




Investigating Success Factors in Admission Test at Grade 8: A Survey Study of Cadet Colleges in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The fairness of the test for taking admission to prestigious institutions is a debatable issue across the globe. The majority of institutions apply a 'traditional meritocratic approach' to award admission on the basis of grades and admission tests. This paradigm does not fulfil the needs of marginalized, low socio-economic, poor-quality background students. The present study is descriptive and quantitative in nature, investigated the socioeconomic and academic factors of the students who were successful in securing admission to Cadet Colleges after passing the test and interview. We constructed two interview questionnaires for data collection from applicants. The sample of the study was comprised of 228 students for the session 2022 in selected institutions. The findings of the study highlight the low Socio-Economic Status as a strong factor in getting admission in prestigious education institutions. The results despairingly indicate that the admission test and stipulations at the interview to get enrolled in the institution do not equally address the learning competence of different streams thus putting a question about the national integration and cohesion that discourages marginalization of students from low Socio-Economic Status. The results of the study stress measures to be taken by the policymakers for the formulation of admission tests that equally correspond to ensuring equal competition opportunities for students with varying socio-economic and educational systems backgrounds.

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1. Introduction

Multiple education systems in Pakistan are in conflict with the constitutional provision about equal educational access to all, irrespective of any discrimination based on caste, colour and creed etc. (Government of Pakistan, 1973). It is further reiterated in the National Education Policy 2009 and draft National Education Policy 2017 about ensuring equal educational opportunities to all state citizens. Providing quality elementary and secondary education to all irrespective of discrimination is the state's responsibility. And Pakistan is at the top of the list among those countries that have the highest number of out-of-school children and poor quality of education because of outdated curriculum, poor competence of teachers, weak infrastructure, monitoring and supervision challenges, and diversified systems of education. According to UNDP, Human Development Report 2020, Pakistan is ranked 154th out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index HDI (Government of Pakistan, 2020). In lieu to this, certain educationists have criticized the multiple education systems run by several organizations in public and private sector. Moreover, Pakistani society is widely divided

between “Haves and Have Nots” in terms of economic, social, ethnic, religious, and basic life needs status, which may become a serious challenge for national integration and unity. Several studies have established that socioeconomic status impacts significantly the education of students that is constituted by the parent’s education, income and occupation, house location, availability and use of digital devices, family size, schooling background (Ahmar & Anwar, 2013; Azhar, Nadeem, Naz, Perveen, & Sameen, 2014; Ghazi, Nawaz, Shahzad, Shahzada, & Rukhsar, 2013; Kudari, 2016; Shah, Ahmad, & Chitrali, 2016; Shaheen & Gul, 2014). Shah et al. (2016) reported the findings of the studies conducted by Bozick (2007) that the dropout rate of students with low-income parents is higher and they face difficulties in competing with their peers to get admission in high quality institutions and high paying jobs as well (Rafique et al., 2020).

However, responding to the situation, since the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, public and private organizations are contributing to address the challenge of the provision of quality education to all the citizens of the state and bridging the widening socio-economic gaps amongst the Pakistani community. Moreover, the public and private sectors have contributed to establishing cadet colleges for providing leadership in military and non-military organizations too. Total 48 cadet colleges are working all over Pakistan on the model of the first Cadet College, ‘The Prince of Wales Royal Indian Military College’ that was established in March 1922 in the pre-independence period. Amongst them 19 cadent colleges are in Punjab, 09 are in KPK, 08 are in Sindh, 06 are in Baluchistan, 03 are in FATA, 02 are in Gilgit Baltistan and 01 in Azad Kashmir. The graduates of these colleges are filling the quality education gap, as these institutions are committed on producing leaders especially for the military and other institutions. Moreover, being residential institutions, they offer a wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, which instill leadership qualities and confidence among the cadets and provide them opportunities to explore and then promote their talents; consequently, emphasizing on all-round personality development and character-building of its cadets. For the annual intake, the college administrations conduct admission tests and interviews every year to enroll students in 8th grade. Usually, the admission test consists of four subjects i.e. English, Mathematics, General Science, Intelligence test and General Knowledge, and Islamic Study/Urdu. Students all over Pakistan from the public and private sector appear for admission tests annually comprising the significant majority of students that come from the public school system and less number of students from the Cambridge school systems. Certain educators and even the members of the Board of Governors are raising questions about the validity and fairness of annual intake in grade 8 admission tests in meeting the learning competence of the students of public and private schools. The concern is rising in particular about the extent to which the admission criteria (i.e. admission test and interview) are ensuring equal competition opportunities to students with varying socio-economic and education systems backgrounds.

