

# Investigating the Assessment by Teachers about the Causes of Inattentive Classroom Behaviour of Secondary School Students

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim of the Study:** Inattentiveness is a condition in which students are not able to pay attention to the instructions made by teacher. It is a serious behavioral problem and causes teachers become frustrated when they do not get required response from the students. The current study aims at exploring the underlying causes of students' inattentive behavior in secondary classroom as assessed by teachers.

**Methodology:** It is a descriptive study and quantitative method has been employed in it. The total population is 617 secondary school teachers that are employed in two tehsils (Tehsil Kallar Syedan and Tehsil Gujarkhan) of Dist. Rawalpindi. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Table of Sampling was utilized to calculate the sample of 237 teachers. Simple random sampling technique was utilized to derive the sample. A questionnaire was constructed as research tool.

**Findings & Conclusion:** The results of the study concluded that social status was not serious factor for inattentive behaviour; but, economic status of students, health problems (like depression, day dreaming, sleeplessness etc.), low academic and language development, poor environment in classroom (like noisy classrooms and overcrowded classrooms) and poor pedagogical techniques are serious factors that cause students' inattentive behaviour in classroom.

**Keywords:** Inattentiveness, ADHD, Behaviour, Causes.

## Introduction

Inattentive behavior causes serious problems for teachers in classroom. Inattentiveness is the sub-category of a broad term Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). According to American Psychiatric Association (1999), inattentiveness includes problem in paying attention and staying focused. In ADHD, it combines with hyperactivity. Hariparsad (2010) and Birchwood (2012) have also presented a separated category without hyperactivity. In current study, inattentiveness denotes to a behavioral problem rather than physical or mental disorder.

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It is not a new term. Sir Alexander Crichton referred as same kind of issue in his book (An Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Mental Derangement) in 1798 (Palmer et al., 2001). Similarly, during 19<sup>th</sup> century, Heinrich Hoffmann (a German physician) made some drawings and included that drawings some stories that were used for the inattentive students to make them attentive (Lange et al., 2010). Scholars like Palmer (2001), Finger (2001), Conners (2000), Barkley (2006) and Rafalovich (2001) consider the Lectures of Sir George Frederic Still (1902) the beginning of the panorama of inattentive behavior of students and Attention Deficit Disorder. "Moral Control" was used by the Still, which in modern times, refers to "attention"; the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century observed a shift of turn from hyperactivity to inattention. DSM-II made detailed review of inattentive behavior of students as addition of hyperactivity. Douglas (1972) gave importance to inattentive behavior as compared to hyperactivity in ADHD.

Inattentive behaviour may be the outcome of diversity of socio-economic factors or meta-cognitive disorder (Reddy et al., 2008). Inattention occurs if a student feels hurdles in paying heed to the instructions made by teacher or if he is inattentive to day-to-day activities of classroom (Engelbrecht et al., 1999). Inattention not only refers to unfocused and sustained attention but also to low self-organisation (Hill, 2014). Inattentiveness may be displayed in social or education environment and its symptoms may include unfocused attention, inability of fulfillment of the assigned activities and not properly obeying instructional guidelines (Youssef et al., 2015). Inattention, being summarised, refers to a situation when student is unable to focus instructions made by teachers and thus lags behind other students in academic scenario.

Usually, inattention is referred to as the behavioural issue associated with childhood but studies show that it is chronic that begins at early age and may sustain in adulthood (Barkley et al., 1998). Hoseini et al. (2014) considers inattentiveness a chronic behavioural problem that may affect adulthood age as well. Similarly Van Cleave et al. (2008) say that inattentiveness is chronic condition starting from childhood. The studies of these researches show that inattentive not only affect childhood but may continue in the later age of children. The understanding of chronic condition of inattentive behaviour creates interest of patients, families and researchers (Tugay et al., 2022).

The prevalence of inattentiveness or ADHD is worldwide studied topic in the field of behavioural sciences. Paster et al., (2008) say that almost 3% to 5% school going children are affected by inattentive condition. The ratio of boys is higher (13%) than the girls (6%) that are vulnerable to being affected by inattentiveness (Bitsko et al., 2022). Lola et al. (2019) says that the prevalence rate of inattentive behaviour is 16.4% in Saudi Arabia, 8.2% in America, 6.8% in Spain, 5.4% in South Africa, 19.7% in Egypt, 6.3% in Kenya, 6% in Congo, 17% in Iran and 7.3% in Ethiopia. Mirza et al. (2017) explains that, in Pakistan, its prevalence rate is 2.49%.

