

# Evaluating the Impact of the Single National Curriculum on Educational Equality and Teacher Preparedness in Pakistan

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**Abstract.** This study explores the challenges and potential impacts of implementing the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Pakistan's education system, particularly in Punjab. The purpose is to assess the SNC's effectiveness in addressing educational inequalities and improving the quality of education across public, private, and madrasa schools. A mixed-methods approach was employed, utilizing surveys, interviews, and thematic analysis to gather data from 100 teachers, 20 administrators, and 10 policymakers. Quantitative findings indicate that urban schools report tremendous SNC success (mean = 4.1) compared to rural schools (mean = 3.5), while qualitative analysis highlights the need for better teacher training and resources. The study concludes that while the SNC has potential, more support is needed for consistent implementation. Implications include the need for targeted policy reforms, improved teacher training, and resource allocation to ensure equitable education for all.

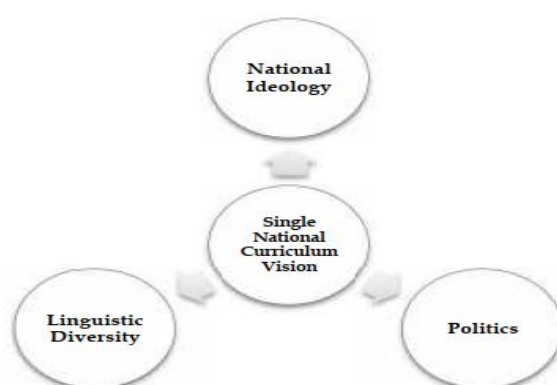
**Keywords:** educational reform; Pakistan education; single national curriculum; teacher training.

## 1 Introduction

[1] investigates the efficacy of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in mitigating systematic prejudice against religious minorities within Pakistan's educational framework. The research underscores the difficulties of executing a uniform curriculum in a nation with many spiritual and cultural identities. Although the SNC seeks to consolidate the education system, [1] contends that the curriculum may neglect the distinct needs and viewpoints of religious minorities, thereby exacerbating societal divisions instead of reconciling them [1]. Pakistan is defined by its linguistic, cultural, and ethnic diversity. After the nation's independence in 1947, the Government of Pakistan, shaped by the remains of British colonialism in the Indian subcontinent, established an educational system including many mediums of teaching. This resulted in the creation of English Medium Schools (EMS), Urdu Medium Schools (UMS), and Vernacular Medium Schools (VMS), leading to considerable social and educational inequalities across the country [10], [11], [12]. The current administration has implemented the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in schools across Pakistan to combat disparities and mitigate social injustice and economic disparity. The authors have conducted a thorough study of the original draft of the SNC for many grade levels and created a model based on this document.

The assemblage of syllabuses provided by any educational establishment, whether a school or college, is termed the "curriculum" [3]. A curriculum is designed for students participating in a particular subject or course, emphasizing objectives, content, pedagogical approaches,

evaluations, and resources, all cohesively organized within a structured learning framework [8], [18]. The principal aim of a curriculum is to provide an organised educational experience that promotes cognitive growth and collectively improves students' academic achievement. The many educational experiences included under this framework are termed the curriculum [20]. As the world experiences fast changes, school curricula are becoming obsolete, resulting in an expanding disparity between the education system and the practical requirements of social and vocational skills [17]. Consequently, educational systems require immediate reform to rectify these deficiencies, promoting a learning atmosphere that nurtures creativity and intellectual growth while equipping students for success in a globalised context and facilitating economic progress [31].



**Figure 1.** Proposed SNC Perception

Irfan asserts that reform initiatives must prioritise the modernisation of the curriculum to align with the changing requirements of students and society [9]. Pakistan has considerable obstacles from constrained resources, insufficient policies, and ineffective reforms [35]. Zaman, Saleem, and Ali similarly identified the frustrations of vital educational stakeholders, including policymakers, teachers, and parents, regarding outdated curricula, the lack of significant reforms, and the failure to implement a cohesive national curriculum capable of addressing global challenges [19]. To resolve these issues, educational institutions in Pakistan must establish a complete curricular structure. This framework must adhere to Pakistan's constitution, the national education policy, and Vision 2025, emphasising curriculum creation, review procedures, and other essential matters about school education.