Since fairness of the admission test is a questionable issue, majority of institutions across the globe apply ‘traditional meritocratic approach’ to admission on the basis of grades and admission test. Instead of this paradigm, research emphasizes on the need of contextualized admission test approaches that may provide equal admission opportunities to all students by addressing the challenge of low socio-economic background. However, this approach does not receive attention due to institutional structure, lacking competence to complete the course, financial factors viewed by admission authorities (Boliver & Powell, 2023). Similarly, the previous Pakistan Tahreek-e- Insaf led Government introduced ‘Single National Curriculum (SNC)’ to provide equal education opportunities to all the citizens of Pakistan by introducing ‘Single National Curriculum’ and assessment modes to ensure fairness of quality education by providing equal opportunities to all children (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training-GOP, 2022). However, it has been criticized by certain quarters on academic, administrative, and political reasons.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

It is an established fact that cadet colleges have significant contributions for producing leaders and experts for several departments in Pakistan. However, certain education experts and even the members of the Board of Governors of the cadet colleges raised questions about the fairness of the admission intake in grade 8 for the students coming from multiple streams. To respond to the question, this study was conducted to investigate the socio-economic and

academic factors of the students who are successful in securing admission after appearing in the admission requisites i.e. admission test and interview. The study findings may provide insight to cadet college administrations to plan their admission tests that equally address the learning competence of different streams and contributing to the national integration and cohesion instead of marginalizing the different streams of education i.e. public and private sector.

1.2. Significance of the Study

The study findings may provide insight to cadet college administrations to plan their admission tests that equally address the learning competence of different streams and contributing to the national integration and cohesion instead of marginalizing the different streams of education i.e. public and private sector.

1.3. The objectives of this study are to:

1. Investigate the curricular and co-curricular factors that supported in getting admission in Cadet Colleges
2. Determine the socio-economic status of students enrolled in grade 8 at cadent colleges
3. Recommend measures for the formulation of admission tests that equally correspond previous grade academic experience of O level and public school students

2. Literature Review

Numerous studies have investigated the impact of socio-economic factors on students' success in admission tests. These factors may include parental income, education level, and access to educational resources. A Study conducted by Gillette et al. (2017), identified supporting factors for admission test, these factors are as follow: The study reveals that, the role of test preparation in students' performance. This can involve exploring the effectiveness of various preparation methods, such as tutoring, practice exams, and study materials.

2.1. Educational Background

The quality of previous education influences students' preparedness for admission tests. This includes variations in curriculum, teaching methods, and educational resources across different schools.

2.2. Cultural and Linguistic Considerations

This includes investigating potential biases in tests and the role of language proficiency.

2.3. Alternative Assessments

Researchers have explored the validity and reliability of admission tests, considering whether alternative assessment methods might provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' abilities.

2.4. Motivation and Engagement

This includes intrinsic motivation, goal-setting, and the impact of student engagement on test performance.

2.5. Equity and Inclusion

Studies often address issues of equity and inclusion in the admission process, exploring measures that institutions can implement to ensure fair access to educational opportunities for all students.

2.6. Institutional Support

The role of institutional support, such as counseling services and feedback mechanisms, in facilitating students' success in admission tests. The debate over the fairness of admission tests and the traditional meritocratic approach has been ongoing in educational institutions worldwide. While grades and admission tests have been used as standard measures of academic ability, critics argue that these methods may not always be fair, especially for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. This is because factors such as economic disparities, unequal access to educational resources, and socio-cultural differences can impact a student's performance on standardized tests. In response to these concerns, there has been a growing interest in exploring alternative, contextualized admission test approaches. These approaches aim to take into account the individual circumstances and

background of each student, providing a more holistic view of their capabilities. Here are some key considerations and approaches that researchers and educators have proposed:

Holistic Admissions: Holistic admissions involve considering a broad range of factors beyond just grades and test scores. This can include personal essays, letters of recommendation, extracurricular activities, and interviews. By looking at the whole person, admissions committees can gain a better understanding of an applicant's potential (M. Bastedo, 2021).