Inattentiveness is highly acknowledged problem in school going students (DSM-V, 2013). Inattentive children may face academic problems than normal children (McDougal et al., 2022). Children with the problem of inattentiveness cannot focus on teacher's instruction properly. They are absorbed in environment rather than academic activities. Their academic performance is severely affected due to their absent-mindedness.

Inattentiveness is caused by numerous factors that have been investigated by the previous researchers. According to Thapar et al. (2011), inherited factors contribute a lot in creating inattentive behaviour; other factors like environmental hurdles can also be the reason of it. Mirza et al. (2017) says, the most identified reasons behind the inattentive behaviour are single parent and delayed growth. Similarly, studies indicate that inattentive behaviour creates challenges for teachers in classroom (Bothma et al., 2000). Ewe (2019) proclaims that teachers face more problems with inattentive children than the normal

children in classroom. Hasan et al. (2014) mentions that inattentive behaviour by students creates problem in classroom like issue in organizing work, problem in responding to teacher's instructions, problem in staying on the assigned task, and forgetfulness. Hariparsad (2010) says that educators are often not ready for inattentive behaviour; thus, they cannot cope with the situation effectively.

In developing countries, like Pakistan, there is no such awareness about inattentive behaviour of student. Teachers often use corporal punishment to beat the behaviour without giving attention to the underlying cause of that behaviour. The researches, conducted in Pakistan on the given topic are limited. In present study, the researcher intended to explore the cause of inattentive behaviour as perceived by secondary school teachers in the context of Pakistani rural areas. The objective of the study is “to investigate, by teachers, the causes of inattentive classroom behaviour of students.”

## **Review of Related Literature**

Inattentiveness is well known term in researchers and educationists in developed and advanced countries. In developing countries, the term is not much acknowledged because of the presence other educational problems. In ADHD (Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder) it is studies with hyperactive behavior of students. The research aimed at exploring inattentiveness without the effect of hyperactivity in students. Inattentiveness refers to inattention or less focus to the instructions of teachers (Youssef et al., 2015). Inattention connotes to a situation of lack of concentration on any activity or object (Ajiboye et al., 2020).

Several studies indicate symptoms of inattentiveness. The booklet issued by National Institute of Mental Health (2008) has enumerated seven symptoms of inattentive behaviours including distractness, forgetfulness, difficulty in focusing things and getting bored from routine work. Denyse Doerries (2001) has presented six symptoms of inattentiveness in “The Consideration Packet” including distraction, diversion, forgetfulness, disorganisation and others. Similarly American Psychiatric Association (APS), in DSM-V (2013), has mentioned nine signs of inattentive behaviour as shown by the students.

Studies indicate that inattentiveness is chronic issue; it means that it starts from childhood and remains consistent in adolescence as well (Hoseini, 2014; Landsberg, 2005). Studies also indicate that the outcomes of inattentive behaviour can lead to less development of children socially, mentally and academically (Hughes, 2009; Hapsari et al., 2020). The students with the problem of inattentive behaviour face hurdles in their routine activities; they face emotional, social and intellectual challenges (Mancil, 2014). Teachers feel stressed because of their low knowledge about inattentive behaviour and its underlying cause (Ellis, 2013).

