



# Assessing Programs for Ensuring Children's Safety and Rights in Lahore's Elementary Education System: Seminars, Training, and NGO Practices

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Child protection strategies encompass a range of measures and policies designed to safeguard children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and other risks to their well-being. This study examines Programs for Ensuring Children's Safety and Rights in Lahore's elementary education system, focusing on the influence of seminars, training, and NGO practices. Employing a positivist research philosophy, the study involves 200 teachers from government and private schools engaged in child safety programs. Data collection through questionnaires using a Likert scale highlights three dimensions of child protection practices. Statistical analysis reveals significant disparities between public and private schools regarding awareness seminars, training sessions, and child protection practices. Private schools exhibit higher organization of seminars and training, along with more effective child protection practices. Findings highlight significant disparities between public and private institutions concerning seminars and training related to child protection. While private schools exhibit a more comprehensive application of child protection measures, government schools lack awareness workshops. The study underscores the vital impact of seminars and training sessions in enhancing stakeholders' comprehension of child protection regulations. It proposes prioritizing awareness programs and engaging the Parent-Teacher Association to fortify child protection policies. Despite limitations in resources, this research offers crucial insights for policymakers, furnishing empirical data to guide the establishment and execution of effective child protection policies within Lahore's elementary education system.

**Keywords:** Child Safety, Public and Private Institutions, Awareness Programs.

## Introduction:

In the bustling educational landscape of Lahore, the protection of children within the elementary education system stands as an essential pillar for ensuring a safe and nurturing environment. The multifaceted approach to this crucial aspect involves a spectrum of strategies ranging from seminars, and specialized training initiatives, to the integral involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). This comprehensive assessment aims to delve into the efficacy, implementation, and impact of these strategies, examining their collective role in safeguarding the welfare and rights of children within Lahore's elementary educational framework. As we navigate through the intricate web of initiatives and practices, we uncover the interplay between educational institutions, community engagement, and external support networks, all converging to create a shield of protection around the young learners in the capital city's educational sphere. Primary education holds a fundamental position within both societal and governmental concerns [1]. The attainment of universal literacy and the subsequent success

in secondary and tertiary education pivot significantly on the extent and efficiency of a country's primary education system. Regarded as an essential service, primary education is perceived as a right accessible to all, irrespective of financial constraints, with the onus typically resting on the state for its delivery. However, the provision of primary education by the public sector, much like various other public services, grapples with substantial inadequacies in its reach, efficacy, and standard.

Access to primary education stands as a fundamental entitlement for every individual within a society. Literacy forms the bedrock of productive functionality and empowers individuals to contribute meaningfully to their communities while realizing their capacities. Virtually all nations prioritize the well-being of their populace as the primary objective of their existence[1]. The citizenry represents the ultimate goal for which the state operates. When citizens are regarded as this ultimate end, their needs and prerequisites for a fulfilling life become integral components of the fundamental rights that underpin a society or state. In this context, education emerges as an indispensable prerequisite for unlocking the complete potential of a citizen and subsequently becomes a paramount concern for the state. It's crucial to emphasize that the argument advocating for these basic rights doesn't hinge upon the citizen's ability to afford education or the state's capacity to finance it [2]. Instead, it solely rests upon the perception of citizen welfare and what is deemed necessary to secure and enhance this welfare.

The primary responsibility of any state is to provide a secure and supportive environment while safeguarding the rights of all its citizens. Governments must ensure that every individual is granted fundamental and fair rights, creating a sense of security among citizens both in their workplaces and places of residence. This commitment not only fosters stability but also nurtures a sense of trust and assurance within society. Essentially, the foremost and essential duty of the state is to protect the lives of all individuals under its authority from violations of their human rights. Both governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play active roles across diverse spheres, including safeguarding children from sexual, psychological, and physical violence, as well as advocating for and upholding human rights [3].

Emerging countries face multiple obstacles regarding child abuse, bullying, and physical violence. Several studies have highlighted that a considerable number of children undergo both psychological and physical abuse due to ineffective implementation of laws safeguarding children. Consequently, the rate of dropouts in elementary schools is progressively rising, leading to adverse effects on the emotional and physical well-being of pupils [4]. In Pakistan, the legal structure aims to shield individuals from violence carried out by others. The country's predominant religious adherence is Islam, with most people identifying as Muslim. As a result, societal norms and laws in Pakistan are significantly shaped by Islamic principles, including adherence to Islamic sharia. Within this framework, children are believed to receive extensive protection in Islamic society [5].

