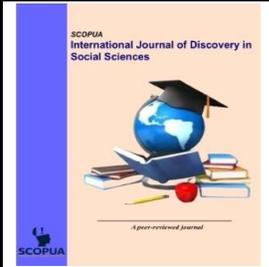




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SHORT COMMUNICATION

Analyzing Performance of Student Unions for Students with Physical Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this quantitative study was to evaluate the performance of student unions supporting students with physical disabilities. The study population comprised all physically disabled students enrolled in universities across Punjab. A convenient sample of 30 such students was selected from the University of the Punjab, Government College University, University of Management and Technology, and the University of Education. Data was collected using a self-developed questionnaire, administered through interviews. The responses were transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed, with frequency distributions calculated to identify patterns. The key findings indicated that student unions were actively engaged in both educational and political advocacy for students with physical disabilities. Based on these findings, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made, urging policymakers to conduct a comprehensive survey of student unions serving this population.

Keywords: Student unions; Physically disabled students; Performance of students

1. Introduction

Student unions have continued to play an essential role in fostering inclusive academic environments, leadership development, and democratic engagement in universities worldwide. These unions serve as platforms for students to express their concerns, build community, and participate in governance. In modern higher education, unions are recognized not only for representing students' voices but also for promoting civic responsibility, leadership, and institutional accountability. Jadoon (2025) argues that restoring student unions in Pakistan is vital for nurturing democratic norms and preparing youth for future leadership roles, especially in light of the political suppression and union bans of the past decades (Jadoon, 2025). In the United Kingdom, recent research has analyzed the broader institutional impacts of university staff strikes, showing how union activities affect student outcomes. Braakmann and Eberth (2024) found that while academic strikes slightly reduced student satisfaction during disruption periods, the long-term academic performance of students and the quality of research output remained largely unaffected. This demonstrates the nuanced influence of union-led activism on the academic ecosystem and highlights the importance of protecting union rights without compromising student welfare (Braakmann & Eberth, 2024).

While general student bodies benefit from such representation, students with physical disabilities often face systemic neglect in higher education, especially in developing countries like Pakistan. A study conducted by Nasir, Bashir, and Naseem (2023) employed a narrative inquiry approach to examine in Pakistani universities. The findings revealed that while support exists in some isolated cases, students with physical disabilities lack consistent institutional support, accessible



infrastructure, and proper representation in student governance bodies. This underscores the need for targeted inclusion policies and advocacy for students with disabilities within student union structures (Nasir, Bashir, & Naseem, 2023). Supporting this perspective, Safdar et al. (2024) examined faculty experiences with disability accommodations in higher education through a grounded theory approach. The study revealed that, despite formal inclusion policies, a lack of faculty training, persistent bullying, and poor peer support hinder the actual participation of students with disabilities in university life. These findings indicate that inclusion must move beyond symbolic access and focus on meaningful participation, which student unions could actively champion if empowered to do so (Safdar et al., 2024).

In more technologically advanced educational settings, recent innovations are exploring how assistive technologies can complement traditional advocacy roles. Markelius et al. (2025) explored the use of social robots to support students with disabilities in higher education. Their research, based on participatory design with students, educators, and disability advocates, found that while social robots can offer social-emotional support and mediation in classrooms, they should not replace human-led inclusion efforts such as those led by student unions or peer mentors. The study warns against relying solely on technology for inclusion and instead calls for integrated models of human and digital support (Markelius et al., 2025).

Additionally, civic movements such as the Students Solidarity March (2018–2020) in Pakistan have reignited national conversations around the importance of student unions. Students across major cities demanded not only better academic policies and campus facilities but also the restoration of student unions as platforms for youth empowerment, dialogue, and resistance against administrative injustices. These movements reveal how student-led activism continues to shape public discourse and reinforce the need for institutional spaces that represent all student voices, including those of marginalized communities (Students Solidarity March, 2020).

1.1 Objectives of study

The study is conducted to achieve the following objectives:

1. To know the educational beneficence of student unions for students with P.D.
2. To know the economic support by student unions for students with P.D.
3. To know the social performance of student unions for students with P.D.
4. To know the political contributions of student unions for students with P.D.

1.2 Research questions

The study is conducted to find out the answers of following questions:

1. What is the educational beneficence of student unions for students with physical disabilities?
2. What are the economic supports of student unions for students with physical disabilities?
3. What is the social performance of student unions for students with physical disabilities?
4. What are the political contributions of student unions for students with physical disabilities?

2. Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design using a questionnaire-based survey. The population included all students with physical disabilities enrolled in universities across Lahore. A purposive sample of 30 students, aged 22 to 38 years and studying at the Master’s and M.Phil levels, was selected from various departments. A self-developed scale was used for data collection. It consisted of two sections: demographic information (name, age, gender, department, and institution) and three components assessing the performance of student unions in supporting students with physical disabilities. The scale included close-ended items with five response options: not at all, occasionally, about half the time, most of the time, and all the time. Reliability of the scale was determined using Cronbach’s alpha. Non-parametric statistical procedures were applied, and the data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, means, and inferential tests such as ANOVA or t-tests.

