



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Between Schools, Between Worlds: Educational Equity and Wellbeing among Highly Mobile Students**

**<sup>1</sup>Muhammad Abdullah Farooq Javed, <sup>2</sup>Muhammad Faheem Asher and <sup>3</sup>Asim Mahmood**

1. Assistant Professor, College of Education, Peshawar: Constituent College of Air University, Islamabad, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, College of Education, Peshawar: Constituent College of Air University, Islamabad, Pakistan
3. Assistant Professor, College of Education, Peshawar: Constituent College of Air University, Islamabad, Pakistan

**Corresponding Author:** mafjaved2025@uop.edu.pk

**ABSTRACT**

This paper discusses the impacts of frequent school movement on the academic trajectory and socio-emotional wellness of highly mobile students in a multi-branch school system in Pakistan. Academic disruption and social dislocation are generally linked with student mobility. Nevertheless, there is little literature that looks at situations where institutional structures seek to alleviate such impacts, especially in the Global South. This study utilized qualitative multiple case study design. The observations and school records were triangulated with data, and the data were analyzed thematically. The results have shown that standardized curriculum and centralized assessments and record transfer systems are great aids to academic continuity. Nonetheless, students still have early socio-emotional problems that can be anxiety and inability to establish peer relationships. Key mediating variables included resilience, peer support and teacher facilitation. Academic alignment should be accompanied by increased organized systems of socio-emotional support in schools to augment the students' well-being.

**KEYWORDS** Student Mobility, Educational Equity, Socio-Emotional Wellbeing, Qualitative, Academic Continuity

**Introduction**

Student mobility refers to the change in school enrollment as a result of residential mobility and it has a substantial impact on academic achievement and psychosocial well-being (Rumberger, 2003). Students in Pakistan who are highly mobile, especially when the professional posting of their parents demands frequent mobility, face distinct problems, such as educational disorientation, social disintegration, and emotional pressure. Regular mobility has potential to discontinue curricular cycle, peer associations, teacher-pupil contacts, and academic achievement and educational prospects in the long-term (Voight et al., (2012). Although mobility can also provide a chance to experience varied learning settings, it tends to increase inequalities, especially when the schools do not have the policies to address the effect.

In Pakistan, families of government workers, corporate workers, and military workers tend to move in and out of cities or provinces, which means that their children change schools repeatedly. This may negatively affect the continuity of learning because the curricula, pedagogical methods and school cultures differ. Even though there are schools that are trying to standardize the curriculum and testing, the psychological and social incongruities related to the mobility are still relevant (Hango, 2006). According to the social capital theory, the academic engagement and emotional adjustment may be destabilized by loss of stable peer and mentor networks, which emphasize the larger impacts of residential mobility beyond instructional gaps (Voight et al., 2020).

Mobile students are highly mobile with a frequent change in school that discontinues academic routine as well as social networks. Such recurring transitions require constant adjustments, which frequently disorient cognitive and emotional resources toward learning (Galton et al., 1999; Gruman et al., 2008). Besides academic difficulties, mobility may influence psychological health, social self-confidence, and sense of belonging, which is why interventions that meet the educational and emotional needs should be considered (Lester and Mander, 2020).

In order to guarantee fair learning among mobile students, systemic and relational supports must be taken into consideration. Educational equity means that all students are made available to resources, academic continuity, and supportive learning environments despite their mobility status (Levinson et al., 2022). In the absence of these steps, the mobility may often widen the gaps in the performance, socialization, and the prospects of education in the long run.

Well-being is understood as social, emotional, and psychological aspects that play a critical role in academic involvement. Students who are very mobile can be subjected to stress, peer displacement and less connected to school, which impact not only the learning but also the entire development (Swanson and Schneider, 1999). These issues require such comprehensive support systems, which promote resilience, inclusivity and long-term involvement.

There is substantial amount of literature on student mobility in the Western setting. However, there is extremely scanty research on the topic in the Global South, particularly Pakistan. There is even less study on students in multi-branch systems of schooling where there is effort to standardize curricula and reduce learning interruptions.

## **Literature Review**

This review provides an overview of the existing scholarship on the educational and psychosocial effects of student mobility, theoretical frameworks, and empirical evidence, as well as gaps, which informed the choice of the current research. It focuses on the active interaction of residential mobility, socioeconomic environments, family influences and school experiences with special emphasis on their educational equity and well-being implications.