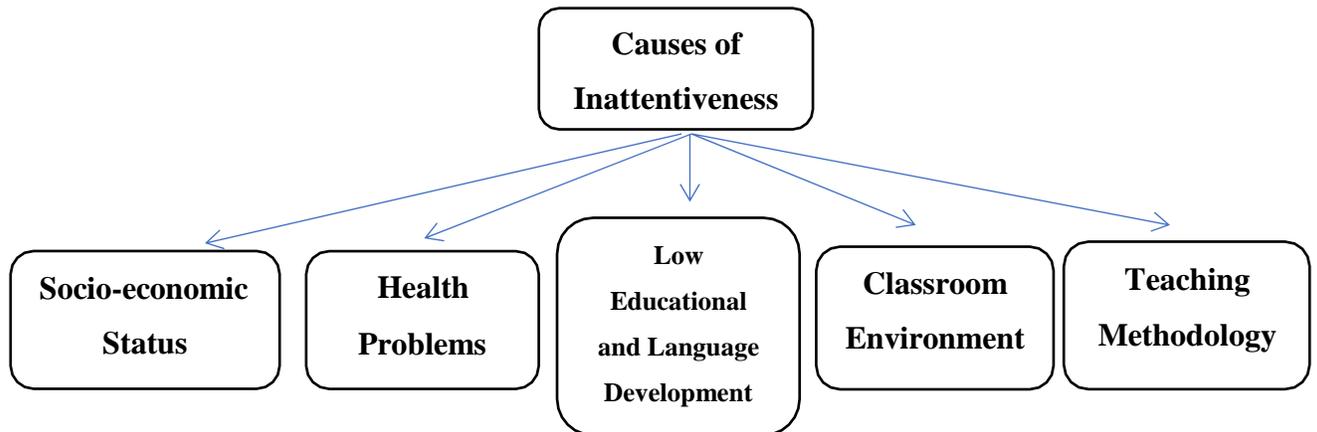
Studies indicate that the factor of inattentiveness is not without reason. Researchers have identified numerous factors related to inattentiveness or ADHD but still there is confusion; that is the exact reason of inattentiveness is not known (Hariparsad, 2010). National Institute of Mental Health (2008) has presented brain injuries, food problems, sugar level, environmental issues and genetically drawbacks as the reasons of this disorder. Another scholar Lewis (2002), in his book “Child and Adolescent Psychiatry” mentions that the factors related to inattentive behavior are numerous and may include genetical, psychological, neurological, educational and developmental factors. Jaramillo et al. (2021) have proclaimed that environmental issues, poor physical and mental development might be the factors behind inattentive behavior.

Inattentive behavior creates challenges for a teacher in class and makes him stressed. Szep et al. (2021) say that inattentive students display problematic behavior and makes teaching difficult for the teacher. According to Kapp (2002), teacher needs comprehensive knowledge about inattentive disorder and ADHD to be skillful in teaching. According to Elis (2013), teachers face stress while having inattentive students during classroom activity. Hapsari (2020) says that teaching students with inattentive behavior in normal class is much difficult for a teacher to maintain academic progress of normal students.

Several studies have been conducted on international on the topic under consideration (like Dittman, 2013; Hariparsad, 2010; Khusheim, 2022; Pettersson et al., 2015; Hapsari et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2010; Lingineni et al., 2012; Szep, 2021; Birchwood et al., 2012). These researches explored symptoms, causes, consequences and suggestions related to inattentive behaviour in classroom. On national level, studies conducted on inattentiveness are limited (e.g. Ghazi et al., 2013; Mirza et al., 2017; Ham et al., 2020; Pasha et al., 2021; Azeem et al., 2021; Mushtaq et al., 2021). The causes of inattentiveness in Pakistani

context have not been given much attention by national researchers. Again the teacher's perspective may be a new dimension for exploring inattentive behaviour of students. The present study is intended to explore causes of inattentive behaviour as mentioned by secondary school teachers in Pakistani rural areas.

### **Variables of the Study:**



### **Research Method**

#### ***Research Design***

In the current study which aims at identifying the causes of inattentiveness as stated by secondary school teacher, the descriptive research design was employed that was based upon quantitative method.

#### ***Population***

The population of the present study was 617 secondary school teachers working in Tehsil Kallar Syedan and Tehsil Gujarkhan of Dist. Rawalpindi. There were 195 secondary school teachers working in Tehsil Kallar Syedan and 422 secondary school teachers working in Tehsil Gujarkhan.

#### ***Sample***

A sample of 237 secondary school teachers was selected from the given population (617 secondary school teachers) by using simple random sampling technique. The number of sample was calculated by using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Table of sampling.

#### ***Research Instrument***

For the collection of data, the research employed a self-structured questionnaire. The researcher reviewed the studies of the field before structuring the questionnaire. The questionnaire was based upon Five Point Likert Scale and had 25 items including five items on each variable.