Pakistan is working to implement laws aimed at safeguarding children from different kinds of mistreatment. Unfortunately, these efforts have not succeeded in establishing an efficient child protection system. One of the key issues is the lack of widespread understanding of child protection laws [6]. Parents, teachers, and students often lack awareness regarding child protection laws. Current initiatives to raise child protection awareness within school settings are inadequate, resulting in a concerning rise in reported cases of child abuse specifically within primary schools [7]. This study seeks to delve into the perspectives of teachers in both public and private elementary schools within the Lahore region concerning child protection awareness programs. It aims to thoroughly examine the role played by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in these initiatives. The specific objectives set for this research endeavor include assessing the effectiveness of seminars and training sessions in influencing the adoption of child protection practices within the context of primary education. By gathering insights from educators in both the public and private sectors, this study endeavors to offer a comprehensive

understanding of the impact and influence of these programs on safeguarding children within educational environments [8].

In this study, we aim to scrutinize and assess the viewpoints of educators in both public and private schools concerning child safety protocols and their practical implementation. By focusing on the field of literature, we intend to offer recommendations aimed at improving the execution of child protection measures within primary education. The purpose of this response is to conduct a critical evaluation of the subject matter, exploring its relevance and implications in shaping and fortifying child safety strategies within educational contexts [9].

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) establishes a comprehensive framework outlining the essential liberties and entitlements universally available to individuals under the age of 18. This framework is designed to ensure these rights are accessible to all, regardless of demographic characteristics such as color, language, gender, race, opinions, religion, origins, birth status, wealth, or abilities [10]. This inclusive approach guarantees the universal applicability of these rights, emphasizing the crucial need to safeguard children from societal issues that could adversely affect their outlook, conduct, and future opportunities. Every state acknowledges the rights of all individuals, although there might be differences in how these rights are understood and encountered by children and adults. However, it's essential to recognize that the fundamental rights themselves remain consistent across these varying perceptions and experiences [11]. Because of their physical and cognitive immaturity, the state grants children specific rights designed to nurture the development of their capabilities. While adolescents might be seen as vulnerable within the family sphere, it's crucial to recognize that they are not devoid of agency or incapable of taking action. According to researchers, there are distinct duties and rights linked to the developmental process, all aimed at ensuring children can live a life that's free from unnecessary complexity and hardship [12].

The realm of child protection covers a broad spectrum, spanning various aspects related to children, from addressing abuse to implementing strategies for its prevention and eradication. Children face significant challenges within their cultural, economic, and social environments, which deeply impact both society and its members. These challenges often shape the experiences and well-being of children, underscoring the interconnectedness between broader societal contexts and the welfare of its youngest members [13]. Schools and teachers hold significant potential in ensuring the safety of children. Educational institutions can serve as secure environments, offering a refuge from abuse, especially for children facing economic hardships, maltreatment, or other adversities. By providing a safe and nurturing atmosphere, schools play a crucial role in mitigating instances of violence and creating a conducive space for all children to learn and grow. Teachers, as guardians and mentors, also contribute to this protective environment by fostering trust and providing support to children in need [14]. This fosters a smooth and open dialogue among peers, allowing individuals to interact seamlessly. Educators possess the ability to contribute significantly to safeguarding children within the school system by promptly reporting any cases of student abuse to the appropriate school authorities [15]. Teachers can swiftly recognize and monitor changes in students' behaviors. Sometimes, students form strong bonds with teachers and willingly disclose instances of abuse or domestic challenges. Given the strict legislation prevalent in many countries, reporting cases of child abuse to higher authorities becomes imperative to ensure compliance with legal mandates. Child safety rules are rigorously enforced in these countries, and individuals involved in education and other relevant fields have undergone training and participated in awareness campaigns [16].

The lack of a clear and comprehensive framework significantly impacts Pakistan's child protection system. Numerous factors contribute to the challenges faced in ensuring children's safety, such as inadequate legislation and its enforcement, a shortage of trained educators and specialists, differing attitudes toward child-rearing practices, and a lack of research on children's rights and related issues. These factors collectively hinder the establishment of effective

