PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ABOUT ENGLISH MEDIUM INSTRUCTIONS - A CASE STUDY OF DISTRICT DERA GHAZI KHAN, PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to determine how teachers in government secondary schools perceive English Medium Instructions (EMI) and how they anticipate the obstacles it poses to their teaching styles. This qualitative study used a case study approach supplemented by thematic analysis to examine the perspectives of five secondary-level English teachers from district Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab, Pakistan. In the purposive selection, all the schools offered EMI at the secondary level. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with participants over the zoom meeting and each meeting was recorded. The secondary schools that were chosen on purpose all provided EMI programs. In-depth interviews were conducted with participants via Zoom meetings, and the sessions were recorded for later analysis. Round two was an in-depth, semi-structured interviews. While most teachers had a favorable impression of EMI, the data review revealed that they had difficulty putting it into practice in the classroom. The participants in this study attributed these problems to a number of factors, including a lack of qualified teachers, a lack of professional development opportunities for educators, a lack of high-quality learning resources, and superfluous constraints imposed by the school policy.

1. Introduction

English is not merely the language of one country or region, but is used in a wide variety of contexts and fields all over the world. It has been the most used language to provide information globally (Mahboob, 2017). English has skyrocketed in every corner of the globe. This is due to both demographic changes and the ongoing trend of globalization. Thus, the modern world has used the English language to convey its progresses, shifts and innovations. The global community has shrunk and gotten easier to navigate because of the English language. English is growing in popularity across political and ideological lines as a second language in many regions of the globe due to its universality and simplicity of use as a lingua franca (Bukhari & Awan, 2018). Because of the rapid changes in politics, the economy, and science and technology, it seems that people have no choice but to study it. (Ahmad *et al*., 2022). In Pakistan's public school system, EMI has recently developed as a new language specialization (Siddiqui, 2022). The term "socioeconomic mobility" has spread due to globalization and the economic clout of the English language. People must invest time and effort into mastering the English language since it occupies a prominent and significant place in today's economic and social framework (Manan, 2015; Rehman & Perveen, 2021). As a result, English has surpassed other regional languages in all aspects of life, including the economy and academics. The medium of teaching at the secondary level might be Urdu, English, or both. Since then, children in public schools have had the option of learning in either English or Urdu. As a result, since 2009, EMI has been used in a significant number of Pakistani public schools (Arshad *et al.,* 2022). In the same vein, Fareed *et al.,* (2019) claimed that English Medium Instruction (EMI) is rapidly replacing the conventional Urdu medium instruction in government schools across Pakistan. Another study conducted Ahmad *et al*. (2023) with a comparable setting suggested that EMI policies create a deficit identity for ethnic minority populations by stigmatizing and eliminating their knowledge of and respect for their mother tongues in the classroom while maintaining neoliberal principles. Such policies not only assist to flourish an English-only monolingual ideology, but they also present numerous challenges to students' from minority or ethnic background, an epistemic injustice which is due to an impact on parents' attitude. These parents who see English as a key to success in today's interconnected world have increased their demand for EMI (Phyak *et al.,* 2021). This gap has been created as a smart financial move in the name of higher education of better quality. Hence with this mixed views on benefits and challenges of EMI, the widespread desire for and the generally positive views of educators toward English-medium instruction (EMI), secondary school educators face a number of questions and obstacles when attempting to incorporate EMI into their classrooms (Khatri, 2019).