#### ***Validity and Reliability of the Instrument***

The structured questionnaire was shared with five field experts to researchers to validate it. The suggestions made by these experts helped the researcher to improve the internal consistency of the questionnaire. To check the reliability of the questionnaire, the researcher adopted SPSS analysis to check the value of Cronbach's Alpha. The analysis showed that the value of Cronbach's Alpha was 0.804 that made questionnaire reliable for further step of data collection.

### Data Collection

The researcher personally visited the respondents to collect the desired data. Prior to it, a formal permission letter from CEO (DEA) Rawalpindi was sought to get the data from desired schools. The summary of the collected data is as follows:

Table 1: Summary of Collected Data

|               | Targeted Population | Sample | Questionnaire Distributed | Completely Filled | Partially Filled |
|---------------|---------------------|--------|---------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Kallar Syedan | 195                 | 75     | 75                        | 75                | 0                |
| Gujar Khan    | 422                 | 162    | 162                       | 160               | 2                |
| Total         | 617                 | 237    | 237                       | 235               | 2                |

### Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed through SPSS version 29. SPSS is a strong analysis platform developed by IBM. The data was entered in SPSS sheet and codes were generated. Mean, mode, median, percentage, standard deviation, and frequency were analyzed to get the descriptive and numeric outlook of the collected data.

### Results

Table 2: Socio Economic Status as Cause of Inattentiveness.

| N   | Mean   | Median | Mode | Std. Deviation |
|-----|--------|--------|------|----------------|
| 237 | 3.3865 | 3.4000 | 3.60 | .67810         |

Figure 1: Socio Economic Status

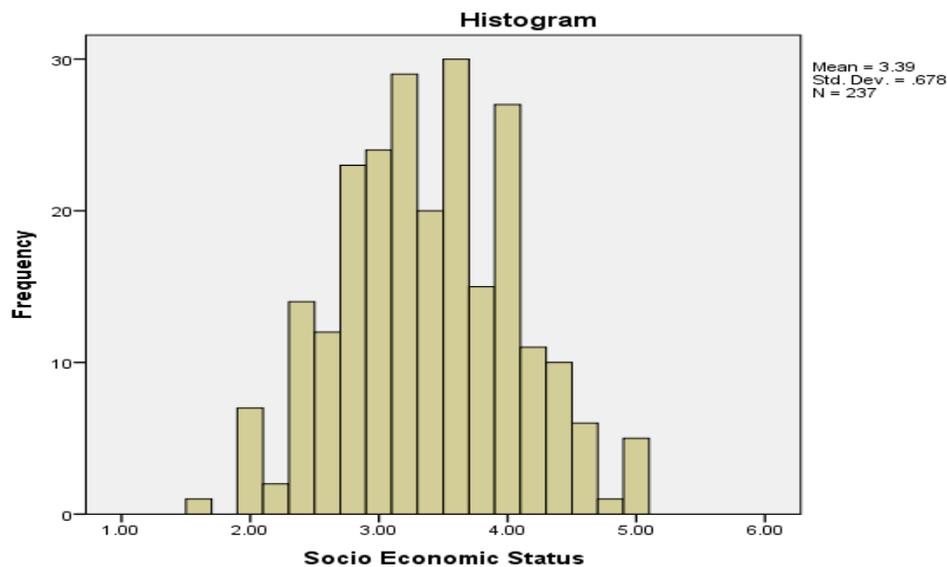


Table 3: *Detailed Analysis of Variable 1.1 (Socio-economic Status).*

| Questions  | N   | Missing | Mean | Median | Mode | Std. Deviation |
|--|-----|---------|------|--------|------|----------------|
| Social differences make students inattentive in classroom.   | 237 | 0       | 3.48 | 4.00   | 4    | .932           |
| Students from backward areas feelsocial inferiority in class and become inattentive.                                     | 237 | 0       | 3.40 | 4.00   | 4    | 1.022          |
| Students of low caste remain inattentive in class because ofinferiority complex.   | 237 | 0       | 2.92 | 3.00   | 2    | 1.013          |
| Economic status of family leads students to neglect teachers' guidelines.  | 237 | 0       | 3.47 | 4.00   | 4    | 1.031          |
| Economically low students try tolessen their parents' burden and resultantly they cannot pay attention to their studies. | 237 | 0       | 3.68 | 4.00   | 4    | .965           |

Table 2 and Table 3 show that analysis of the first variable. The value of the mean is 3.40 that show uncertainty on the behalf of respondents. The detailed analysis shows that items related to social background of the students show the mean value remains low which means that the respondents are either uncertain or not agreed with the view that social background affects students' atteniton. The items related to economic condition of students show agreement of the students that poor economic condition may create inattentiveness in students.