Contextualized Admissions: Contextualized admissions take into account the socio-economic context of the applicant. For example, a student's achievements may be viewed in relation to the resources and opportunities available in their school or community. This approach acknowledges that not all students have equal access to educational resources and support (M. N. Bastedo, Umbricht, Bausch, Byun, & Bai, 2023).

Test-Optional Policies: Some institutions have adopted test-optional policies, allowing students to choose whether to submit standardized test scores as part of their application. This recognizes that standardized tests may not accurately reflect a student's abilities or potential. Affirmative action policies that consider socio-economic background can be implemented to address historical disadvantages faced by certain groups. This approach aims to create a more diverse and inclusive student body (Soares, 2015). Instead of relying solely on standardized tests, institutions can explore alternative assessment methods that are more inclusive and reflect a student's potential. This might include project-based assessments, portfolios, or performance-based evaluations. Institutions can provide additional support, such as bridge programs or preparatory courses, to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds enhance their skills and succeed in higher education. Implementing these approaches requires a careful balance between maintaining academic standards and providing equal opportunities for all students. Contextualized admission strategies can contribute to a more diverse and inclusive student body, fostering a learning environment that reflects a broader range of perspectives and experiences. However, it's essential to continually evaluate and refine these approaches to ensure they effectively address the challenges associated with socio-economic disparities in education. Conducting surveys, interviews, and data analysis can help gather information on these factors. Additionally, collaboration with educational researchers, psychologists, and educators can provide valuable insights into the complex interplay of variables affecting success in admission tests at the school level.

3. Methodology

The present study is descriptive and quantitative in nature, which addresses answering *who, what, where, when, and to what extent* questions. Therefore, it is appropriate to identify the existing trends, categorizations of the trends in the population. Descriptive analysis stands on its own as a research product, such as when it identifies socially important phenomena that have not previously been recognized. More specifically, the panel survey method was utilized to achieve the objectives of the study that was considered useful for studying the same group of students who appeared in the admission test in cadet colleges in the Year 2022. The target population of the study was all the students who applied for admission tests in grade 8 in cadet colleges. The realistic or accessible population of the study was the students who applied for admission in the Year 2022 in the 48 cadet colleges of Pakistan. The number of cadet colleges that are recognized and working in Pakistan are as under:

Table 1: Number of cadet colleges in Pakistan

Sr.No.	Name of Province	Number of cadet collages
1.	Punjab	19
2.	KPK	9
3.	Sindh	8
4.	Baluchistan	6
5.	Fata	3
6.	Gilgit-Baltistan	2
7.	Azad Jammu and Kashmir	1
	Total	48

Source: Human Resource Directorate, Ministry of Defense, General Headquarters Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

Due to financial and time constraints, we are able to gather data from only two institutions conveniently. Total number of students appeared in the admission test of this selected college in the Year 2022 were 4814 (1780 from O level and 3060 from public schools). The data about the students who were not successful in securing admission tests except scores were not available. We applied a random sampling technique and selected 228 students (whole population) who were successful in securing admission in the Year 2022. Random sampling technique is useful in quantitative research approaches that ensure the opportunity for the selection of every individual in the population for the selection, and the selection of the specific individual does not affect the inclusion and exclusion of any other individual. It also guarantees the selection of a sampling size that is representative of the entire population. Furthermore, the generalization and inference of the results are scientifically valid by the use of the random sampling technique. Smith (1983, p. 394) explains, The arguments for randomization are twofold. The first, and most important for science, is that randomization eliminates personal choice and hence eliminates the possibility of subjective selection bias. The second is that the randomization distribution provides a basis for statistical inference.