1.1 Problem Statement

Pakistan a multilingual nation, more than 72 live languages are spoken in Pakistan. It is difficult to choose a language to be the medium of instruction in a country with as many different linguistic groups as Pakistan (Khan & Khan, 2016). Although English Medium Instructions play a key part in classroom activities, every decision about the medium of

instruction must take the views of the directly engaged stakeholders, namely instructors and students, into consideration (Fareed *et al.,* 2019). Consequently, the purpose of the current investigation was to determine the perceptions of the secondary school teachers about English Medium Instructions (EMI) in Pakistan.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research study were:

- To determine how secondary school teachers, perceive English Medium Instructions?
- To explore the obstacles those have prevented its wider adoption in the secondary level government schools in Pakistan.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Policy Review

The EMI policy can't be implemented successfully without teachers' command of the English language. Asif *et al*., (2020) stated that public school teachers in non-English areas are unlikely to be native English speakers. Jabeen, (2020) proposed, however, that the vast majority of educators lack the necessary training to instruct EMI courses. You see that when teachers are required to speak and teach in English only, they report feeling stressed. In a similar vein, Galloway & Rose, (2021) stated that a growing body of research has identified language-related issues and linguistic preparedness as significant barriers to the deployment of EMI. As a result of the unchecked growth of EMI services, new problems have emerged that has an impact on teachers and students and highlights the value of ELT teachers in offering language assistance. While Jiang *et al.,* (2019) discussed the views and practices of subject teachers in EMI and the motivation of students, they also mentioned that

successful educational outcomes were achieved by implementing the practical and pragmatic tactics, but the goal of improving proficiency in English were not achieved because language teaching was not prioritized. Prospective students' linguistic gains were hampered by professors' preconceived notions about EMI. There are many obstacles to implementing EMI, despite the fact that it is in high demand and has been widely adopted in various private as well as government schools in Pakistan and that its proponents have positive sentiments regarding the program (Mahboob, 2017). As per the findings of Channa *et al*. (2016), there seems to be a significant disparity between the intended purpose of EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction) policy and its practical implementation in public school classrooms. In spite of the many benefits that widespread use of EMI has brought about, it has also given rise to a number of recurring issues. All parties involved, including policymakers, educators, and students, must contend with these complications. Everyone in the classroom, from the teachers to the parents to the students, is on board with EMI (Ammar *et al.,* 2015). Using English in the classroom is beneficial for many reasons, but it is not without its difficulties. Some of these difficulties include students' limited exposure to the language, mother tongue interference in the classroom, students' insufficient English language skills, inadequate parental and societal support, and an absence of a motivating educational atmosphere contribute to a lack of encouragement and motivation for teachers (Asif *et al.,* 2020). Although official EMI requirements state that fundamental subjects must be taught in English. Shamim & Rashid, (2019) argued that because of the lack of

qualified staff, the school has developed its own EMI practice by using a bilingual (English/Urdu) medium of instruction. When transitioning from teaching in Urdu to teaching in English, teachers have a far more difficult time communicating their ideas. However, educators are aware of the problem but do not have the necessary English proficiency to implement EMI. They are famous for sharing their extensive knowledge of English with the world (Tahir *et al.,* 2017). There are several Pakistani secondary schools now employing EMI. However, there are various challenges concerning both students and teachers that prevent EMI from being used successfully in the classroom. In this context, Shahzadi & Ducasse, (2022) claimed that despite its widespread use in higher education, the medium of instruction continues to be a source of dissatisfaction among both instructors and students. The students who make the transition to EMI are ill-prepared. They are not exposed to the English language enough, nor do they live in an English-speaking community. They have access to textbooks written in English but lack the literacy abilities to read them. When pressured to speak English, they either speak in a jumbled mixture of English and Urdu or simply don't respond at all (Haider, 2019). Gopang *et al.,* (2017) argued that a lack of English competence on the part of teachers has hindered both content knowledge and English skill learning, despite the intention of EMI to generate linguistic capital and enable students to acquire required fluency in English. Teachers remain unconvinced that students' general achievement has increased, despite the youngsters' obvious potential for growth in this area. As a result, it's clear that EMI is making

it harder for young people to acquire fluency in English.