Bashir, Yasmin, and Ahmad underscored that the essential ideas of the curriculum, together with the need for enhanced teacher education and the development of requisite mindsets, have been recognised [4]. This framework provides a solid basis for curriculum policy, offering direction for subject-specific curricula, training programs, assessment systems, professional development, and student performance. In 2018, the Pakistani government started initiatives to create a standardised education system designed to eradicate inequality and class distinctions. The effort, titled "Eik Qoum, Eik Nisaab" (One Nation, One Curriculum), aims to provide equitable educational opportunities nationwide, hence diminishing socioeconomic inequality [13].

The strategy mandates that all provincial governments implement a unified national curriculum, using consistent mediums of teaching, assessment methodologies, and evaluation standards to provide equitable chances for all educational institutions [33]. The curriculum

implementation is segmented into three phases: the first phase, grades 1–5, was designated for the 2021–2022 academic year; the succeeding phase for the next year; and the last phase, addressing classes 9–12, in the ensuing years. The federal government mandated executing this policy throughout all public, private, and religious institutions, including madrasas. Nonetheless, the preliminary outcomes have not met expectations due to discrepancies in the school system, inadequate teacher preparation, and enduring socioeconomic disparities.

Pakistan has three primary categories of educational institutions: madrasas, public schools, and private schools. The pronounced disparities among these systems result in pupils cultivating diverse ideological viewpoints [32], [1]. The Federal Ministry of Education and Professional Training developed a unified national curriculum to address these disparities. Notwithstanding this effort's commendable objectives, which seek to cultivate students' values and confidence and provide them with the requisite skills and information to become productive national and global citizens, obstacles persist.

Qazi said that the present administration is poised to encounter considerable challenges in executing the unified national curriculum in public schools and guaranteeing its proper implementation across the more comprehensive education system [25]. This study seeks to investigate the obstacles to implementing the Single National Curriculum in Punjab's public schools, emphasising its potential as a catalyst for educational change within the province's public school system.

### **Problem Statement**

In 2018, the Pakistani government attempted to implement the Single National Curriculum (SNC) across all provinces to establish a more cohesive education system. Notwithstanding these efforts, many obstacles persist, especially in Punjab's educational sector. The government's principal objective is to create a fair educational system reconciling the inequalities among public schools, private institutions, and madrasas. Many problems, including inadequate resources, inefficient policies, inconsistent approaches, and a persistent learning gap, have impeded the proper implementation of the SNC. The significant disparities within the educational system have fostered the emergence of varied ideological positions among pupils. This research aims to examine the challenges encountered in implementing the SNC and evaluate its potential as an effective instrument for educational reform in Punjab. The study goals include identifying novel educational practices, recommending essential curriculum revisions, and emphasizing the critical role of well-trained educators in advancing educational reform. By focusing on these areas, the research aims to enhance the cohesiveness and efficacy of the educational system in the region.

### **Research Questions**

The research question serves as the backbone of the study, providing clarity and direction for developing research instruments [21]. This study focuses on the following key questions:

**Research Question 1:** What primary challenges do policymakers and educators encounter when implementing a Single National Curriculum in a culturally and socially diverse country like Pakistan?

**Research Question 2:** How can adopting a Single National Curriculum improve a nation's educational system, and what advantages does a standardized curriculum offer compared to a more fragmented one?

**Research Question 3:** To what degree can the implementation of a Single National Curriculum be seen as an innovative approach to enhancing the quality of education in Punjab, and what obstacles may hinder its successful execution within the province?

**Research Question 4:** What are some of the possible strategies and reforms that can be introduced to ensure that the implementation of a Single National Curriculum in Pakistan results in positive outcomes, particularly in terms of educational equity, accessibility, and quality?

These questions are designed to explore the complexities and potential impact of the Single National Curriculum on Pakistan's education system, specifically focusing on overcoming challenges and improving overall outcomes.