3.1. Research Instrument

Constructing a valid data collection instrument requires time and skills. Otherwise sloppy, congested and ambiguous research tools may have poor response ratio. Therefore, careful considerations were given in designing two self-developed questionnaires for data collection to meet the objectives of this study. Both questionnaires were designed on the pattern of an 'interview questionnaire' i.e. each item has multiple response options, to cover the diversity among the respondents. After a detailed review of the literature, we developed 121 items; and finalized 55 after an in-depth discussion and review. One questionnaire was designed for the students who got admitted, it has three sections with 55 items; section A was related to 'regional and previous schooling information' comprising 25 items, section B was about 'co-curricular activities in previous school' comprising of 10 items and section C was related to 'socioeconomic status of students. The second questionnaire was developed for those who were unable to secure admission containing 16 items. The panel of experts determined the content validity of the instruments. Content experts included professionals in the field of education who possessed extensive work and research experience. They pointed out language ambiguities; suggested removal of overlapping questions, ensuring construct alignment, overcoming sequencing problems, and etc. They proposed linguistic and conceptual tips for adjusting brief, targeted, and single-barrel questions as well.

3.2. Procedure

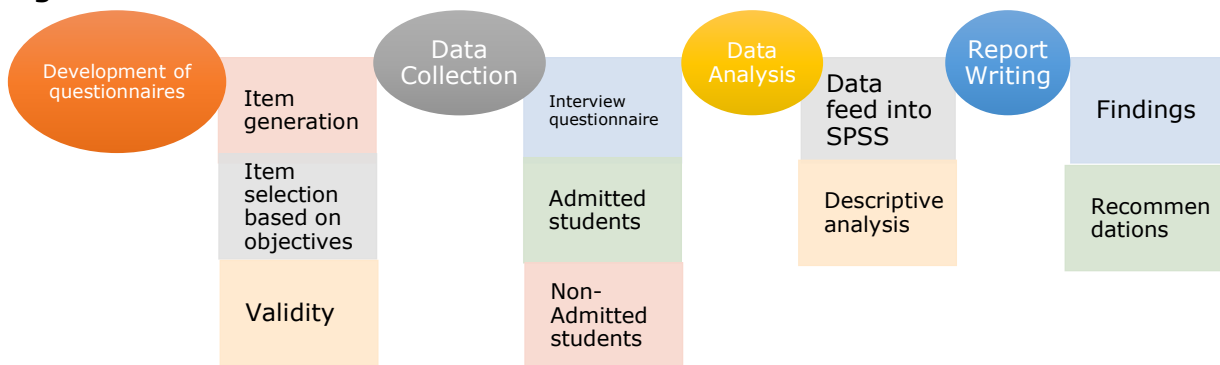
The research team gathered detailed information from the cadet college administration and faculty about the fairness of the 8th grade admission test for students studying in different modes of schools (public & private). We also gathered detailed documentary information about the tests, curriculum, teaching learning process and related matters about the targeted problem. After discussion, we have finalized the scope and objectives of this study. We spend Two months (October- November-2022) in reviewing the literature to establish the national and international context of the study, and also for the development and validation of the research tools. For the data collection, it was required to conduct the survey face-to-face, one-on-one basis. For this, the research team visited the institution and gathered data on the prescribed questionnaire. The respondents were given orientation about the research and the research team member ensured to clarify any queries and assisted the students where they needed clarity about any item of the questionnaire. The purpose was to explore the issue and get authentic and reliable information. The data of those students, who were unable to secure admission, was collected from their admission forms. The data collected in December-2022 were analysed by using descriptive analysis and the project report and the paper was finalized in the month of January 2023 for further discussion and dissemination among the primarily involved stakeholders.

4. Data Analysis

We calculated frequencies, percentages and mean to draw findings to infer the conclusions and discuss the results of the study. Descriptive analysis was useful to identify, explore and determine the phenomenon in quantitative terms to understand the given situation and data of the study. It also provided an insight to understand the gravity of the

situation and demand solutions from the stakeholders based on scientific evidence about the phenomenon under study.

