



RESEARCH PAPER

Exploring the Role of Reinforcement as a Determinant of Quality Education at the University Level

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ABSTRACT

The study's main goal was to explore the role of reinforcement by parents as a determinant of student's academic quality at the university level. A survey design was used to complete this qualitative study. For this purpose, an interview protocol was designed. A Semi-structured Interview consists of seven items for parents. All the parents (living in 10500 houses in Zakariya town Multan) were the population of the study. A purposive sampling technique was employed to get the responses from respondents. Fifteen educated parents were selected. Researchers personally recorded the responses from respondents. The interview responses revealed that most parents congratulate kids vocally on their accomplishments with comments or praise and an appreciation certificate, respectively. Based on the findings, the study came to the conclusion that parental encouragement is beneficial for raising academic quality at the university level. Further, the study recommends that reinforcement be given to children by their parents frequently and periodically.

KEYWORDS Academic Quality, Reinforcement, University

Introduction

Education quality is an entity made up of different parts. As a result, opinions on how to effectively oversee quality in higher education remain widely divided. Although we all have an innate understanding of what quality is, it can be difficult to articulate. A sleeper concept, according to Harvey and Green (1993), is a quality similar to independence, justice, wealth, or fairness. They list five interrelated concepts of quality: outstanding, perfect (or consistent), appropriate for the aim, bang for the buck, and transformative. He added that governments and agencies value quality. Concerns over the quality of higher education have long existed among employers, who act as partners in training and research as well as graduate recruiters.

Student quality is essential to providing the nation with high-quality education. Although Pakistan has undertaken a number of educational programs aimed at enhancing the standard of instruction, there is a discrepancy between the actual and anticipated outcomes. Numerous internal and external elements impact the school in direct and indirect ways, affecting the level of students. Around the world, universities are recognized as hubs for training and education related to research. One definition of a university is a center for higher learning. Education facilitates the transfer and acquisition of knowledge and skills. Aristotle believed that education was a way to help people reach their objectives, utilize all of their skills to the fullest extent possible, and fully engage in society (Kariem, 2010). University students should have gained the knowledge and skills required to meet the needs of the workforce by the time their

studies are through. It is anticipated of a graduate that he will learn during his education in order to contribute to the advancement of his society. By the time his program ends, it is anticipated that he will have obtained the necessary training to be given a level certification (Yusuf et al., 2010).

Four different kinds of reinforcement exist. When a teacher wants a student's behavior to be enduring and integrated into their job, they will use positive reinforcement. Negative reinforcement happens when a teacher tries to stop unpleasant stimuli or events from happening. During the extinction process, unwanted behavior – whether deliberate or unintentional – is ignored. A conduct that is deserving of punishment becomes weaker as it is reinforced, strengthening the behavior's moral character. In the context of globalization, there is an increasing need for higher education, which might be met by high-quality higher education. Raising the caliber of higher education is crucial. Its primary objectives are to teach, train, conduct research, and perform community service (Dilshad & Latif, 2011; Otero & Haut, 2016).

Education, especially via self-cultivation, but also via emulating conduct models for others. He emphasized the importance of education in promoting social advancement and disseminating the values of responsible citizenship. Asian mothers who worked had always assumed that education would shield their kids from the poverty that had befallen them. In Japan, mothers regarded educating their children as their primary responsibility. A Chinese woman is said to have traveled significant distances to attend nighttime sessions for years on behalf of her disabled son. She then tutored the child using the notes she had taken in class. Korean moms would sell their cows to pay for their kids' schooling. These illustrations show how important education is in Asia (Kazmi & Quran, 2005).

The purpose of this study was to determine how university students' academic performance is impacted by reinforcement. These incentives are classified as social reinforcers. These versions refer to the help as verbal positive reinforcement because it is given verbally. Even if they aren't material presents, those spoken words give students the stimulus they need to learn (Kelly & Pohl, 2018). This makes them act as positive reinforcement (Kerr & Kerr, 2001).

Goldman et al. (2019) examined if the students met the behavior criterion and the teacher gave them praise. If not, the teacher reiterated the goal and provided the student with thorough feedback. The instructor wrote a quick note to the parent and made sure it was kept in the designated spot so the parent could find it at home. In order for the parent to find the message at home, the instructor quickly drafted a note to them and made sure it was stored in the proper location (Otero & Haut, 2016). The parent would naturally remind the student of the behavioral expectation and the chance to get the reward the next day if the student did not meet the need for reinforcement. Within an hour, participating parents are required to reread the note and commend their child if the behavior target was achieved. Parents need to monitor their child's interest in the selected reinforcer and switch it out if needed.