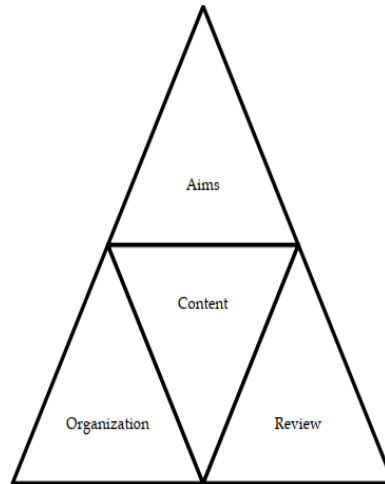
### **Significance of the Study**

The study's significance lies in its potential to significantly contribute to the ongoing reform efforts within Pakistan's education system, mainly through implementing the Single National Curriculum (SNC). By examining the challenges and opportunities associated with adopting the SNC, this research offers valuable insights into how a standardized curriculum can help address educational disparities across public schools, private institutions, and madrasas. The study aims to underscore the impact of curriculum reform on promoting educational equity, enhancing instructional quality, and bridging socio-economic gaps in education. Furthermore, it emphasizes the crucial role of skilled educators and innovative teaching methods in ensuring successful curriculum implementation. The findings are expected to provide valuable guidance for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders, informing future reforms and improving the overall effectiveness of Pakistan's education system, particularly in Punjab, which faces distinct challenges in achieving these objectives. This study has the potential to serve as a blueprint for other developing nations contending with similar issues of educational inequality and curriculum fragmentation, thereby contributing to a more globally relevant body of research on educational reform.

## **2 Literature Review**

Rahman contends that globalisation has considerably enhanced the prominence of English in Pakistan, primarily due to the expansion of job opportunities. Consequently, there has been a heightened demand for English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) in educational institutions, sometimes to the detriment of local languages [27]. English has been established as a compulsory subject in the curriculum of academic institutions in Pakistan. Thus, English language educators aim to equip pupils with global literacy abilities and cultivate critical thinking [16]. Richards emphasises that the curriculum is fundamental to every educational institution. It includes the curriculum, pedagogical approaches used by educators, accessible learning materials, and assessment procedures [28]. The model below delineates four fundamental curriculum components (see Figure 2).

Richards declares that a successful curriculum creation process encompasses many essential stages: needs analysis, situational analysis, delineation of learning objectives, organisation of course content, selection and preparation of teaching materials, and evaluation of learners and instructors [28]. Given that the curriculum is tailored for learners, gathering data on their educational, social, and cultural backgrounds is essential to enhance comprehension of their ideas and learning preferences. The primary objective of a curriculum is to enable students to evaluate existing systems and institutions critically, allowing them to successfully define their responsibilities in society.



**Figure 2.** Areas of Curriculum (Richards, 2011)

The academic courses and lessons educational institutions provide are often termed the curriculum. Dictionaries usually describe a curriculum as the collection of courses offered by an institution; however, this definition must be consistently implemented in classroom environments [30]. The curriculum encompasses the learning objectives and goals students are anticipated to attain and the resources supplied, including textbooks, presentations, and other instructional materials. A curriculum serves as a framework for educators, outlining the objectives, activities, and materials required for effective teaching in a particular course [28]. It functions as a blueprint that includes the curriculum and strategies for assessing educational results. Members of the Bureau of Curriculum assert that the Single National Curriculum (SNC) aims to provide equitable access to education nationwide [5]. This extensive system includes student exams, evaluation procedures, and a cohesive teaching framework for all learners. The welfare of instructors and students is intricately connected to the sustainability of curriculum and educational advancement. Curriculum reform has been suggested to promote sustainable educational progress [8].

A crucial part of educational reforms' success is the strategy for their implementation, with the adoption of a cohesive curriculum being a significant element. To ensure the success of these changes, accountability procedures must exhibit flexibility, and the autonomy of both students and teachers should be emphasised, prioritising the cultivation of trust within educational institutions [23]. The Pakistani education system is now fragmented by discrepancies in learning quality, educational goals, access to equitable opportunities, and economic inequalities [19]. The Single National Curriculum seeks to resolve these challenges by establishing uniform goals and standards. This approach aims to provide standardised education nationwide, mitigating the differences across public schools, private institutions, and madrasas [14]. The adoption of the SNC is a possible remedy to mitigate the educational disparities resulting from variations in resources and quality across these institutions.

A principal challenge confronting public schools is the need for more engagement and supervision by educators and management, which has led to a deterioration in the quality of education provided [22]. In contrast, madrasas concentrate only on religious education, whereas private schools, with more financial means, provide a superior quality of teaching. This split has

led to a disjointed and uneven educational system in Pakistan. Since gaining independence in 1947, a persistent endeavour has been to fortify national identity, as seen in the nation's educational policies and curriculum. Public education has historically served as an instrument for nation-building, fostering unity and collective identity via curricula that promote collaboration, creativity, and critical analysis [36].