Figure 1



4.1. Results

The data collected were tabulated and analyzed by calculating frequency and percentages. The demographic information differed by type and area along with other attributes including, language, qualification, and income etc. The descriptive analysis is as under:

Table 1: Province wise Residence and Mother Tongue of Admitted Students

S.N	Province	Frequency (%)	Mother Tongue	Frequency (%)
01	KPK	60 (26)	Urdu	102 (44)
02	Punjab	124 (54)	Punjabi	42 (18)
03	Federal	16 (7)	Pashto	52 (23)
04	Baluchistan	8 (3)	Sindhi	2 (0.8)
05	Sindh	8 (3)	Baluchi	2 (0.8)
06	Others	12 (5)	Saraki	22 (10)
07			Hindko	10 (4)

Table 1 presents demographic information, including province-wise residence and mother tongue of admitted students. As the data shows that the majority of the enrolled participants (54%) are from Punjab; and Urdu is the mother tongue of the majority (44%) of the students.

Table 2: Mother and Father Qualifications and year wise Income

S.N	Qualification	Mother- Frequency (%)	Father-Frequency (%)	Income level	Frequency (%)
01	Under Matric	24 (10.5)	12 (5.3)	Less than 100000	26 (11)
02	Matric	10 (4)	12 (5.3)	150000	32 (14)
03	FA	28 (11.5)	22 (9.6)	200000	42 (18)
04	BA	66 (28)	42 (18)	250000	34 (14.9)
05	MA	68 (29.8)	78 (34)	300000	20 (9)
06	M.Phil.	16 (7)	32 (14)	Above 300000	74 (31)
07	PHD	6 (2)	12 (5)		
08	Another	10 (4)	18 (8)		

Table 2 shows the mothers' and fathers' qualifications and their year-wise income. Data reveals that the majority of the mothers are B.A (28%) and M.A (29.8%), while the majority of the fathers possess M.A qualification (34%). Data reveals that the year-wise income of the majority (31%) of the parents of the admitted students was Above 300000.

Table 4 depicts mothers' and fathers' professions and facilities available at home for the admitted students. The majority (67%) of the mothers were Housewives while the majority of the fathers were Govt. officers (24%) and Business (24%). Data shows that (59%) have a Separate study room at home, (66%) have a Separate sleeping room, (80%) of students have a laptop/computer at home, (89%) of students have internet connectivity at home, (96%) have a family vehicle and (68%) have library corner at their homes.

Table 3: Mother and Father Profession and Facilities Available at Home for the admitted Students

S.N	Profession	Mother- Frequency (%)	Father-Frequency (%)	Facilities at home	Frequency (%)
01	Professor	6 (2)	Nil	Separate study	134 (59)
02	Teacher	28 (13)	Nil		
03	Housewife	152 (67)	Nil	Separate sleeping	150 (66)
04	Govt Officer	10 (4)	56 (24)		
05	Doctor	14 (6)	14 (6)	laptop/computer at home	182 (80)
06	Principal	6 (2)	Nil	Internet connectivity	202 (89)
07	Private Jobs	12 (5)	34 (15)		
08	Army officer	Nil	14 (6)	Family vehicle	218 (96)
09	Business	Nil	56 (24)		
10	Engineer	Nil	22 (10)	library corner	156 (69)
11	Landlord	Nil	32 (14)		
12	Others	Nil	14 (6)		

Table 4: Schooling Stream and Medium of Instruction in Grade 7

S.N	Schooling Stream	Frequency (%)	Medium of Instruction	Frequency (%)	Class Strength	Frequency (%)
1	Public	22 (10)	Urdu	14 (6.3)	Up to 25	110 (48)
2	Private	180 (79)	English	154 (67)	26-50	92 (40)
3	Semi-Government	26 (12)	Bilingual	60 (26)	50 above	26 (12)
4	Any other	4 (1)				

Table 4 reveals the schooling stream, medium of instruction, and class strength in grade 7. Most of the students (79%) were from private schools, English as a medium of instruction of the majority of the students (67%), and (48%) class strength was up to 25.