Table 4: *Health Problem as the Cause of Students' Inattentiveness*

| N   | Missing | Mean   | Median | Mode | Std. Deviation |
|-----|---------|--------|--------|------|----------------|
| 237 | 0       | 3.9030 | 4.0000 | 4.00 | .51564         |

Figure 2: *Health Problem*

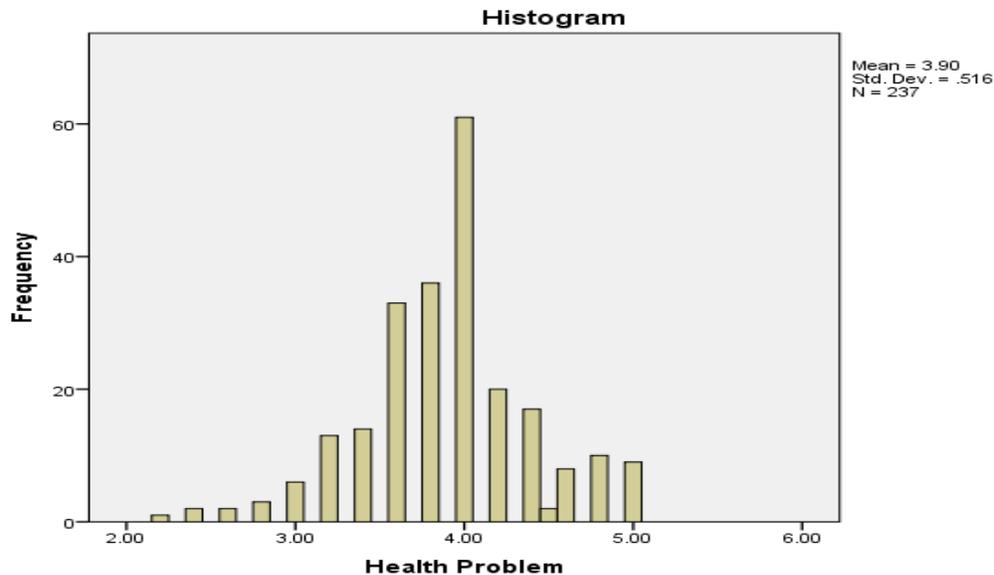


Table 5: Detailed Analysis of Variable 1.2 (Health Problem)

|  | N     |         | Mean | Median | Mode | Std. Deviation |
|--|-------|---------|------|--------|------|----------------|
|  | Valid | Missing |      |        |      |                |
| Bad health affects students' learning and their inclusion in mainstream class. | 236   | 1       | 4.13 | 4.00   | 4    | .723           |
| Inattentiveness is sometimes caused by genetic disorder.                       | 237   | 0       | 3.59 | 4.00   | 4    | .932           |
| Depression, sometimes, is the cause of students' inattentiveness.              | 236   | 1       | 4.03 | 4.00   | 4    | .743           |
| Inattentiveness is, sometimes, caused by sleeplessness.                        | 236   | 1       | 3.96 | 4.00   | 4    | .734           |
| Daydreaming is another cause of inattentiveness.                               | 237   | 0       | 3.79 | 4.00   | 4    | .817           |

Table 4 and Table 5 shows that analysis of the second variable i.e. health problem. The analysis shows that the value of mean for second variable is 3.90. Detailed analysis also shows that each item in variable two is in-between 3.79 and 4.13. It shows that most of the respondents are agreed that the health problem (like depression, genetic disorders, daydreaming and sleeplessness) may cause inattentive behavior in students.