2.2 Empirical Review

According to Dearden (2014), issues affecting EMI practice globally include a lack of EMI-qualified teachers and teaching resources, ambiguity regarding which subjects should be taught in the English language, the age at which EMI begins, the absence of a set level of English proficiency for EMI teachers, the teacher's role, the importance of language centers and professional development, and the age at which EMI begins. The difficulties with adopting EMI in Pakistan seem to be the same as they are everywhere else. In a similar study, Taj, (2019) argued that teachers' limited command of English is the primary barrier to the successful implementation of EMI policy in public schools. By creating a survey-style research, Saeed *et al.* (2012) performed a study to ascertain teachers' opinions about English language training at the secondary level. They discovered three things about secondary-level English-medium training. First, English was not favored by instructors as a secondary school instructional language. However, they recognize that English-medium schooling has some advantages. Second, the majority of teachers lack the necessary proficiency to instruct in English. Third, according to instructors, English-medium instruction is bad for pupils. Tahir *et al.,* (2017) investigated the impact of `English medium instructions on the dropout rate of students at government secondary schools. Their study concluded that: 64% head teachers stated that students leave the school due English medium instructions, 54% head teachers said that the students fail in their exams due English medium

instructions, 57% head teachers pointed that Students lose their interest in learning due to EMI and 50% head teachers agreed that Students are not able to understand key concepts in different subjects due to EMI. Mukhtar *et al.,* (2021) studied teachers' attitudes about English as a medium of instruction at Government Higher Secondary Schools in Sindh, Pakistan. The study design used was qualitative in nature and centered on semi-structured interviews. They found in their study that supplemental reading materials, with the help of technology, and English courses can play an important role in providing internalization and adaption of the English language as a medium of education. Most of the above mentioned research indicated that instructors and students in Pakistan do not prefer English as a language of teaching in secondary schools. As a result, the researchers may conclude that implementing English medium instruction at the secondary level in Pakistan is a difficult endeavor. To produce a counter argument, literature was searched further.

2.3 Research Questions

The overarching research questions driving this study are:

RQ1: What is the perception of English Medium Instructions (EMI) among Pakistani teachers?

RQ2: What are some of the anticipated obstacles to EMI's successful application, and how could they be potentially mitigated?

3. Research Methodology

The research methodology used in this investigation was a qualitative multiple case study. Case study research is described as "the investigation of the uniqueness and complexity of a single case in order to comprehend its behavior under critical conditions" (Stake, 1995). A case might be a person, an event, an action, a process, a group, an organization, or an institution. Because the emphasis is on a single unit, within-case analysis is used instead of comparative cross-case analysis (Ryan, 2019). Informed by the literature on case study as a methodological approach, this study employed the same methodology. This method allows for in-depth knowledge of a subject in real-life contexts from the views of those involved. Instant study research is best suited to studies that seek answers to "what" and "why" questions and it has the ability to fully understand the nuances of a given case.

3.1 Research Site

The four public schools were chosen for this study all offering EMI in the secondary level. S1, S2, S3, and S4 were the schools chosen (coded) from district Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab, Pakistan.

3.2 Research Participants

The participants were four secondary school English language teachers, one from each of the four schools used in the study. Teachers are coded as T1, T2, T3 and T4. The participants were native Saraiki speakers and spoke fluent Urdu in addition to English for professional purposes.