Table 5: The type of Syllabus taught and available facilities in Grade 7 (Multiple Syllabi in few Schools)

S.N	Type of Curriculum	Frequency (%)	Facilities at school	Frequency (%)
	Punjab Textbook	78 (34)	Comfortable furniture	184 (81)
	KPK Textbook	22 (9.6)	Multimedia	54 (24)
	Sind Textbook	2 (0.95)	Library class compulsory	108 (48)
	Oxford Syllabus	82 (35)	Blended mode of learning	184 (81)
	Cambridge Syllabus	34 (14)	Joined the tuition centre	118 (52)
	Any other	14 (6)	Teachers care because of parents' status	38 (17)

Table 5 illustrates the type of syllabus taught and available facilities in grade 7. Data shows that the majority (39%) of the students were taught Oxford Syllabus. Most of the students (81%) have comfortable furniture in their schools, (24%) of the students have multimedia in their classrooms, (48%) of students have library classes compulsory in 7th grade, (52%) of the students agree that they joined the tuition center during 7th grade, (17%) of students said that teachers care because of their parent's status during 7th grade.

Table 6: Quality of Teaching-Learning in Previous School

S.N	Statements	Often	sometimes	Rarely	M	SD
1	7 th -grade teachers allowed questioning in the classroom	194	34	00	1.15	0.38
2	Discuss learning problems with teachers	150	54	24	1.45	0.68
3	7 th -grade peer support in lesson preparation	112	76	40	1.6	0.74

Data in Table 6, shows that the majority of the teachers (194) often allowed questioning in the classroom, the mean is 1.15 with S.D 0.38 which supports the statement. 150 students agree that they often discuss learning problems with teachers without any fear, mean is 1.4, with 0.68 S. D, which supports the statement. Only 112 students said that 7th-grade peer support in lesson preparation, the mean is 1.6, with 0.74 S. D, which is not in favor of the statement.

Table 7 explains the availability and joining of co-curricular activities, data shows that (40%) of students have Phy. Edu Club, (54%) of students have computer club, (39%) of students have debate clubs, and (41%) of students have science clubs in their previous schools. Data reveals that (26%) of students have joined Phy.Edu. Club, (24%) of students have joined Writer's Club, (25%) of students have joined computers clubs, (18%) of students

have joined debate clubs, and (20%) of students have joined science clubs in their previous school.

Table 7: Availability and Joining of Co-Curricular Academic Activities in Grade 7

Availability of clubs	Frequency (%)	Joining of clubs	Frequency (%)	Co-Academic activities	Frequency (%)
Phy. Edu Club	90 (40)	Phy.Edu. Club	60 (26)	Book Clubs	28 (12)
Gen.Knowledge Club	62 (27)	Writer's Club	54 (24)	School magazine	46 (20)
Writer's Club	54 (24)			Poetry recitation	50 (22)
Computer Club	124 (54)	Computer Club	58 (25)	Story-writing	49 (43)
				Debates	114 (50)
Debate Club	88 (39)	Debate Club	42 (18)	Organizing exhibitions	62 (27)
				Preparing charts	78 (34)
Science Club	94 (41)	Science Club	46 (20)	Essay competition	110 (48)
				Projects exhibitions	90 (39)

Data indicates that (12%) of students have joined book clubs, (20%) of students have joined school magazines, (22%) of students have joined Poetry recitation, (43%) of students have joined story writing competitions, (50%) of students have participated in Debates, (27%) of students have participated in Organizing exhibitions, (34%) students have participated in Preparing charts, (48%) of students have participated in an Essay competition and (39%) of students have participated in Projects exhibitions.

Table 8: Availability of Outdoor and Indoor Game Facilities in Previous School

S.N	Outdoor games	Frequency (%)	Indoor games	Frequency (%)
	Cricket ground	160 (70)		
	Football ground	168 (74)	Table tennis	102 (45)
	Basketball court	100 (44)		
	Racing Track	76 (33)	Badminton	126 (55)

Table 8 shows that (70%) of students have Cricket grounds, (74%) of students have Football grounds, (44%) of students have a Basketball court, and (33%) of students have Racing Track in their schools. Data depicts that, (45%) of students have Table tennis and (55%) have Badminton in their schools.