mechanisms for safeguarding children in the country [17]. Various definitions and conceptual frameworks for abuse have been sporadically formulated, leading to some ambiguity in understanding these concepts. In Pakistan, the use of WHO criteria is prevalent due to the lack of a domestically developed legal definition for child abuse and its different forms. This deficiency can be linked to complex procedures and a lack of awareness and understanding among teachers, professionals, and other stakeholders involved in addressing child protection issues [18]. In Pakistan, there's a notable absence of a clear outline defining the roles and responsibilities regarding child protection for educators and other professionals. The current system lacks effectiveness in addressing child abuse and ensuring children's safety. According to prevailing views, children are legally under the care and supervision of their parents, and no individual within the state or society has the authority to interfere or investigate family matters. Arguments suggest that family values, privacy, and cultural perspectives significantly influence a child's upbringing, adding complexity to interventions in cases of abuse or neglect [19]. The introduction of seminars and training sessions significantly impacts child safety practices in both public and private sector schools. Teachers' perspectives from these schools regarding various research variables hold considerable significance in understanding the effectiveness and nuances of these safety practices [20].

### **Methodology:**

#### **Research Philosophy:**

The present study adopts a positivist research philosophy, focusing on empirical observations and measurable data to derive reliable information.

#### **Participants and Sampling:**

The study involves schools engaged in child safety programs initiated by NGOs. The sample comprises six government institutions and 10 private schools, totaling 200 teachers selected using the stratified selection technique [21].

#### **Data Collection:**

Data collection utilizes a questionnaire employing a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire comprises two sections: the first gathers demographic information, and the second focuses on three dimensions of child protection practices including awareness seminars, training and workshops, and child protection practices and implementation [22].

#### **Sample Size Determination:**

The study determines the sample size using an appropriate formula and aims to validate and ensure the reliability of the research tool.

#### **Questionnaire Validation and Reliability:**

Validation utilizes the item-objective congruence measure to assess content validity [23]. Reliability is assessed using Cronbach's alpha to measure internal consistency.

#### **Data Analysis:**

The study concentrates on the analysis and subsequent discussion of the collected data, focusing on evaluating the relationship between seminars/trainings and child safety practices in public and private schools [24].

#### **Findings and Results:**

For public sector schools, the model output indicates that approximately 17% of the variation in child safety practices can be attributed to the conducted training, with a positive beta coefficient of 0.243. In private sector schools, around 69% of the variation in child safety procedures is associated with the conducted training, with a positive beta coefficient of 0.793. The [25] statistic indicates no autocorrelation between variables in both public and private school models. The study focuses on child protection practices, highlighting the influence of seminars and training on enhancing these practices in both public and private sector schools.

#### **Results and Discussion:**

An analysis of teachers' viewpoints reveals significant differences between public and private

school perspectives on awareness seminars ( $p=.000<.05$ ), training sessions ( $p=.000<.05$ ), and child protection practices ( $p=.000<.05$ ). Data indicates that private schools organized awareness seminars more frequently (mean score = 4.12) than public schools (mean score = 2.17). Moreover, trainings in private schools scored higher (mean=4.22) compared to those in public schools (mean=1.33). Similarly, child protection practices were more effective in private schools (mean=4.29) than in public schools (mean=3.47).

**Table 1:** Comparison of Perspectives: Public vs. Private Schools on Awareness Seminars, Training Sessions, and Child Protection Practices

Perspectives	Public Schools (Mean)	Private Schools (Mean)
Awareness Seminars	2.17	4.12
Training Sessions	1.33	4.22
Child Protection Practices	3.47	4.29

The study primarily examined the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Education Program (CPP) in elementary schools in Lahore. Findings emphasize the significant influence of training and seminars on CPP implementation, aligning with similar studies showcasing enhanced awareness among instructors regarding child neglect and abuse post-training.

**Table 2:** Themes and differences observed between public and private institutes regarding Early Childhood Education

Themes	Public Institutes	Private Institutes
Policy Implementation	Weak policy, poor state of education, accountability	Implementation challenges, separate policies
Teacher Training and Awareness	Lack of awareness, need for seminars and training	Good quality training, persistent misconceptions
Teaching Quality	Weak quality, outdated methods	Good quality teaching, qualified and dedicated teachers
Resources and Curriculum	Limited resources, poor infrastructure, unrealistic curriculum	Quality facilities, updated curriculum
Institutional Support	Average support, lack of social awareness	Good support, high priority to ECE, social awareness
Challenges and Issues	Lack of resources, training, administrative attention	Addressing challenges through resources and policy

The interviews conducted to evaluate the quality practices of Early Childhood Education revealed critical themes differentiating perspectives between public and private institutes. Public institutions faced challenges such as weak policy implementation, inadequate resources, and a lack of awareness among teachers. Conversely, private institutes showcased better quality teaching, updated curriculum, and improved resources. While public schools struggled with limited resources and older teaching methods, private institutions offered a more conducive learning environment and higher-quality teaching practices. Despite these disparities, public schools played a vital role in accommodating children from disadvantaged backgrounds, while private schools excelled in providing a superior learning environment. The study acknowledges limitations in its scope, emphasizing the need for further research to explore quality using broader assessment tools and sampling methods beyond the current outdoor-focused approach.