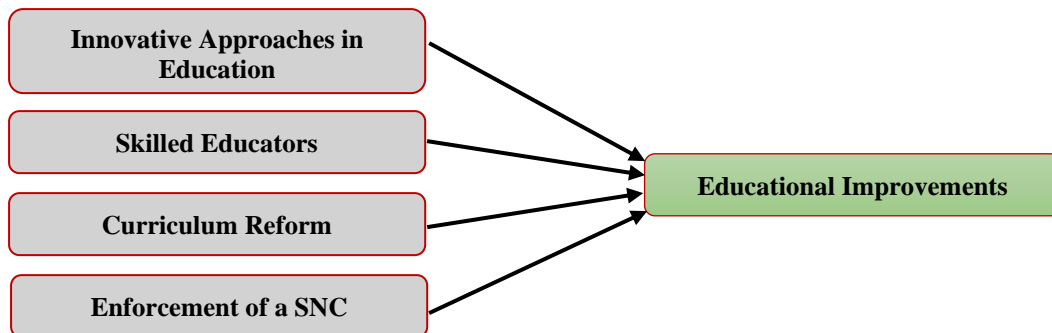
In 2018, Pakistan implemented its first national curriculum framework, departing from prior methodologies that used individual topic mandates to build curricula [29]. By the 18th Amendment of 2010, this new framework fosters national unity and ideology, seeking to reduce the decentralisation of education to the provinces. The curriculum creation and implementation responsibility has recently transitioned from the provincial to the national level. The SNC's implementation seeks to standardise education nationwide and promote national unity. The need for a cohesive curriculum emerged from the inconsistencies among various curricula and educational standards among institutions [24].

A comprehensive curriculum encompasses academic material, co-curricular activities, contemporary pedagogical approaches, international learning standards, infrastructure, and assessment systems. To address the requirements of a changing society and equip students for global issues, continuous updates to the curriculum are essential, making curriculum reform unavoidable [2]. The execution of a standardised curriculum encounters several challenges, mainly stemming from class-based educational disparities, including distinctions between secular and religious institutions and between private and public schools [15]. Concentrating on a Unified National Curriculum signifies an innovative strategy for implementing educational reform [26].

Educators are essential in advancing and achieving the ambitious objectives linked to the Single National Curriculum [19]. Educators must be highly competent and well-educated to achieve these educational goals. Pakistan is confronted with a need for more adequately prepared and competent educators, which impedes effective curricular change. Mitigating this deficiency is essential for realising the intended objectives of educational reforms [7]. A cohesive national curriculum has advantages in tackling challenges such as educator training, enhancing school enrolment for all children, and recognising and mitigating educational disparities [6]. The government's plan to establish the Single National Curriculum seems promising. This study is anticipated to effectuate beneficial transformations via educational enhancements and system improvements throughout the restructuring process [34].

### **3 Conceptual Framework**

The study's conceptual framework revolves around many factors influencing educational advancements. The independent variables, including innovative educational methodologies, competent educators, curriculum restructuring, and implementing a standardized national curriculum, are pivotal in shaping educational results. These variables are anticipated to directly and substantially influence the dependent variable, namely educational advancements. By comprehending the interconnectedness of these variables, the study seeks to offer insights into the prospects of augmenting the quality and efficacy of educational systems.



**Figure 3.** Conceptual Framework

The displayed independent variables exhibit characteristics linked to the dependent variable, education. The study's factors were designed to explore the challenges associated with implementing the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in public schools in Punjab. The research aims to investigate whether the adoption of SNC will serve as a novel mechanism for driving educational reform in Punjab's public school system.

#### 4 Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses will serve as the foundation for our research, which aims to assess the impact of the Standardized National Curriculum (SNC) on educational reform and equity within Pakistan's educational framework. Our study seeks to investigate the potential of a standardized curriculum in alleviating educational disparities across public, private, and religious educational institutions. Furthermore, we will analyze the influence of proficient educators, innovative methodologies, and curriculum restructuring in fostering educational advancements, explicitly focusing on the province of Punjab.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** The Single National Curriculum does not significantly improve educational quality or reduce disparities in Punjab's public schools.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** The Single National Curriculum significantly improves educational quality and reduces disparities in Punjab's public schools.