3.3 Research Tool
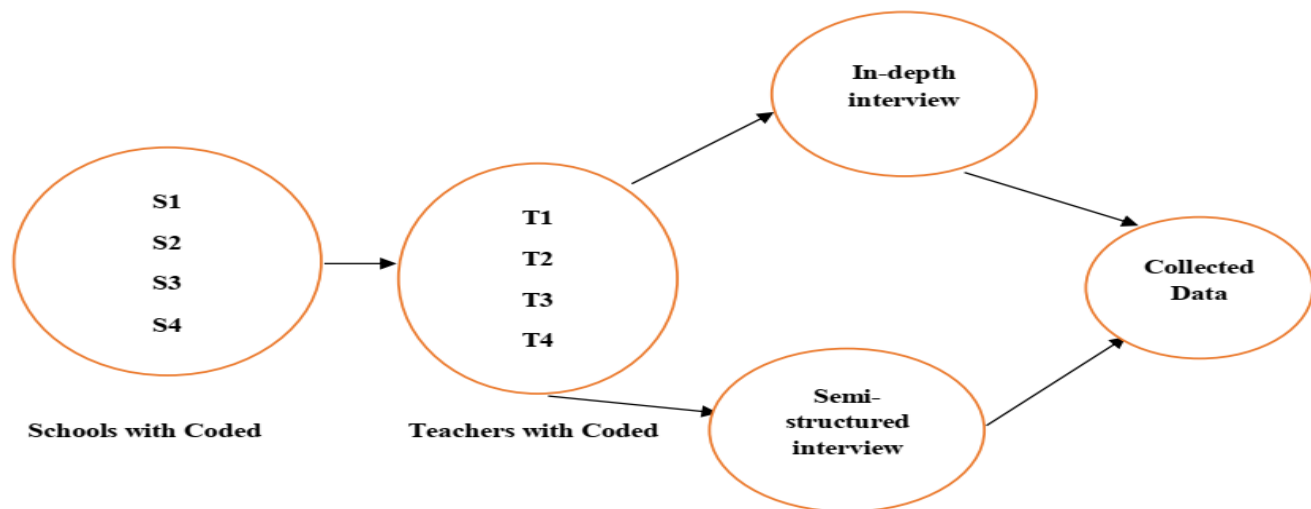
Figure 1: Research Design of the Study

Semi-structured interview was conducted to supplement the in-depth interviews. As part of the data collection process. Meeting was set with each of them in person for a 30-minute interview and conducted a video calling zoom software free version. English was used to gather information; later Urdu was switched whenever needed. Conversations were recorded, transcribed, and translated from Urdu to English. In order to avoid any moral dilemmas, the document protects both the anonymity of the school and the research participants. The research design of the study is shown in figure 1.

4. Results

The results were based on the answers to two overarching study questions: What do teachers feel about EMI? What would be the most significant obstacles (and what may create them?) and how may we lessen these obstacles to a more effective EMI rollout in Pakistan? In order to get at these answers, the interviewees were asked a total of six questions. The interview data was analyzed, and the results are presented below. There are four primary groups into which the results are organized: The attitudes of educators regarding EMI, the current state of schools, the difficulties inherent in implementing EMI, and the measures that can be taken to mitigate these difficulties.

4.1 RQ1: What is the perception of English Medium Instructions (EMI) among Pakistani teachers?

This led to the first research question, which concerned educators' perspectives on EMI. Two teacher's express optimism about the potential of EMI in their classroom discussions. They all agreed that EMI is crucial because we live in a globalized world because it improves students' abilities and facilitates their integration into society. In fact, EMI helps today's youth adapt to multicultural societies. Since English is rapidly becoming the global lingua franca, the importance of teaching in an English-only environment cannot be overstated. The responses from T1, T2, T3, and T4 revealed favorable perceptions toward EMI and a general agreement that English must be employed as the primary medium of instruction in their environment. The current findings are in line with those of earlier studies by Gopang *et al.,* (2017), Khatri, (2019), and

Jabeen, (2020), which all addressed the opinions of English language teachers regarding EMI. Hence, the beliefs about ESL teachers in 2022 through this study also suggested that teachers of the English language underestimate the difficulty of their jobs in the modern neoliberally influenced so called progressive world with still regressive educational praxis.