Table 6: Low Educational and Language Development as the Cause of Inattentiveness

| N   | Missing | Mean   | Median | Mode | Std. Deviation |
|-----|---------|--------|--------|------|----------------|
| 237 | 0       | 4.0449 | 4.0000 | 4.00 | .51742         |

Figure 3: Low Educational and Language Development

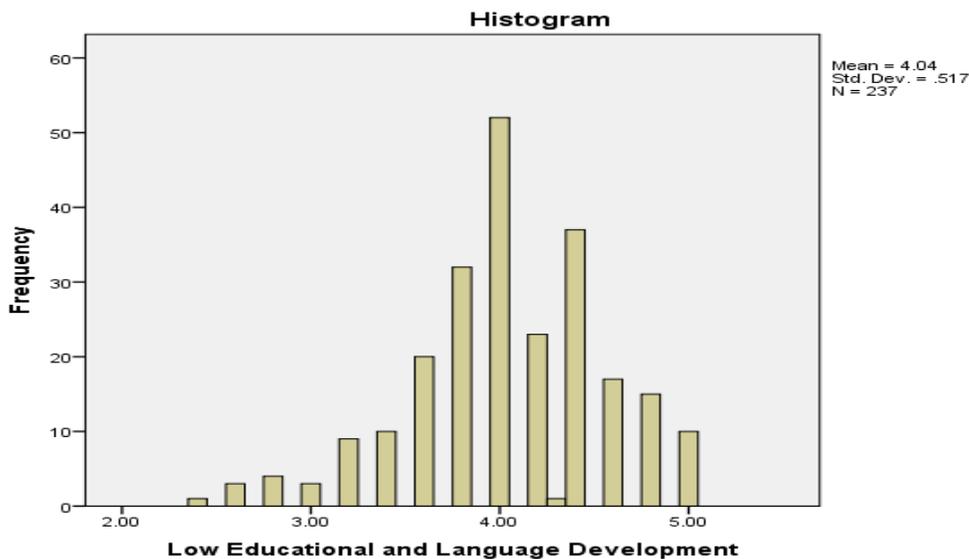


Table 7: Detailed Analysis of Variable 3 (Low Educational and Language Development)

|   | Valid | Missing | Mean | Median | Mode | Std. Deviation |
|---|-------|---------|------|--------|------|----------------|
| Some students lack attention in class because of low education development.               | 237   | 0       | 3.92 | 4.00   | 4    | .746           |
| Students with inattentiveness often have literacy problem.                                | 236   | 1       | 3.98 | 4.00   | 4    | .777           |
| Students with numeracy problem also show inattentiveness in class.                        | 236   | 1       | 3.70 | 4.00   | 4    | .753           |
| Students who are not properly taught in low classes show inattentiveness in high classes. | 237   | 0       | 4.30 | 4.00   | 5    | .823           |
| Inattentiveness is sometimes caused by low development of language skills                 | 237   | 0       | 4.32 | 4.00   | 4    | .682           |

Table 6 and Table 7 display the analysis of collected data related to third variable (low educational and language problem). The analysis reveals that low educational and language development in previous classes may result in inattentiveness of students in higher classes. The analysis shows that the value of mean for third variable is 4.04 while item wise analysis presents the value of mean between 3.70 and 4.32 of each item. This displays the strong agreement of the respondents regarding the third causative factor of inattentive behavior in secondary school.

Table 8: Classroom Environment as the Cause of Students' Inattentiveness

| N   | Missing | Mean   | Median | Mode | Std. Deviation |
|-----|---------|--------|--------|------|----------------|
| 237 | 0       | 3.9236 | 4.0000 | 4.00 | .66124         |