Table 1: Frequency of the respondents along with their percentages on respondents views about performance of the student unions

NO.	Statement	Agreed		Strongly Agreed		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagreed	
		Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%
-	Educational Purpose	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1	Do student unions help you in educational problems?	15	50	6	20	2	6.7	7	23.3	2	6.7
2	Do student unions provide you educational scholarships?	9	30.0	6	20.0	2	6.7	10	33.3	3	10.0



3	Do student unions provide information about scholarships?	11	36.7	2	6.7	6	20.0	9	30.0	2	6.7
4	Do student unions help you to get scholarships?	5	16.7	7	23.3	3	10.0	10	33.3	5	16.7
5	Do student unions provide information about special education related policies?	7	23.3	6	20.0	3	10.0	8	26.7	6	20.0
6	Do student unions arrange educational seminars for physically disabled students?	7	23.3	6	20.0	3	10.0	8	26.7	6	20.0
7	Do student unions help you to purchased aids according to your disability?	8	26.7			3	10.0	16	53.3	3	10.0
-	Political Purpose	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	Do student unions help to get your civil rights?	3	10.0	10	33.3	1	3.3	7	23.3	9	30.0
9	Do student unions tell you about their political activities?	8	26.7	7	23.3	5	16.7	8	26.7	2	6.7
10	Do student unions activities are benefit for your education?	10	33.3	5	16.7	6	20.0	8	26.7	1	3.3
11	Do your student unions conduct elections?	13	43.3	6	20.0	5	16.7	5	16.7	1	3.3
12	Do your student unions allow them to choose unions administrators?	10	33.3	6	20.0	3	10.0	10	33.3	1	3.3
13	Do your student unions tell about elections results?	10	33.3	6	20.0	6	20.0	4	13.3	4	13.3
14	Do you satisfied with the performance of student unions?	13	43.3	1	3.3	3	10.0	8	26.7	5	16.7
-	Economic Purpose	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15	Do student unions provide information about jobs?	12	40.0	3	10.0	3	10.0	9	30.0	3	10.0
16	Do student unions guide you to get jobs?	5	16.7	2	6.7			15	50.0	8	26.7
17	Do student unions help you in condition of not paying fees?	4	13.3	2	6.7	2	6.7	18	60.0	4	13.3
18	Do your student unions give scholarships on the basis of merit?	5	16.7			3	10.0	21	70.0	1	3.3
19	Do your student unions provide chance of job in condition of not getting jobs?	3	10.0					11	36.7	16	53.3

3. Analysis and Findings

3.1 Findings Related to educational purpose of student unions

According to (50%) students unions help them in educational problems but almost (33.3%) respondents reported student unions don't provide them educational scholarships. Majority of students (36.7%) reported that student unions provide them information about scholarships. Approximately (33.3%) respondents reported that student unions don't help them in getting scholarships. About (36.7%) respondents reported that unions inform them about policies for disabled and 26.7% reported that unions don't conduct educational seminars. A large number of students (53.3%) reported that unions do not help them to buy devices that could help to move.

3.2 Findings Related to political purpose of student unions

A large number of the respondents (33.3%) reported that unions help them to get their civilian rights. A small number of (26.7%) respondents said that unions inform them about their political activities. About (33.3%) reported that they are not sure whether union's political activities are directed towards their educational benefits. 43.3% of students reported that their unions conduct elections and (33.3%) reported that their unions do not allow them to choose the administrator or president of the union. 33.3% of respondents reported that their unions do not inform them about the results of elections, but overall a large number of respondents (43.3%) were satisfied with the efforts of their union.

3.3. Findings Related to political purpose of student unions



Majority of respondents (40%) reported that their unions inform them about vacant seats for job and (50%) reported that their union does not guide them to get a job. Majority of respondents (60%) reported that their unions don't help them to pay fee, if they are unable to pay. A large number of respondents (70%) reported that union does not give scholarships on the basis of merit and (53%) reported that their union does not give them job opportunity in their private offices in case of not getting a job.

3.4 Results on the performance of student unions on the basis of their universities

A significant difference have found in the performance of student unions in the opinion of students from different universities (mean of students of PU= 17.28, mean of students of EU= 19.5,0 mean of students of AIOU=20.00,mean of students of GCU=14.0,mean of students of UMT=24.8)

Table.2: Mean of student's score on the basis of their universities.

Names of Universities	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
University of Punjab	17.2857	7	5.40723
GCU university	14.0000	6	6.92820
Allama Iqbal Open University	20.0000	6	5.58570
UMT	24.8000	5	8.28855
University of Education	19.5000	6	4.88876
Total	18.8667	30	6.72480

4. Conclusion

Student unions are forming an essential part of society and individuals and to come forward to solve and highlight the problems of students within an educational institute. Student unions are also important due to its benefits towards students. On the base of study, it can be said that student unions are working effectively for students with physical disabilities but it has to more efficient to cover all problems of students with physical disabilities. Results of this quantitative study recommend student unions to take following steps:

- Student union must provide scholarships.
- Student unions must help them to pay fee, if they are unable to pay
- Student unions must help its members to get scholarships.
- Student unions must help its members to buy AV aids if they cannot afford.
- Further study must be conducted with the larger sample.

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Declaration

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