Table 9: Availability of Culture and value based activities in previous School

S.N	Socio-Cultural activities	Frequency (%)	Value based activities	Frequency (%)
1	Scouting and guiding	24 (10)	Picnics	114 (50)
2	Organizing cultural events	80 (35)	Drawing competition	88 (39)
3	Volunteering for social work	48 (21)	Sketching	102 (44)
4	Celebrating National Gazetted Days	98 (43)	Album making	126 (55)
5	Dramatics	78 (34)	Poster drawing	82 (36)
6	Interschool cultural festivals	56 (25)	Oil painting	56 (25)
7	Annual day programs	122 (53)		

Table 9 shows the availability of culture and value-based activities in previous schools. Analysis reveals that (10%) of students participated in scouting and guiding, (35%) of students participated in Organizing cultural events, (21%) of students volunteered for social work, (43%) of students participated in celebrating national gazetted days, (34%) of students participated in dramatics, (25%) of students participated in Interschool cultural festivals and (53%) of students participated in annual day programs in their previous school. Data reveals that (50%) of students attended picnics organized by their previous schools, (39%) of students participated in drawing competitions, (44%) of students participated in sketching, (55%) of students participated in Album making, (36%) of students participate in poster drawing and (25%) of student participated in Oil painting in their previous schools.

Table 10: Failure Students Score Range (N=4814)

Score Range	English-N (%)	Math-N (%)	GK- N(%)	Urdu-N (%)
0 to 10	958 (19)	2984 (62)	1444 (30)	1059 (22)
11 to 20	2358 (49)	1107 (23)	2984 (62)	1973 (41)
21 to 30	1299 (27)	481 (10)	336 (7)	1347 (28)
31 to 40	144 (3)	192 (4)	0	336 (7)
41 to 50	0	48 (1)	0	10)

Table 10 reveals the failure students' score range of different subjects. In the score range of 0 to 10, (19%) of students on English tests, (62%) of students on Math tests, (30%) of students on GK text, and (22%) of students on Urdu tests. In the score range of 11 to 20, (49%) of students on English tests, (23%) of students on Math tests, (62%) of students on GK tests, (41%) of students on Urdu tests. In the score range of 21 to 30, (27%) of students on English tests, (10%) of students on Math tests, (27%) of students on GK tests, and (28%) of students on Urdu tests. In the score range of (1%) of students on Math tests, (0.4%) of students on Urdu tests.

5. Discussion

This study was designed to provide insight to cadet college administrations about the fairness of their admission tests—a concern raised by certain educationists. Most specifically, to underline if the admission test ensures equal competitive opportunities to students coming from public and private sector institutions. The results of this study stipulate the factors that supported the selected 228 students—who were successful in securing admission in the Year 2022—including their socioeconomic status, stream of school and facilities, participation in curricular and co-curricular activities in their previous schools, and etc. The results also feature measures of the formulation of admission tests that equally correspond to the previous grade academic experience of students in their schools from different streams i.e. Cambridge and/or public school system. Although the school administration shared and the documentary evidence confirmed that a vast majority (79%) of the students who secured admission in 2022 had studied in private schools, which followed Oxford/Cambridge system. The results further indicate that the students who got admission had conducive learning environment and academic facilities in their previous schools including comfortable furniture and facility of multimedia. There was a library class in their school and majority of the students joined tuition center in their seventh grade class. The class strength of the majority of the students in their previous private schools was twenty-five students.

Some published research in the field has also demonstrated on how the facilities provided at [previous] school setting and learning environment is instrumental for future success of students specially to enroll in demanding and dominant schools (Brooks, 2011; Octavia, 2020). The higher number of students from the private sector got admission in Cadet College as compared to the students from the public schools. It may be due to the lack of facilities in public schools or the criteria of admission tests in Cadet College that is less compatible with the competence of public school students. A small number of students also indicated the influence of their parents' status on their class teacher as the data revealed that their teacher might take care of them due to the status of their parents (Fan, 2012). The research conducted by Shochet, Smyth, and Homel (2007) affirms that parent involvement influences individual differences among the students, which indirectly affect how they recognize the school environment, which in turn impacts their rapport at school. The results particularly indicate that the curricular experiences of the successfully enrolled students in their previous schools have contributed in their admission. The curricular factors such as questioning in class, discussion with teachers regarding learning problems without any fear supported students in getting admission in Cadet College. This finding may also highlight the importance and need of collaborative learning and expression of ideas and sharing as an admission requisite. However, peer support emerges as less important factor in lesson/test preparation. Nabi, Farooq, and Nazir (2019) affirms the findings through their research findings about the curricular environment of private school and how the provision of various facilities impacts quality of education and student profile.