Researchers such as Bernier assert that teachers must receive training on the use of positive reinforcement in the educational setting. Bernier compares and contrasts students' social drive based on whether they receive positive reinforcement or not. When students experienced positive social reinforcement, they were 68% more likely to complete tasks or adhere to instructions (Bernier et al., 2012). Teachers, parents, and faculty members may be able to recognize the significance of this essential teaching strategy based solely on the findings of this study. No other classroom profile offers the

learner as many advantages. According to Bernier's research, when a teacher employs positive reinforcement tactics in the classroom, students pay attention 93% of the time (Bernier et al., 2012). Students will continue to contribute positively to their learning environment if they are able to accept criticism from their instructors and fellow students (Dad et al., 2010; Fromme et al., 1983; Winter, 2011; Zhang et al., 2018). Different people may want different quality outputs and evaluation methods because they have varied definitions of what quality is. Harvey and Green (1993) define quality as a "relative term." About the stakeholders in higher education:

The context and the person employing the term determine its quality. It can mean many things to different individuals, and even the same person may embrace multiple interpretations at different points in time. Hence, the question "Whose quality?" arises. (Harvey & Green, 1993).

For example, dedicated scholars view one of the qualities of higher education to be its capacity to generate a steady stream of intelligent, highly motivated students who will carry on the learning process and transfer. A high-quality system, according to the government, is one that generates the necessary number of qualified scientists, engineers, architects, doctors, and other professions. An industrialist would perceive a credible educational setting as producing graduates with receptive minds capable of picking up new skills fast and adjusting to shifting expectations and conventions (Amjad et al., 2020, 2021, 2022, a, b). Blegur et al. (2018) contend that learners must first be inherently encouraged to recognize their own academic potential in order to modify academic activities throughout learning.

In terms of quality, Pakistan's higher education system is not the best in the world. Many factors, such as facilities, faculty, curriculum, efficient reinforcement, opportunities for research, and monitoring strategies, influence the quality of higher

Literature Review

Every citizen has the fundamental right to education, regardless of where they live, and all industrialized nations prioritize this right. Parents and children who take advantage of Pakistani educational opportunities to further their education, however, have limited options or recommendations at their disposal. More formal education is a powerful and essential weapon that can help establish a modern, educated, civilized, and cultural society. It disseminates profound knowledge on a range of life's aspects. by offering a more comprehensive viewpoint on the world. Higher education is turning become a need rather than a luxury. In the context of globalization, there is an increasing need for higher education, which might be met by high-quality higher education. Raising the caliber of higher education is crucial. Its primary objectives are to teach, train, conduct research, and perform community service (Dilshad & Latif, 2011).

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Universities are viewed as essential to progress and development since, as we are all aware, we have a history of colonization. It was anticipated that universities would play a major role in resource management, the fight against poverty, and quickening the nation's growth in these areas. Universities were also meant to support national sovereignty preservation, industry, and workforce development in addition to enhancing regional knowledge. Regretfully, in recent years, higher education has spread quickly in places like Pakistan. This was done in recognition that continued human growth required the population to have access to advanced education that would result in extraordinary living levels. Since gaining independence in 1947, the Pakistani government has taken an active role in regulating higher education (Avalos, 2011).

Praise is a powerful tool for motivating kids and ensuring the greatest possible outcomes for the classroom. Students may properly manage their time, create objectives, track their progress, and assess themselves with the help of their instructors. Teaching students how to uphold appropriate behaviors and protocols can help them achieve their ultimate educational goals. As ridiculous as it may sound, incentive is an essential part of learning for all animals. The notion states that teachers won't have to constantly reward students once they understand that it's not the reward that drives them to work hard. People often view grades as the main indicator of success; nevertheless, even in cases where a student is highly motivated to succeed academically, the overall climate of the classroom can predict a student's performance (Otero & Haut, 2016).

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Research revealed that when instructors congratulated students for their performance in the classroom, the students indicated a desire to "learn for their teacher." Positive reinforcement in the classroom, such as complimenting a student who is performing well in their studies, has a greater effect on compliance than punishment. A student's accomplishment becomes their goal when they receive praise (Bernier et al., 2012).

Numerous research focusing on positive reinforcement cite renowned behavioral psychologist Skinner. When desired behavior is rewarded, the unwanted behavior eventually stops occurring. Again, as each student responds differently to reinforcement for conduct, it is crucial to get to know your child. Positive rewards increase the chance

of a response by strengthening the situation rather than eliminating it, per Skinner's rat studies (Dad et al., 2010).