## **Theoretical Frameworks of Educational Equity**

Systemic structures that drive student outcomes during high mobility can be explained by the use of educational equity frameworks. Critical Race Theory (CRT) predicts the reproduction of inequities within the institutional practice that is disproportionately impactful on students who have unstable education histories (Ladson-Billings, 2020). CRT emphasizes the role of structural obstacles; inequitable distribution of school resources and uneven curricular quality enhancing the drawbacks of the high frequency of mobility, especially in such a situation as in Pakistan where the differences in the educational levels in regions are significant. Asset Based Pedagogy does not emphasize the lack but emphasizes the ability of the students and their cultural capital such as the linguistic and family resources to support continuity in the learning process (Yosso, 2005). The Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) offers a nested model to analyze how mobile students experience influences of interactions between the microsystem (family, classroom), mesosystem (relationships across contexts), and exosystem (community, policy) (South et al., 2007). Combining stress and coping model further explains how movement between environments initiates the process of adaptation both at the individual level and external supports (Fergus and Zimmerman, 2004). All these theoretical perspectives help shed light on the reasons why certain students remain academically

engaged regardless of recurring disruption, i.e., the significance of the systemic support and personal resources.

### **Impact of Mobility on Academic Achievement**

There is a strong body of research that constantly associates frequent mobility with poor academic performance. Curriculum discontinuities decrease instructional time and learning, and they lead to deteriorations in standardized test results and grade point averages (Voight et al., 2020). In addition, mobility disrupts the social capital, networks and norms that support academic participation resulting in low academic confidence and high chances of repetition or dropout (Coleman, 1988; Swanson and Schneider, 1999). South et al. (2007) reported that independent predictors of lower academic outcomes in the U.S. context were residential and school mobility even after family socioeconomic status was taken into account. Nevertheless, this evidence is still scarce in non-Western settings. In Pakistan, where curriculum difference between provincial and school boards is high, not only do transfers set academic progress back, but in most cases they force students to learn in a different language of instruction and assessments, which in turn can prove difficult and thus lead to further loss of learning.

It also has been observed that the time and frequency of moves also count: mobility in early schooling years, which is crucial to the acquisition of basic skills, is more associated with later achievement than moves in adolescence (Cordes et al., 2019). There is longitudinal evidence that repeated transfers may have cumulative negative academic effects, making it challenging to re-involve students into learning patterns. These observations highlight the importance of taking into account the amount of mobility as well as the time of its development in the study of academic performance.

### **Psychosocial Effects of Relocation on Children**

In addition to academic achievement, the constant change of residence creates serious psychosocial difficulties. Children who have had multiple schooling have been known to complain of increased anxiety, social withdrawal and inability to build a stable peer relationship; major predictors of emotional well-being and school involvement (Simpson and Fowler, 1994). As (Lucas & Banks, 2023) note, cumulative stress due to transitions may overwhelm coping resources and risk maladaptive responses including withdrawal or behavioral problems. Upset social networks deny mobile students social stability in terms of emotional support, and it becomes more difficult to establish a sense of belonging, which is essential to social and academic adaptation (Wilks, 2008). Not all of these psychosocial stresses have equal distribution: students with lower income or marginalized backgrounds can experience added stressor factors associated with poverty, discrimination, and lack of access to support services.

Within the Pakistani context, where community-based support and peer-relationship form part of the student welfare, the constant commute between culturally different areas can enhance the sense of social alienation. The literature on internal migrant children in Pakistan indicates that the lack of social and cultural continuity may increase anxiety and hamper the ability to integrate in new school settings, hence the significance of culturally responsive and relationally-based support interventions.

### **Support Systems for Mobile Student Populations**

With the recognition of the vulnerability of highly mobile students, research has found multi tiered support systems as the way to build resilience. Connectedness at school, defined as positive relations with teachers and peers, is closely related to increased attendance, academic success, and emotional adaptation (Longobardi et al., 2019). The adverse outcomes of displacement are alleviated with the assistance of academic

interventions that can assist in the quickest assimilation to new curricula, as well as special mental health services. The literature however shows a lack of knowledge on how teachers understand and react to problems of mobility and how the relationship between students and teachers can be used to counter the broken peer networks.

Recent research indicates that the perceived teacher support may offset the negative impact by increasing the academic self efficacy and belonging of students (Berryman and Eley, 2019). However, there is a dearth of systematic evidence especially on operationalization of such support in resource limited settings. It is important to close this gap because positive classroom climates can be seen as compensatory systems in the instances where familial or peer support is discontinuous.