4.2 The Current State of EMI in Educational Settings.

All four respondents believed that the current state of EMI at their school is unsatisfactory because of the lack of linguistically qualified teachers and a low rate of student linguistic transition and time pace of adaptation. They claimed that EMI was implemented to help students become adept, yet the opposite has happened. T2 mentioned, "My current school uses EMI beginning in middle school. However, I do not believe that most students are making adequate progress toward their English language proficiency goals. It's possible that a lack of proficiency in both the language and the classroom is to blame for the students' struggles to adjust". From his tone, it's evident that he doesn't think pupils will benefit practically from the school's adoption of EMI because of the disparity between teacher and student competence. Similarly, T4 stated, "EMI was implemented five years ago because the school administration wanted to raise their kids' English performance in school. The problem was that they weren't keeping up and were now oppositely falling behind. This is due to the fact that many veteran teachers lack the language skills necessary to communicate effectively in English. My conclusion is that EMI has failed to take hold at our institution. The outcome of this response demonstrates that EMI is not achieving academic success. The school adopted EMI with good intentions, but the lack of competence among the long-tenured teachers has prevented any significant improvement in student achievement". The lack of teachers who could speak fluent English and the students' struggle adapting to the new language, according to all of the teachers, meant that EMI did not function properly at their school. The participants' statements made it apparent that while they first had a favorable opinion of EMI, when pressed further, they felt otherwise and began to point out the scarcity of teachers who could speak English fluently as the biggest hurdle.

RQ2: What are some of the anticipated obstacles to EMI's successful application, and how could they be potentially mitigated?

Teachers encounter various obstacles while attempting to introduce EMI into public schools, despite its critical role in preparing students for modern-day competition. The participants were asked, "What are the most significant obstacles your school must overcome in order to use EMI effectively?" The lack of high-quality educational materials is the biggest obstacle. Other issues include a dearth of qualified teachers, insufficient educational resources, and a lack of personnel. T1 mentioned, "My students are mostly bothered about how to pass the exam and they hardly care about improving their English. Even the most advanced students often resort to deceptive practices in order to pass their English language exams rather than studying the basics of the language. "Similarly, T2 mentioned, "My school has strict rules and regulations. It is hard to follow the rules that are imposed upon us. This way of defining teachers'

roles and responsibilities is a further obstacle for us." This statement indicates that the school needs help implementing EMI owing to a lack of trained teachers, instructional materials, training, resources, the role and duty of teachers, and the carelessness of students. T4 reported, "The obstacles while adopting EMI are lack of competent teachers, professional development including teacher-training workshops, and lack of human resource. Additionally, there is a problem with communication. I cannot communicate well with my students because I am so conscious that they can catch my speaking struggle. I sometimes wish to speak native language to build smooth rapport with students with better communication". This response indicates that there are difficulties in implementing EMI due to a lack of proficient English speaker teachers, meaning a shortage of competent teachers, a lack of suitable pre-service preparation and in-service training for teachers, and a huge communication gap. T3 mentioned, "Students frequently tended to resort to exam-passing strategies at the expense of learning the basics of the English language. The problems that are caused by teachers. Lack of teaching resources, lack of competent teachers in subject areas, lack of training, communication issues between teachers and students, and the complicated and tricky grammar of the language itself are all obstacles to the successful implementation of EMI". This comment exemplifies the issue associated with the shift in focus from the job of the teacher to that of the exam. Challenges to implementing EMI include a dearth of pedagogical materials, an absence of qualified instructors, difficulties in student-teacher interaction, and the linguistically complex and syntactically challenging nature of the target language. Participants' reflections on the difficulties they've encountered while attempting to implement EMI confirmed that a number of obstacles lie in their way. Lack of pedagogically competent teacher (Rashid *et al.,* 2016), lack of language proficiency (Azam *et al.,* 2020), lack of training as well as teaching materials, lack of informed pedagogy (Umrani & Bughio, 2017), communication issues between student and teacher (Awan & Zia, 2015), lack of teaching resources, teachers' role and responsibility (Dearden, 2014).

4.3 Thematic Analysis

Braun and Clark's, (2006) six steps of Thematic Analysis (TA) are listed below:

4.3.1 Familiarizing with the Dataset

Making notes on early analytical observations and insights, both for each data item (such as an interview transcript) and for the dataset as a whole, is required at this phase, which requires reading and rereading the data to get immersed and intimately familiar with its content.

