of Rs. 150 billion per day. An estimated direct loss of Rs 800 million was sustained besides indirect losses of many more billions.¹⁶ All this made investors reluctant to invest, since they had already suffered a loss of Rs. 450 billion at the stock exchange. There was a lack of activity in exports and the import of raw materials declined. It was forecasted by economic analysts that the trade deficit could witness manifold increase, putting further pressure on the already fragile economy.¹⁷

A noteworthy observation was the reaction amongst the people, who were repulsed by watching and listening to biased reporting pseudo analysis on television channels day and night. This turmoil led to making them irrational, edgy, opinionated and obstinate in their views, creating a rift in the masses. Some sentiments that were witnessed in the public were anger, anguish, disgust, depression, despair, hopelessness etc.¹⁸

Survey suggests that teachers working in universities of Lahore are mentally and emotionally disturbed and feeling insecurity, anxiety and to some extent depression. Diverted concentrations, concerns and disturbed minds can never produce desired and required results. Political Instability has resulted in decreased morale, drive and interest in their teaching and research which is badly affecting their professional behavior. Most of the university teachers, irrespective of gender, are thinking about getting immigration to any other country for the sake of their physical and mental health and for a more secure future of their kids. Pakistani education system especially higher education is already facing a lack of competent, motivated, committed and highly qualified intellectuals, and when they move out, it will cause a great loss for educational institutions.

Teachers involved in collaboration and national and international projects, are disappointed. They have a fear of shortage of funding and lack of facilities and environment to complete their projects. History reports that all fields and industries of a place collapsed whenever a country in the world comes under crises. The same goes with higher education.

Teachers' changed behavior directly affects the universities which cut them off from their constructive intellectual activities for a number of days. Teachers have to leave for work early when there is an unstable condition, which in turn results in increased workload for keeping pace and catching up with the schedule. Quantitative data shows that most universities do not accommodate make up classes, which can cause schedule slippage. Linder found that people become less motivated due to security anxiety which affects their ability of taking an initiative, hardworking, dedication, devotion, carefulness, creativity, efficiency, effectiveness and concentration.¹⁹ In unstable conditions teachers, like other citizens, become self-centered, thinking more about themselves than the students. Their changed behaviors significantly influence their work decorum which results not only in the loss of effective teaching but in effective learning too. Majority of respondents agreed that there were changes in their targets set, and also disturbances to their professional meetings with their targets. Teachers involved in collaborative projects have suffered delays which resulted in discontinuity of project. Even after completing this project partner/ foreign universities may not like any further research with them. Generally, universities are lacking due to changed teachers' behaviour in providing quality of teaching to students and quality services to partners.

Building rapport with peers and colleagues is a characteristic of teachers' behaviors. It is well established that teacher engagement is associated with student engagement, mediated by the quality of student-teacher interactions.²⁰ Teachers report that they became less concerned about their peers and students during the PI.. They spent less time in building positive, trusted, and friendly relationship with their students. Therefore, their students did not listen to or respond to them properly. Sometimes they became angry and harsh with their students without any reason. They discussed issues but did not accept others' views. Also, they discussed whenever they wanted to discuss themselves but left them when others wanted to do so. Due to these factors their relationships faced a decline.

During the period of political instability, teachers mostly used the lecture method to teach students. They avoided other instructional strategies. The majority of the teachers reported that their lectures were less prepared during the researched period as compared to before political turmoil. Diverted concentration and disturbance compromised the quality of all related tasks in the

given time. Resultantly they required more time to ensure quality of work. The flow of teaching in the class was badly disturbed.

Teachers feel that the PI results in a poor teaching- learning environment. Students nowadays are more aware and concerned with teaching and learning quality. Due to the changed behaviors, universities are facing difficulty in smooth running, rendering it difficult for them to work on process improvement. Public sector university teachers' perceptions regarding PI are negative. This is true for all the subcategories: Instructional strategies, motivation, stress and building rapport with peer and students. The people of Pakistan generally, and teachers in particular are not happy with the state of uncertainty, economic meltdown, power outages, lack of law and order and terrorist threats and acts in the country. The PI has led people to develop negative perceptions regarding institutions and work. Whenever there is democracy in the country there is less academic work and more transfers and postings. The results of PI for the teachers are bitter. Majority of teachers opined that opposition in Pakistan is not playing the role serving the nation but instead is focused more on personal gains. As the study was delimited to public university teachers, future researchers are recommended to include the private sector university teachers and consider the effects of PI on their work behavior.

Conclusion

The Political instability has been a tragic fact of Pakistan since independence. Once an Indian leader joked on this situation by saying that I take time to change my trousers, but Pakistanis take no time to change their prime ministers. Pakistan's situation is comparable with that of Iraq and Afghanistan, the only difference is that they are fighting external forces i.e. against other countries' armies, while we are fighting against our own countries' legal, bureaucratic and governmental institutions. The situation is not foreseen to become better soon and therefore might continue effecting teachers work behaviors, increasing their frustration, stress and insecurity while decreasing their ethics and enthusiasm. All these would affect universities and their quality of education.

Recommendations

Government and universities should take instant steps to minimize the effects of PI on teachers for institutional progress and improving the quality of education. The following actions on the basis of the present study may be helpful in this regard.

- The heads, directors and deans should regularly make their faculty realize the importance of their projects and highlight impacts of incomplete projects.
- Involve them in organization of conferences, workshops, seminars etc
- Provide ad-hoc, on contract and visiting teachers a job security by providing them policy awareness in order to keep them satisfied and motivated.
- Make teachers realize that their work is important. No body and no party can or should influence their job.

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