### **Policy and Practice in Addressing Student Mobility**

This requires effective policy responses that deal with both structural and psychosocial barriers. Researchers in the international community propose the policies that guarantee the fast transfer of academic records, standardized assessment calibration between jurisdictions, and special funding of the schools with high mobility rates (McKenzie et al., 2015; Galton et al., 1999). In a situation such as Pakistan, policy models must focus on professional growth among educators regarding mobility issues, data systems that enhance continuity of teaching and inclusive practices that enhance school belonging. Integration of mental health services, or counseling in the school environment and support infrastructure; like dedicated counselors and transition mentors, can prove as an additional shock absorber to frequent moves.

### **Conceptualizing Well-Being in Educational Settings**

Emotional, social, and psychological well being in education refers to the condition of health and is influenced by the quality and stability of school experiences (Govorova et al., 2020). A conceptualization that is multidimensional acknowledges that well being is not the lack of distress but rather an active ability to manoeuvre through difficulties, establish affirming relations and remain engaged in education (Noble and McGrath, 2014). Well being measurement in mobile students should thus include the indicators of belonging, resilient as well as adaptive functioning in the areas of development. To handle this complexity, there is a need to study using new and innovative research designs that are able to reflect the interaction between the individual characteristics, the surrounding environmental conditions and the systemic structure.

### **Methodology**

The research design used in this study is a multiple case study design, which will examine the lived experiences, problems, and coping strategies of highly mobile students in a semi government school system in Pakistan. Multiple case study approach facilitates richly contextualized understanding of complex educational phenomena in different, yet similar contexts (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Yin, 2009) and is especially apt when the demarcation between the phenomenon and the context is not well-defined in advance.

### **Participants**

Purposive sampling was used in order to be representative of different views of mobile students, their parents, and school officials. Two focus groups of students were considered in the study, one with 20 students aged between 8-12 years and another 20 students aged between 13-16 years old, whose families had a history of high relocations. The sample also comprised of six parents, eight teachers and two school principals who were sample-wise selected by taking an equal number of parents, teachers and school principals in two institutes of a semi government school system, which runs a multi campus

school in Pakistan. This design will permit cross case analysis and further investigation of patterns within groups of participants, as well as within schools.

**Table 1**  
**Profile of Study Participants**

| Participant Type         | Number | Age / Experience                        | Notes / Context   |
|--------------------------|--------|---|---|
| Students (Focus Group 1) | 20     | 8–12 years                              | Mobile families; semi-government school; two branches                           |
| Students (Focus Group 2) | 20     | 13–16 years                             | Mobile families; semi-government school; two branches                           |
| Parents                  | 6      | Adult parents of participating students | Insights on family mobility and student wellbeing                               |
| Teachers                 | 8      | Teaching experience 3–15 years          | Equally representing two school branches; involved with mobile students         |
| School Principals        | 2      | 5–10 years leadership                   | One from each school branch; perspectives on school support for mobile students |

### Data Collection

Multiple data sources based on qualitative data were synthesized to have the methodological triangulation and increase the validity of results (Yin, 2009). To start with, semi structured interviews were held with six parents, eight teachers and two school principals. These interviews took 40-50 minutes and they were structured to bring about perceptions of student transitions, academic continuity, and social wellbeing. Semi structured interviews give the flexibility to explore emergent themes but sufficient structure to facilitate systematic analysis (Diviani et al., 2025).

Second, students were involved in the focus group discussions. These group contexts allowed group cogitations about school transitions, peer relations, and coping techniques enabling group members to develop upon each other and disclosing common and different patterns. Focus groups are fairly well-regarded techniques of study of social and cultural aspects of youth experiences (Krueger, 2014).

Third, classroom observations and participation in school activities were conducted to ensure real time interactions, behaviours and contextual incidences are captured that may not be well expressed in interviews or group discussions. The data source of observation complements the other data sources of interview and focus groups by giving an external confirmation of the behaviours and interactions being reported. Lastly, school records and student portfolios were considered after institutional permissions, to understand the continuity in academics between successive postings. The whole data was collected between January to June 2025 timeframe. Triangulation of interview and focus group data on academic transitions and performance was conducted using documents like transfer certificates, progress reports and attendance records.

### Data Analysis

Thematic analysis of academic disruption, social integration, emotional resilience and institutional support was done by an iterative process of transitioning through the first round of open coding to upper order thematic categories.

Besides the thematic analysis, the narrative analysis was also applied to preserve the order, logicity, and contextual meaning of the personal narratives of students. Narrative analysis is concerned with the way people make sense of their experiences through the construction of stories, and it offers information into how students make sense of their transitions. The two-fold approach balances the recognition of general trends amongst the participants and the maintenance of the unique sequences of experiences, which ensure the comprehensive perception of the phenomena being investigated.