4.3.2 Coding

This process entails creating brief labels (codes!) that capture and evoke essential data qualities pertinent to answering the research question. It requires two or more rounds of coding the full dataset and then collating all the codes and relevant data extracts for further analysis.

4.3.3 Generating Early Themes

In this phase, codes and data were examined to find significant broader patterns of significance (potential themes). It then requires collecting data pertinent to each possible theme so you may analyze it and evaluate its viability.

4.3.4 Developing and Reviewing Themes:

This phase entails comparing the candidate themes against the coded data and the complete dataset to ensure they tell a credible tale of the data and answer the research question. This phase develops topics that may be split, amalgamated, or abandoned. Themes in our TA approach are patterns of shared meaning based on a primary premise.

4.3.5 Refining, Identifying, and Naming Themes

This phase requires careful investigation of each theme, deciding its scope and focus, and determining its "narrative." It also includes naming each theme.

4.3.6 Concluding

1	2	3	4	5	6
Familiarizing	Coding	Generating early themes	Developing and reviewing themes	Refining identifying and naming themes	Concluding main themes

Figure 2: Six Stages of Thematic Analysis (Source: Braun and Clarke, 2006)

The final process entails integrating the analytic narrative and data extracts and contextualizing the analysis.

4.4 Reducing the Obstacles to More Efficient EMI Implementation

4.4.1 Themes Developed from RQ1 (Gap in Perception and Practice).

In relation to the first question of the study regarding teachers' attitudes towards EMI, two teachers displayed a positive perspective on the matter. They recognized the necessity of EMI in today's world as it enhances students' abilities and facilitates their integration into the globalized era. Both participants expressed their positive views, emphasizing that English as a medium of instruction is crucial in their context. These perceptions align with the findings of Mahara (2023) in a study involving English language teachers. Similarly, in Khatri (2019) these perceptions of English language teachers imply that English language teachers EMI the challenges of teaching and learning in the present day world. However, participants also acknowledged the significance of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) but held a negative viewpoint, specifically regarding its implementation at the secondary level. While certain students and parents favor EMI due to its perceived ability to lead to well-paid jobs, I believe it is not suitable for children studying at the secondary level as it hinders their ability to express their ideas. Furthermore, it acts as a barrier for language minorities, preventing their access to higher education. The participants in the study accepted the demand for EMI in today's world but rejected its appropriateness for secondary education. They argued that EMI results in the loss of minority languages and makes learners uncomfortable when expressing themselves in English. Similarly, to the findings of Bidari (2021), the participants in this study also expressed concerns about the suitability of EMI at the secondary level. They emphasized the challenges students face in expressing their ideas and the potential negative impact on language minority students. This similarity in findings indicates a

consistency in how participants in both studies perceive EMI at the secondary level (Bidari, 2021; Saud, 2019).

4.5 Themes developed from RQ2

4.5.1 Lack of educational materials

Implementing English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in public schools poses various challenges for teachers. When asked about the major challenges their school faces in successfully running EMI, participants highlighted several issues. The primary challenge identified was the lack of authentic teaching resources. Additionally, they mentioned the absence of competent teachers, inadequate teacher training, insufficient instructional materials, and limited human resources. Another concern raised was that students with complex backgrounds often overlook the fundamentals of the English language and instead rely on exam-focused strategies. The role and responsibility of teachers were also recognized as a challenge. These responses indicate that the school encounters difficulties in implementing EMI due to the absence of qualified teachers, inadequate instructional materials, insufficient training and resources, as well as challenges related to the responsibilities of teachers and students' attitudes towards learning. These findings align with the research conducted by Mahara (2023) and Saul (2021), further emphasizing the consistency in identifying these challenges within the field of EMI implementation (Mahara, 2023; Saud, 2021).