Students can be observed complimenting one another's work in Kennedy's "matching law" and Winter's social network course. Students are more likely to attend and participate in class when they feel comfortable voicing their opinions (Winter, 2011). In discussion forums, students can constructively criticize one another, providing a way for them to reciprocate one other's hard work. When offered a forum for discussion, students enthusiastically showed their appreciation for one another's efforts and assistance.

The four essential components are the environment, reward, action, and reinforcement learning agent (Qureshi et al., 2023). Reinforcement learning seeks to maximize the agent's reward by executing a sequence of actions in response to a changing environment. It can help with sequential decision-making in ambiguous situations. According to Zhang et al. (2018), the traditional reinforcement learning algorithm functions with limited environmental knowledge and feedback regarding the efficacy of judgments.

People may want different quality outputs and evaluation methods because they have varied definitions of quality. Harvey and Green (1993) define quality as a "relative term." About the stakeholders in higher education: The context and the person employing the term determine its quality. It can mean many things to different individuals, and even the same person may embrace multiple interpretations at different points in time. Hence, the question "Whose quality?" arises. (Harvey & Green, 1993).

For example, dedicated scholars view one of the qualities of higher education to be its capacity to generate a steady stream of intelligent, highly motivated students who will carry on the learning process and transfer (Tabassum et al., 2023, 2024). According to the government, a high-quality system generates the necessary number of qualified scientists, engineers, architects, doctors, and other professionals. An industrialist would perceive a credible educational setting as producing graduates with receptive minds capable of picking up new skills fast and adjusting to shifting expectations and conventions (Amjad et al., 2023, a, b, c).

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In terms of quality, Pakistan's higher education system is not the best in the world. Many factors, such as facilities, faculty, curriculum, efficient reinforcement, opportunities for research, and monitoring strategies, influence the quality of higher education.

Material and Methods

For this purpose, an interview protocol was designed. A semi-structured Interview consists seven items for parents. All the parents (living in 10500 houses of Zakariya town district Multan in the year, 2023 were the population of the study. Purposive sampling technique was employed to get the responses from respondents. 15(fifteen) educated parents were selected whose children were university students. Parents were asked how they encourage their children and how it effects on their

academic performance. It consists of 7 items. Turboscribe and Thematic analysis techniques were applied to the examination of qualitative data.

Results and Discussion

Thematic analysis and Chatgpt was used for the analysis of data. Once the reader was comfortable with the transcribed data, they were able to identify the initial codes. Following the coding process, the researcher grouped together any codes that shared comparable characteristics in order to categorize the themes that had surfaced. After observing, each theme was determined and presented in a way that made sense given the questions asked during the interview. Subsequently, each issue was reported using interview excerpts along with computed frequencies and percentages.

Demographic information of the participants

The data was collected by the parents of Zakariya town residents who child are university students. Male and female respondents with educational backgrounds ranging from matriculation to M.Phil. were interviewed and provided with data.(details regarding respondents name, gender, age, qualification, and the number of children attending university as well as basic details about the child's course, semester, department, and university, can be provided if needed).

Table 1
Thematic analysis

Themes that have been identified	Frequency of codes	Percentage of themes
Congratulate kids vocally on their accomplishments with comments or praise	17	18.5%
Positive reinforcement helps the youngster do well, become more active, or gain confidence.	16	17.4%
Quality is enhanced by reinforcement	15	16.4%
Presents, honors, awards, and incentives	13	14.1%
Avoid comparing your child to other	6	6.5%
Motivate them to take action by providing incentives.	5	5.4%
Recognize the psychology of children	5	5.4%
Provide educational resources or infrastructure	4	4.3%
Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of taking a specific action	4	4.3%
Refrain from using negative reinforcement or punishment.	3	3.3%
Illustrations of outstanding individuals	2	2.2%
An appreciation certificate	2	2.2%
Total	92	100%

Table 1 shows the final themes. A total of 92 codes related to the information from the interviews were found. To decrease the volume of data and enhance the way the findings are presented, similar codes were aggregated. Subsequently, the amalgamated codes were showcased as twelve comprehensive themes. To present the whole analysis, the researcher calculated the percentages of each theme. Parental reinforcement was shown to have the highest percentage (18.5%) and lowest percentage (2.2%), respectively.