## **Ethics**

There were strict ethical procedures. Before participation, parental consent and student assent were taken in writing. Participant data were anonymised and pseudonyms were also used in transcripts and reporting to maintain confidentiality. Since transitions and wellbeing are very sensitive issues, special care was taken regarding the emotional safety, and participants were allowed to refuse to respond to any question and to withdraw at any time without penalty.

## **Findings**

This segment highlights the report of the study that is structured in the experiences of highly mobile students, parents, and school staff in a semi-government school system that has several branches operating throughout Pakistan. The schools have developed policies that focus on reducing the effects of the frequent relocations such as standardised curriculum taught at the same time in the campuses, centrally prepared tests, transfer of academic records, structured teacher training and transfer. The results are displayed in the form of themes which are formed due to the experiences of students, attitudes of parents, and the views of teachers and principals, which are academic, social, and socio-emotional.

### **Student Academic Experiences**

One of the most notable results was that curricular continuity made a significant decrease in academic disruption. The students always claimed that there were no significant gaps in the content during the changing of the branch. One student noted, "When I entered the new school, they had already done the same chapter and hence, I didn't feel behind." Another one commented, "I was able to understand everything even after I moved on because the syllabus was the same."

Nevertheless, even though there were no significant differences in the content alignment, students revealed some minor difficulties associated with pedagogical differences. Disagreements in pedagogy, classroom aspirations and rhythm had to be altered. One of the participants explained, "The topics were the same, but the way the teacher explained was different, so I had to get used to it." This was supported by observational evidence, which indicated a difference in instructional delivery, even though there was standard content.

The students showed great adaptive skills to sustain academic performance. Most of them reported looking at past notes, asking their teachers to explain, and cooperating with their colleagues. One of the students stated, "I compare my old notebook and the new one and fill the gaps." Another one mentioned, "If I don't understand something, I ask my classmates first, then the teacher."

It was found that mobile students tend to achieve self-controlled learning behaviours as time goes by. One of the teachers explained, "These students would tend to know how to make up fast since they have done this on numerous occasions." This means that one becomes exposed to the transitions and this can be developed as adaptive academic practices through repetition.

The continuity was facilitated by the institutional mechanisms. The consistency among campuses was maintained using centrally prepared assessments, coordinated lesson planning and student portfolios. A principal explained, "We do not want any child to lose in academics because of transfer."

Teachers stressed academic record transfer because it assisted them in identifying the gaps and support. One of the teachers mentioned this and said, "Once a student comes,

we know their past performance and are able to help them right away.” The bridging strategies of brief revision and intensive feedback were quite popular and helped in making a smooth transition.

### **Socio-Emotional Experiences**

At the same time, as opposed to academic continuity, the process of social integration became a serious issue. Students often referred to insufficient agitation at the beginning of friendship building. One of the young participants mentioned, “At first, I didn’t talk much because everyone already had their groups.” Another student added, “It takes time to understand who you can be friends with.”

Older students, though, were more confident, and in fact most of them used past experiences of relocation. One of the students commented, “I have changed schools before, so now I know how to make friends faster.” This implies that repeated mobility could also lead to social adaptability with time.

The importance of school activities that were organized was very crucial in integration. Students pointed out the group work, sports, and co-curricular programs as the avenue to bond. According to one of the student respondents, “When I started playing football, it became easier to talk to others.” It was observed that classroom practices that involve collaboration aided in interaction and inclusion.

Students said that they felt anxious and emotionally uncertain at the beginning after their relocation. The first stage of transition was characterized by isolation, hesitation and self-consciousness. As one of the students told, “I was alright academically, but emotionally I felt like I didn’t belong at first.”

Family support was one of the coping mechanisms. Parental reassurance was a factor that was prevalent among students. One of the participants remarked, “My parents tell me I’ve done this before, so I can do it again.” Also, emotional adjustment was supported by peer support and teacher encouragement.

Interestingly, some group of students stated that they had acquired a certain degree of emotional hardiness and empathy. One of the older students reflected, “You learn to adjust, but you also don’t get too attached because you know you might move again.” This brings on board another dimension of mobility; it brings up adaptive nature, though it can also restrain interpersonal bonding among individuals to a larger extent.

### **Parental Perspectives**

Parents found the school system to be effective to a greater degree in the area of academic stability. They held in high regard the standardized tests and uniform curriculum. One of the parents remarked, “The greatest advantage is that my child does not need to begin each time we change the place of residence.”

Record transfer systems were another thing demanded by the parents and ensured continuity in assessments and instruction. One of the parents said, “The new school is already aware of the progress of my child, so there is no confusion.”

Nevertheless, emotional problems were always emphasized by parents. One of the parents said, “Academically things are fine, but emotionally it is difficult for children to leave their friends.” Another one added, “The main issue is not studies; it is adjustment.”