4.5.2 Lack of Competent Teachers

The challenges confronted in enforcing English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) are significant barriers to achieving academic success. These obstacles include a shortage of competent teachers, inadequate training, and limited human resources, making the journey even more challenging. In addition, communication barriers between teachers and students further complicate the process. Furthermore, students often prioritize exam strategies over mastering the language, neglecting the fundamental aspects of English. The complexities of grammar also present an additional hurdle to overcome. These challenges persist due to various factors, such as the need for qualified teachers, insufficient proficiency, inadequate training, teaching materials, appropriate methodologies, and effective communication between students and teachers. Additionally, the scarcity of resources, the roles and responsibilities of teachers, and students' limited awareness contribute to this uphill battle. Bidari (2021) also highlighted these challenges in her research. Despite the daunting nature of these challenges, it is important to recognize that academic success in the context of EMI implementation is attainable with dedication and appropriate measures.

4.6 Remedy for EMI

Embarking on the implementation of EMI is an ambitious undertaking, but it is not without its fair share of challenges. The road to success is often hindered by a shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate training, and limited resources. This uphill battle is further complicated by communication barriers between teachers and students. In addition, students frequently prioritize exam strategies over language mastery, neglecting the essential building blocks of English. The perplexing nature of grammar adds yet another obstacle to overcome. These challenges persist due to a combination of factors, including the absence of

competent educators, insufficient proficiency, inadequate training and teaching materials, and ineffective communication between students and teachers. The scarcity of resources, the demanding roles and responsibilities of teachers, and the students' limited awareness also contribute to the difficulty. However, despite the daunting nature of these obstacles, with determination and perseverance, successful implementation of EMI is within reach. In other words, it is essential to properly organize induction programs, training sessions, workshops, and other professional development opportunities for both new and experienced teachers. The emphasis is on teachers assuming responsibility and employing innovative instructional methods to enhance learning outcomes. Research suggests that students should receive English medium instruction from the foundational level onwards, delivered by trained professionals. Additionally, there should be easy access to resources and instructional materials for both learners and instructors, indicative of a robust infrastructure.

5. Limitation of the Study

While acknowledging the insights provided during this study, it is crucial to recognize and confront its limitations to ensure more robust future research. The limited sample size, comprising only four EMI-adopted school English teachers, cautions against making sweeping generalizations based on the findings. Furthermore, the absence of student perspectives hampers a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

4.7 Recommendation and Educational Implication

Moving forward, it is recommended that future researchers consider these limitations and try to overcome them. Public schools should receive increased resources and opportunities for in-service training to cultivate an environment that fosters successful EMI implementation. Access to up-to-date technologies and instructional materials is paramount for the effectiveness of EMI programs. Additionally, teachers should be provided with comprehensive professional development programs that encompass pedagogy-focused workshops and seminars, enabling them to further enhance their instructional abilities. The findings of this research can serve as a foundation for larger-scale studies and can offer valuable insights for policymakers and language planners seeking to strengthen EMI programs. Given the intricacies of the subject matter, it is advisable to employ quantitative or mixed-methods research designs to conduct a more comprehensive exploration of EMI-related concerns. Moreover, future studies should prioritize the integration of student perspectives to attain a more holistic understanding of the implementation and impact of EMI within the classroom setting. By adhering to these recommendations and considering the limitations at hand, future research on EMI has the potential to contribute to the advancement of effective language instruction practices.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study conducted in Pakistan highlights significant challenges in effectively implementing English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in public schools. These challenges include a need for more proficient teachers, limited training

opportunities, inadequate resources, deficient infrastructure, complex language grammar, low student motivation, and uneducated parents. To address these challenges, recommendations include creating a supportive environment, providing enhanced resources and technology, prioritizing teacher training and professional development, formulating appropriate policies, and offering implementation support. By implementing these recommendations, public schools in Pakistan can overcome barriers and achieve successful EMI implementation, leading to improved language instruction practices and better student educational outcomes. The concerned authority should provide continuous professional development opportunity including, instructional training, workshops and seminars to the teachers.

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