Figure 4: Classroom Environment

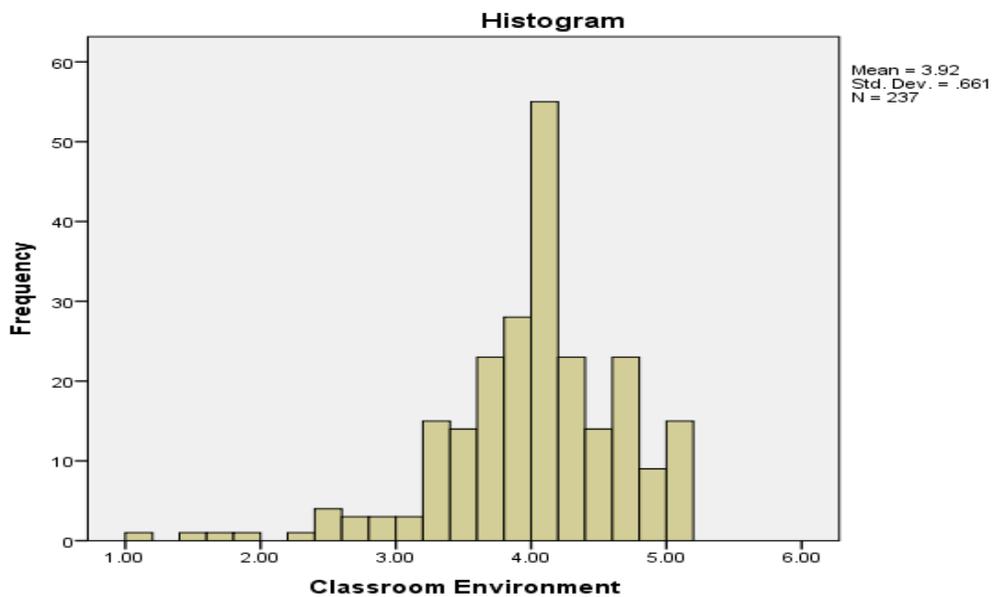


Table 9: Detailed Analysis of Variable 1.4 (Classroom Environment)

|   | N     |         | Mean | Median | Mode | Std. Deviation |
|---|-------|---------|------|--------|------|----------------|
|   | Valid | Missing |      |        |      |                |
| Poor classroom management is the cause of inattentiveness.                          | 236   | 1       | 3.91 | 4.00   | 4    | .858           |
| Seating arrangement and lack of space in classroom is the cause of inattentiveness. | 237   | 0       | 3.74 | 4.00   | 4    | 1.033          |
| Students cannot learn effectively in noisy classroom and show inattentiveness.      | 237   | 0       | 4.10 | 4.00   | 4    | .875           |
| Crowded classroom leads students to neglect teachers' guidelines.                   | 237   | 0       | 4.08 | 4.00   | 4    | .845           |
| Relationship with Peers in classroom sometimes creates inattentiveness.             | 235   | 2       | 3.79 | 4.00   | 4    | .849           |

Table 8 and Table 9 show the analysis of fourth variable that is Classroom Environment. The table shows that the value of mean for the fourth variable is 3.92. It means that the respondents are agreed with the statement that poor classroom environment can affect students' attentiveness in class. Noisy and over-crowded classrooms are not good for students to be focused on their studies.

Table 10: Teaching Methodology as the Cause of Students' Inattentiveness

| N   | Missing | Mean   | Median | Mode | Std. Deviation |
|-----|---------|--------|--------|------|----------------|
| 237 | 0       | 4.0636 | 4.0000 | 4.00 | .55256         |

Figure 5: Teaching Methodology

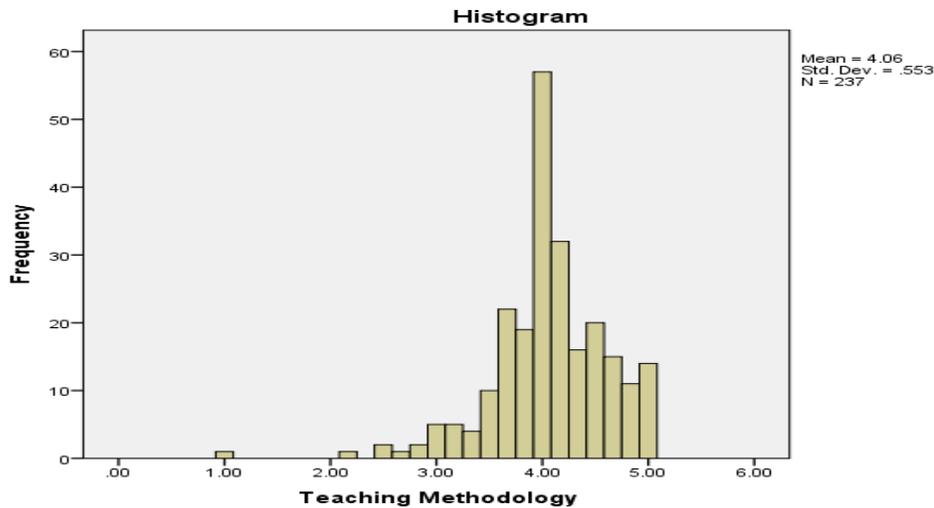


Table 11: Detailed Analysis of Variable 1.5 (Teaching Methodology)