Percentage vs. Themes

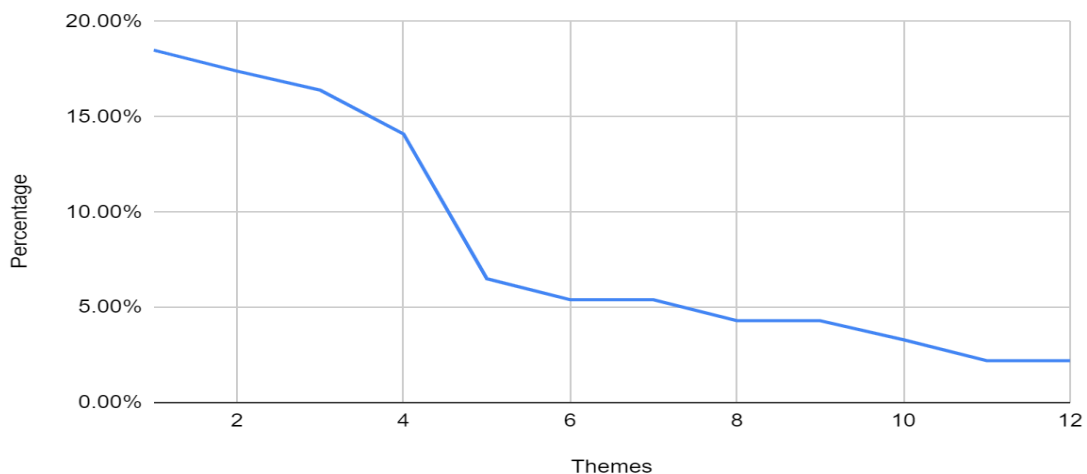


Figure 1: Themes and their percentages.

Congratulate kids vocally on their accomplishments with comments or praise.

In an effort to recognize kids for their accomplishments, (18.5%) of instances were found. Parents expressed gratitude in a variety of ways. Good words, verbal praise, and nice compliments are the main categories that parents emphasize. Children tend to work hard and achieve better when they receive praise.

According to one participant:

"My daughter enrolled in a BS program, performed well in her first semester, and was encouraged by me and her teachers to work hard and earn a gold medal."

Positive reinforcement helps the youngster do well, become more active, or gain confidence

Following examination, instances of providing positive reinforcement were found to be (17.4%). Parents have indicated that when students receive positive reinforcement, they perform well, become more engaged, and develop greater confidence.

One participant reported:

"It takes push to accomplish something."

Quality is enhanced by reinforcement

The study found (16.4%) of instances related to quality in higher education. All of the parents agree that providing reinforcement does contribute to raising the caliber of kids, programs, and institutions. The quote that follows is offered for confirmation:

A participant commented:

Indeed, encouraging feedback aids in overcoming a person's, a course's, or an institution's shortcomings. Participating in an activity or receiving positive reinforcement influences the quality.

Another participant narrated:

"If the child performs well because they are receiving reinforcement, the institution's quality will naturally rise."

Presents, honors, awards, and incentives

For giving children gifts, (14.1%) incidences were detected by the study. Parents mentioned multiple forms of gifts including gifting I-phones, shopping's, tours, treats, prizes, etc.

A participant categorizes the various kinds of presents and incentives:

He said that parents in the high and middle classes reward their children with a variety of presents. The middle-class parents use less expensive gifts or mostly verbally praise their child, whereas the upper class uses expensive gifts like iPhones, planned trips & tours, money, bikes (especially for boys), and gold jewelry (especially for ladies).

Avoid comparing your child to others

Following examination, instances (6.5%) were discovered for Avoid comparing your child to other people. Parents said their children are negatively impacted by it. As a result, the child loses motivation, doubts their own talents, and struggles with self-belief.

One participant reported:

"Avoid comparing your youngster to other kids. It typically has detrimental impacts on learning, yet occasionally it may have positive effects as well."

Motivate them to take action by providing incentives

The researcher found (5.4%) instances that serve as incentive. Parents stated Motivate the child to take action by providing incentives. Parents inspire their kids by drawing on their own experiences.

One participant reported:

"I promised my child that I would give them what they want if they worked hard and received good grades, so they did."

Recognize the psychology of children

The researcher identified (5.4%) occurrences in light of understanding child psychology. According to parent reports, it's important to spend time with your children, refrain from using a phone in their presence, pay close attention to their difficulties, and assist them in solving them.

One participant reported:

"Assist child in their studies, pay close attention to their issues, and offer solutions."

Provide educational resources or infrastructure

Following examination, instances of (4.3%) providing them with facilities and educational materials were found. It lessens the difficulties that the student encounters.

One participant reported:

"Offer all kinds of facilities, such as laptops for study purposes, lodging accommodations (if necessary), and funds for various expenses."

Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of taking a certain action

Following investigation, instances when people were informed of the benefits and drawbacks of a decision based on their prior experiences were found in (4.3%) of cases.

One participant reported:

"Children ought to be educated about education and all aspects of life, including whether pursuing a particular path will benefit them or be detrimental to them."