#### 5 Research Methodology

The research methodology outlines the systematic procedures and techniques for collecting, analysing, and interpreting data pertinent to implementing the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in public schools across Punjab. This study utilises a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative research methods to comprehend the challenges and potential ramifications of the SNC comprehensively.

##### Research Design

The research employs a descriptive and exploratory research design, which is suitable for conducting an in-depth exploration of the current state of the SNC's implementation in Punjab. This approach allows for a comprehensive examination of the challenges, opportunities, and potential impacts on educational outcomes. Through the integration of descriptive and

exploratory methods, the study seeks to uncover intricate insights and investigate novel issues associated with curriculum reform in Pakistan.

### **Population and Sample**

The population for this study includes:

- Policymakers involved in educational reform and curriculum development.
- Public school educators (teachers, principals, and administrators) across various districts in Punjab.
- Education experts and stakeholders, including curriculum developers and representatives from both public and private institutions.

A stratified random sampling technique from this population ensures that various stakeholders are represented in the study. The sample will consist of:

- 100 public school teachers,
- 20 school administrators or principals,
- 10 policymakers or education officials, and
- 15 education experts involved in curriculum development.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Data will be collected using primary and secondary sources:

#### ***Primary Data***

- Surveys will be distributed to educators in public schools to collect quantitative data on their views about the effectiveness of the SNC (Science and Nature Curriculum) and the obstacles they encounter when implementing it.
- Interviews with policymakers and curriculum experts to gather qualitative data will provide in-depth insights into the process of formulating policies, the challenges involved in implementation, and the strategies that can be employed to overcome these challenges.

#### ***Secondary Data***

The research will gather secondary data by reviewing academic literature, official government documents, and reports on education reform, curriculum development, and the implementation of the SNC in Pakistan. This approach will lay the groundwork for theoretical understanding and contextual insights for the research.

### **Instruments for Data Collection**

- **Questionnaires:** Teachers and school administrators will be given structured questionnaires containing open-ended and close-ended questions. The questionnaires will address the SNC's influence on teaching methodologies, student achievements, and resource sufficiency.
- **Interview Guide:** A semi-structured interview guide will be used for policymakers and education experts to explore their perspectives on the development and implementation of the SNC.
- **Document Review:** The study will be supported by thoroughly examining government policies, the Ministry of Education reports, and relevant research studies to establish a strong foundation and augment the data.



## **Data Analysis Techniques**

### ***Qualitative Analysis***

Thematic analysis will be utilised to analyse interview transcripts and open-ended questionnaire responses. This approach will help us uncover recurring themes, patterns, and insights about the challenges and perceptions of the SNC's implementation.

### ***Quantitative Analysis***

The data gathered from surveys will undergo analysis using statistical software such as SPSS. Descriptive statistics, including mean, frequency, and standard deviation, will be used to summarise the data. Additionally, inferential statistics such as t-tests and ANOVA will be employed to test the research hypotheses and ascertain if there exists a statistically significant relationship between the implementation of the SNC and educational enhancements in Punjab.

## **Ethical Considerations**

This research will rigorously comply with ethical standards to safeguard the rights and welfare of all persons engaged. Informed permission will be secured from each participant before data collection, ensuring transparent communication of the study's goal, methods, and possible benefits. Participants will be informed that their participation is entirely voluntary, and they have the right to withdraw from the research without repercussions. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study, with all data anonymised to safeguard participant identities. Furthermore, all gathered information will be used only for academic reasons, and sensitive data will be managed meticulously to avert unauthorised access. The research will respect the integrity and dignity of participants, guaranteeing that their replies are neither manipulated nor misrepresented. Ethical permission from relevant institutional review boards will be obtained to ensure the study adheres to recognised ethical norms.

## **6 Research Findings**

### **Qualitative Data Findings**

Interviews were conducted with policymakers, education experts, and teachers to conduct qualitative analysis. Thematic analysis was utilized to discern critical themes about implementing the Single National Curriculum (SNC). The themes identified from the interview transcripts are outlined below:

Table 1. Thematic Analysis

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency of Occurrence</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Challenges in Policy Implementation</b>	15	Difficulties in rolling out SNC due to lack of resources, political issues, and policy discrepancies.
<b>Teacher Training Deficiencies</b>	18	Inadequate preparation and training for teachers to effectively implement SNC.
<b>Resource Gaps in Schools</b>	12	Need for more learning materials and infrastructure, particularly in rural areas.
<b>Positive Attitude</b>	10	General agreement on the need for a single curriculum to address disparities in education.