Table 2 provides a concise comparison between public and private institutes in several key areas, showcasing the differences observed in their approaches and the challenges faced. Notable differences in teachers' perspectives on seminars, training, and child safety measures emerged between the public and private sectors, consistent with comparable studies. Another



study explored the implementation of child safety policies, highlighting differences between private and government schools.

### **Discussion:**

The child protection system in Pakistan is deeply embedded in the country's societal fabric, emphasizing the protection of children's rights across various religions. Before the 1947 partition, laws existed to prevent child exploitation, and institutions were set up to assist juvenile offenders and disabled children. Post-partition, Pakistan inherited this legacy, primarily focusing on remedial services for child welfare. Following a constitutional amendment, the responsibility for child protection shifted to provincial authorities. However, despite international advocacy for child rights, implementing these standards, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, faces challenges and requires a systematic national approach. Achieving these demands coordinated efforts from governments, families, academia, private entities, children themselves, caregivers, and NGOs. Pakistan's child protection system comprises both formal and informal institutions, yet reports highlight the government's struggle to substantially enhance child protection frameworks. Initiatives, like the National Commission for Children and Child Protection and Welfare Bureau, aim to rehabilitate and shelter neglected children. However, resource constraints, particularly in comparison to substantial defense spending, limit efforts toward children's welfare [21]. In essence, while Pakistan has established legislation to protect children, the challenges of resource inadequacy perpetuate a struggling child protection system. This emphasizes the pressing need for comprehensive reforms in Pakistan's approach to safeguarding the well-being of its children.

Unfortunately, Pakistan continues to grapple with the effective execution of its child protection system. According to Pakistan's report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, legislative amendments, such as the Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Act and the Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children Act, have been made. Additionally, in 2007, an evaluation of the child protection monitoring system was introduced. While various institutions like 'Nigheban' for lost children and 'Kashana' for orphaned girls operate under the Directorate of Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal across provinces, the state of these institutions remains undocumented [22]. The non-profit sector, both local and supported by international aid, collaborates extensively on children's rights, addressing issues in health, education, and social welfare. These organizations have brought attention to bonded labor practices, prompting legislative action against such exploitation. However, challenges related to poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, corruption, terrorism, and an overburdened judicial system compound issues linked to child protection. For example, children born in custodial institutions face adversities due to overcrowding and inadequate facilities [23]. Collaborative efforts by organizations like Amnesty International and UNICEF aim to create policies for the welfare of children born in prisons. Furthermore, the absence of dedicated juvenile detention centers exposes juvenile offenders to adult inmates, exacerbating their vulnerability. Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires a comprehensive approach involving legislative frameworks, community engagement, and local governance intervention [24]. While non-governmental organizations play a crucial role, the scarcity of qualified social workers limits their impact. Trained personnel could offer therapeutic counseling and essential support to children and families in need. Resolving the complex issues of Pakistan's child protection system necessitates collaboration among legal, social welfare stakeholders, and structural reforms.

### **Conclusion:**

In summary, drawing from the study's outcomes, several recommendations emerge. Child protection stands as an immensely challenging aspect of social policy, consistently evoking widespread public concern, and demanding immediate attention. This study specifically delves into child protection practices within Lahore's elementary schools, highlighting marked differences in how public and private teachers perceive seminars and training related to child

protection. Notably, there's a lack of awareness programs addressing the Convention on the Rights of the Child and child protection regulations, though private schools have sought NGO support to tackle child safety issues. The research underscores the pivotal impact of seminars and training sessions in enhancing stakeholders' comprehension of child protection regulations. In private schools, there's a notably superior implementation of child protection measures compared to government schools, where awareness workshops are absent. Thus, the study recommends prioritizing seminars to boost awareness among stakeholders about CRC and child protection laws, along with providing reading materials for instructors and students. It advocates for the vital involvement of the Parent Teacher Association in effectively implementing child protection policies. Despite its limitations due to time and financial constraints, this study aligns with previous mixed methods research inquiries, emphasizing the quantitative dimension. Its implications extend to policymakers, offering empirical insights into child protection practices within public elementary schools and furnishing a framework for policy development in this crucial domain.

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