Refrain from using negative reinforcement or punishment.

To prevent penalties or unfavorable reinforcement, the investigator found that (3.3%) of the incidents. The self-esteem of students declines as a result of negative reinforcement.

One participant reported:

"My daughter yells loudly when I slap her because she got bad grades."

Said by another participant:

"If I appreciate my child's test results, she does good job the next time, but if I ignore her, she does not struggle for participation,"

Illustrations of outstanding individuals

The researcher found that (2.2%) of the instances were examples of exceptional people. Parents have indicated that informing their children about successful people can assist to motivate them. Because they exert a lot of effort or refine themselves in this way, it is the greatest sort of reinforcement.

One participant reported:

"If you wish to raise children in the future, you should first model this for them and refrain from acting in opposition to your parents. Encourage them by sharing tales of your own triumphs and those of Islamic heroes, patriots, and remarkable individuals.

An appreciation certificate

The researcher found that 2.2% of the occurrences for Certificate of Appreciation. According to some parents, it works well if the school gives its pupils certificates of gratitude. It would facilitate better learning for students, or they may even obtain these credentials by taking part in extracurricular activities.

The majority of the participants agreed with the code Presents, honors, awards, and incentives (Frequency of Code:13, Percentage: 14.1%) few participants agreed with the code "An appreciation certificate". (Frequency of code: 2, Percentage: 2.2%)

The majority of the participants agreed with the code "Quality is enhanced by reinforcement" (Frequency of code: 15, Percentage: 16.4%) few participants agreed with the code "Illustrations of outstanding individuals" (Frequency of code: 2, Percentage: 2.2%)

The majority of the participants agreed with the code "Congratulate kids vocally on their accomplishments with comments or praise" (Frequency of code: 17, Percentage: 18.5%) fewer participants agreed with the code "Refrain from using negative reinforcement or punishment" (Frequency of code: 3, Percentage: 3.3%)

The cumulative **Analysis of parents Interview** are presented below:

The interview consisted of seven questions. The data helped to produce twelve themes. Out of these twelve themes, 92 codes were combined. The whole tool's computed value (interview) ranged from 18.5% to 2.2%.

Discussion

Positive reinforcement occurs when an action is followed by the provision of a reward (like praise or stamps). As a result, the aforementioned conduct occurs more frequently (Schloss & Smith, 1998). Skinner is well known for encouraging constructive behavior in his study. According to Skinner's research, kids are open to participating in activities that lift their spirits. Students want to feel at ease with their assignments and behavior in the classroom. While Punishment seeks to stop behavior, positive reinforcement tries to develop an individual's predisposition to behave in a particular way (Abreu & Santos, 2008).

There are five reasons, in Kohn's words (2001), not to provide praise, or to say "Good job." Below is a list of these:

- It is an example of manipulating children for the convenience of adults.
- There are "praise junkies" created.
- It deprives the youngster of happiness by telling them how to feel.
- It lowers interest rather than increases it.
- It makes success worse.

Positive reinforcement, which occurs when teachers commend pupils for their good behavior, encourages kids to repeat similar actions more frequently. Prior studies have elucidated the significance of implementing positive reinforcement as a means of motivating students to exhibit positive behavior while they are learning (Hardy & McLeod, 2020). There are many various ways to give and receive positive reinforcement, including giving gifts, winning prizes, and getting written and spoken praise. For this reason, when pupils are learning at home, teachers must utilize positive reinforcement (Mantashiah et al., 2021).

Although this study disagrees with the Kohn study, it accepts the findings of the Abreu and Santos (2008) investigation. The study's qualitative component yielded results

that supported the use of reinforcement. The majority of parents (18.5%) consented to give the youngster verbal praise. Positive reinforcement helps youngsters do well, get active, and gain confidence, according to (17.4%) of parents. Parents were in favor of gifts, awards, rewards, and incentives in (14.1%) of cases.

Conclusion

In light of the study's conclusions, it was determined that the majority of parents believed that parental support improved academic quality.

Every parent concurred that parental and teacher support contributes to raising university-level academic standards. The majority of parents stated that encouraging words or vocal praise can inspire a child to take action. The least successful outcome demonstrated that an institution's certificate of gratitude can also improve students' academic performance.

Recommendations

By keeping in view of above mentioned results, the study recommends some practical recommendations for teachers and parents as well.

As finding revealed that parents use to give reinforcement to their children but its not on periodic or on frequent basis, it is recommended that parents should take into account the importance and effects of reinforcement on their children and this should be done on daily or weekly basis.

In the same context, it is also recommended for the teachers of higher education, they may use reinforcement as a powerful tool for motivation of their students.

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