<b>toward Curriculum Reform</b>		
<b>Cultural and Social Diversity Concerns</b>	9	Fear that SNC may overlook regional and cultural diversity in teaching and content.

The thematic analysis identified significant challenges in implementing the Single National Curriculum (SNC). Predominantly, the difficulty in policy implementation emerged as a central theme, attributed to insufficient resources and inconsistent policy enforcement. Additionally, a lack of adequate teacher training was identified as a significant obstacle to the success of the SNC. Despite these challenges, many participants expressed optimism regarding curriculum reform, acknowledging its potential to mitigate educational disparities. However, there were concerns raised about the SNC's ability to address Pakistan's cultural and social diversity effectively.

### Quantitative Data Findings

A structured questionnaire was disseminated to educators and school administrators to gauge their perceptions and encounters with the SNC. Descriptive statistics were utilized to condense the primary responses.

#### *Descriptive Statistics*

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
<b>Effectiveness of SNC in improving education</b>	3.8	0.75	Moderately positive perception of SNC's effectiveness.
<b>Teacher preparedness for SNC</b>	2.9	0.92	Teachers feel underprepared to implement the curriculum effectively.
<b>Availability of resources for SNC</b>	2.5	1.02	Schools report limited resources available for effective SNC implementation.
<b>Student performance improvement</b>	3.6	0.85	Perceived improvement in student performance post-SNC implementation.
<b>Perception of educational equality</b>	3.4	0.88	Moderate agreement on SNC's potential to reduce educational inequalities.

The SNC's potential to improve education is generally perceived positively, with an effectiveness mean score of 3.8. However, there are concerns about teacher preparedness, as indicated by an average score of 2.9, suggesting that many teachers feel unprepared to implement the curriculum. Additionally, the low mean score of 2.5 for resource availability highlights a significant issue with the lack of materials and infrastructure needed for the SNC. While student performance is perceived to have improved, the data suggests the need for further development in achieving educational equality across different types of schools.

### ***T-test Analysis***

A t-test was performed to assess the differences in teachers' perceptions from urban and rural areas regarding the effectiveness of the Single National Curriculum. The summarized results are presented in the table below:

Table 3. T-test Analysis

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value
Urban Teachers	50	4.1	0.62	2.45	0.016
Rural Teachers	50	3.5	0.84		

A t-test analysis indicates a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of urban and rural teachers regarding the effectiveness of SNC ( $t = 2.45$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Urban teachers hold a more positive view of the curriculum's effectiveness than their rural counterparts. This implies that urban schools may have better access to resources and training for implementing the SNC, while rural schools encounter more substantial challenges.

### ***ANOVA Test***

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was performed to assess the presence of statistically significant variations in the perceptions of SNC's influence on student performance among various school types, including public, private, and madrasas. The findings are outlined below:

Table 4. ANOVA Test

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	p-value
Between Groups	6.24	2	3.12	4.57	0.013
Within Groups	66.82	97	0.69		
Total	73.06	99			

The results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) show a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of the impact of SNC (Student Nutrition Program) on student performance among public, private, and madrasa schools ( $F = 4.57$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Post-hoc tests reveal that private schools significantly improve student performance compared to public schools and madrasas. These findings underscore the necessity for increased support and resources for public schools and madrasas to ensure fair outcomes from the Student Nutrition Program.

## **7 Conclusion**

The research focused on analyzing the obstacles and potential ramifications of adopting the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in public schools in the Punjab region. Despite the SNC's well-intentioned objective of promoting educational equality and standardization across diverse school systems, the results revealed significant impediments. These barriers encompass inadequate teacher readiness, limited resources, and disparities between urban and rural schools and public, private, and madrasa institutions. Nevertheless, there is a prevailing optimism regarding the SNC's capacity to enhance educational standards, diminish inequalities, and cultivate a more unified national identity. To fully capitalize on these advantages, it is imperative to undertake additional measures such as comprehensive teacher training, addressing resource deficiencies, and ensuring uniform implementation across all geographical areas and educational establishments. The study emphasizes the criticality of ongoing cooperation among policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to surmount these challenges and fortify Pakistan's educational framework through a harmonized curriculum.

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