|  | N     |         | Mean | Median | Mode | Std. Deviation |
|--|-------|---------|------|--------|------|----------------|
|  | Valid | Missing |      |        |      |                |
| Teacher's methodology sometimes causes inattentiveness in classroom. | 237   | 0       | 4.00 | 4.00   | 4    | .767           |
| The boring lectures divert students' attention in classroom.         | 237   | 0       | 4.08 | 4.00   | 4    | .803           |

|  |     |   |      |      |   |      |
|--|-----|---|------|------|---|------|
| Teachers who create fun in classroom often have less chance of inattentiveness in classroom.                                       | 237 | 0 | 4.03 | 4.00 | 4 | .943 |
| Traditional and lecture method both make students passive and inattentive to teacher's instruction.                                | 235 | 2 | 3.87 | 4.00 | 4 | .920 |
| Communicative method allows students to participate actively in classroom and resultantly there is less chance of inattentiveness. | 237 | 0 | 4.18 | 4.00 | 4 | .734 |
| Material presentation and its procedure have impact on their attention level.  | 237 | 0 | 4.22 | 4.00 | 4 | .725 |

Table 10 and Table 11 displays that teaching methodology can be another factor that can increase or decrease students' attentiveness in classroom. The poor teaching methodology, boring lectures, passive classrooms and other classroom barriers can have negative impact upon students' attentiveness. The table shows that the value of mean for the fifth variable is 4.06 that shows respondents' strong agreement about the fifth factor.

## Discussion

The study exposes that the economic conditions of students' families make them neglect their studies and remain focused on fulfilling their economic needs. It follows the outcomes of some previous studies (like Boe et al., 2018; Lola et al., 2019). The current study also reveals that social status of students do not have much concern with inattentive behavior of students. These results are not conforming to many previous studies (e.g. Lola et al., 2019; Thapar et al., 2011 and Slobodin et al., 2019). The difference in the result may be due to the reason that the current study was conducted in the rural areas of upper Punjab where social status does not have much importance for the people. The result may be different in rural areas of lower Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan etc. where social status is given more importance.

The study displays that health issues (like sleeplessness, daydreaming, depression etc), deficiency in language skills (like reading, writing, listening, speaking) and low educational development in previous classes and poor teaching techniques and defective teaching style result in diverging students' attention from studies and day-to-day activities. These results conform to many preceding studies like Caldwell (1997), Thapar (2011), Caldwell (1997), Núñez-Jaramillo (2021 and Lewis (2002). The study also reveals that poor classroom environment (like noisy and overcrowded classes, poor sitting arrangement and bad relations with peer) may befuddle students' attention. The result supports the previous research studies (e.g. Brock et al., 2010 and Carbone, 2001).

## Conclusions

It is concluded that, in Pakistani rural context, economic problems are the causes of students' inattention in classroom. It is further concluded that health issues (like daydreaming, sleeplessness, depression and genetic factors), poor classroom environment (like crowded and noisy classrooms and poor sitting plan), low educational and language development (like language skills, numeracy skills and literacy skills) and poor teaching methodology (like use of lecture method or tradition method and use of teacher-centered approach) distract students attention in classroom and cause inattentiveness.

## Recommendations

On the basis of its conclusion and findings, the presents study recommends that:

- i. Classroom environment should be more conducive and supportive and there should be standardized classroom strength.

- ii. Students' language skills and literacy/numeracy skills should be given proper attention in first five classes to provide reliable product for higher classes.
- iii. There should be proper parents-teachers meeting to discuss the behavior problems of students.
- iv. Teaching should be simplified and the teacher should create fun through his teaching to create interest of the students.

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### Conflict of Interest

Authors declared no conflict of interest.

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