The co-curricular factors which support the majority of the students in getting admission in college were being part of writing club, preparing charts, story and essay writing competitions, computer club, and debate club. Apart from these co-curricular activities students also joined physical education club, book club, and school magazine club. Moreover, having the facility of sports grounds (cricket, football, basketball court, and etc.) and racing tracks emerged as important factors for admission in Cadet College as the majority of the students mentioned having the facility of these grounds in their schools. Research supports how sports facilities in a school contribute to academic excellence and social success. Under the umbrella of co-curricular activities, the majority of the students also mentioned their participation in cultural and value-based activities such as scouting and guiding, sketching, cultural festivals, picnics organized by their schools, social work, and drawing competitions.

The findings highlight the exposure and facilities successfully admitted students had in their previous schools are compatible with those provided at Cadet Colleges, which shows compatibility and adaptability in terms of success factor. A vast body of literature supports the findings and highlights how participation in co-curricular activities provide an exposure to learning experiences and support the individual student's personal and academic life affecting their communication, leadership, creativity and self-promotion skills (Graham, Truscott, Simmons, Anderson, & Thomas, 2018). Moreover, the demographic information of the enrolled students shows that majority of the enrolled participants (54%) hails from Punjab province while majority chose Urdu as their mother tongue. It is reported that medium (language) of instruction of majority enrolled students is English (67%). Alarming a large number of students scored less than (20%) in Mathematics and English. These results again indicate about the stream of school and admission requisites.

After finding that higher number of students from the private sector i.e. Cambridge Education System got admission in Cadet College as compared to the students from the public school's stream, it was not surprising to determine the Socio Economic Status of students enrolled in grade 8. The data presented in table (2) indicated that majority of the students have educated family background as parents of the majority of the students were graduate. Data also indicate that the students in the school have a good financial background and their parents are enabled to fulfill their basic needs. The literature also accentuates the role of parental background and socio economic status as success factor in student's future endeavors and academic success (Toldson & Lemmons, 2013). Table 3 depicts the parents' profession, and the facilities students have in their homes. It was found that the majority of the mothers were housewives and fathers were either government officers or own their businesses. Results also indicate that the majority of the successfully enrolled students in the cadet college have study room and separate sleeping room in their homes. They also have the facility of computer/laptop and Internet. Majority of the students have a family vehicle. Availability of all these facilities assures the good financial condition of their families eventually affecting their candidacy for the admission (Ashley et al., 2014). The findings questionably highlight that Socio-Economic Status as a strong factor in getting admission in prestigious education institutions. The results despairingly indicate that the admission test and stipulations at the interview to get enrolled do not equally address the learning competence of different streams. However, the major limitation of the study was about the data of the academic and socio-economic backgrounds of the unsuccessful students was not available for further comparison and contrast to reach at concrete findings.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

It is suggested that instead of 'traditional meritocratic approach' for admission on the basis of grades and admission test; cadet college administrations may apply contextualized admission test approaches that can provide equal admission opportunities to all students by addressing the challenge of low socio-economic background. Thus ensure equal educational access to students studying across different modes of education.

5.1.1. Practical Implications

In lieu of findings that questionably highlight the low Socio-Economic Status as a strong factor in getting admission in prestigious education institutions. Socio-economic variation may be addressed by giving 'need based scholarships' for ensuring inclusivity. It would also enable to check the 'quality brain wastage' of those families who are not able to secure admission seats because of poverty. To learn knowledge is obligatory for every male and female according to the teaching of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), and Pakistan being an ideological state ensured equal educational access to all irrespective of any discrimination in the 1973 constitution of Pakistan. It is further reiterated in the National Education policy 2009 and draft National Education Policy 2017. Therefore, we need to fulfill the quality educational requirements of marginalized, low socio-economic, poor quality background students. They may not fail to get enrolment opportunities only because of lacking any intellectual capacities but also because of their socio-economic marginalization structured. The results of the study stresses upon measures to be taken for the formulation of admission tests that equally correspond to ensuring equal competition opportunities to students with varying socio-economic and education systems backgrounds.

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