The parents also described relocation logistical pressures being school transition management and housing and work-related relocation. Despite these challenges, they had

positive views regarding the responsiveness and assistance of the school. According to one parent, "Teachers know the situation and assist children in settling down."

### **Teacher and Principal Insights**

A range of strategies that can be used to deal with mobile students were defined by principals and teachers. These were orientation, peer-buddy, academic bridging and counseling. One of the principals remarked, "There is an attempt to make it as smooth as possible, both academically and socially."

Teacher training was determined as a very important element. One of the teachers observed, "We are trained to know the needs of transfer students and assist them to adjust within a short time." This is an indication of the institutional capacity role in resolving mobility related problems.

In spite of the systemic support, teachers admitted that they did not know how to deal with different needs of students. Confidence, prior experience and interpersonal competences contributed to the adjustment. One teacher commented, "Some students adapt quickly, while others take longer, especially younger ones." Another observation made by teachers was that emotional adjustment cannot be a curriculum. One of the teachers commented, "It is easy to arrange academics, but emotions are different for every child."

Principals emphasized that uniformity in the branches is required and this should be achieved by centralized planning, monitoring and professional development. According to one of the principals, "We want students to feel that they are in the same system, even if they change campuses." Teaching structure, assessment and classroom routine practices were found to be maintained across branches which contributed to the sense of continuity further.

### **Emergent Themes**

#### **Resilience and Agency**

The transition among students was of high resilience and agency. They were involved in the strategies to sustain academic and social stability. One student remarked, "If I don't try to adjust quickly, I know I will fall behind." This means that realistic self-management and confidence may be achieved as a result of frequent mobility.

#### **Effectiveness of Support Structures**

The study shows the applicability of interventions at the system level in order to reduce academic disruption. Standardized curriculum, centrally prepared testing, transfer of records, teacher training and coordination of schools across the board were also useful in reducing the discontinuity in academics. These measures were not entirely eliminating the challenge but they were a tremendous buffer in case of learning loss. One of the principals described, "Our system cannot stop transfers, but it can stop transfers from becoming educational setbacks."

#### **Gaps and Areas for Improvement**

In spite of these strengths, socio-emotional support gaps can be seen. Also, the absence of emotional and relational support was noted. The emotional price of the breakage of friendship, transference to new classroom relations, and adjustment to new schedules were always high with the well-organized school system. As these results indicate, academic alignment does not constitute an adequate condition. The continuity of relationships with

peers, inclusion and sensitive teacher care are needed in order that students should feel mobility is not stressful but manageable.

The results show that institutional coherence protects academic disruption among highly mobile students to a great extent, and socio-emotional adjustment is one of the most problematic spheres. Resilience of students with the help of the family, peers, and teachers allows the students to adapt successfully, yet the emotional and relationship issues do not disappear. These results are consistent with the research theme of equity and resilience in education and social capital, as it is necessary to implement a combined academic and socio-emotional support model among mobile learners in Pakistan.

## **Discussion**

This research examined the impacts of high frequency school movement on academic performance and socio emotional status of highly mobile students in a multi branch semi government system of schools in Pakistan where standardized delivery of curriculum, synchronized assessment and coordinated institution support are intentionally used to mitigate the impact of mobility. The findings, which are based on the interviews, focus groups, observations, and school records, shed light on the complex interaction between the process in the system and experiences of students and demonstrate the effectiveness of the institutional practices and the persistence of the barriers related to social and emotional adjustment.

### **Academic Continuity and Student Adaptation**

Some of the most conspicuous outcomes included the overall positive academic adaptation of the mobile students. The similarity of the curriculum and the assessment used in the branches also meant that the students were able to resume the lessons without much loss in learning even when they were transferred to a different branch. The availability of centralized academic records and portfolios favored concentration of teaching that enhanced the performance maintenance capacity of students. These results are in line with the research that showed that mobility can adversely affect achievement which can be remedied by standardization and curriculum alignment (Galton et al., 1999; South et al., 2007). In situations where there is no curricular coherence, learning gaps tend to build up over a period of time leading to poorer academic performance among students (Gruenewald, 2003). This tendency appears to be countered by the coherent activities in the school system under analysis.

In line with stress and coping theories, students resorted to self directed-study, peer support, and organized bridging sessions in order to conquer the academic transition. This result is similar to academic resilience studies, which assume that students who have access to supportive learning frameworks and effective coping mechanisms will show continued involvement despite disruption (Skinner and Pitzer, 2012; Bandelaria et al., 2025). Personalized support was made possible through early identification of learning gaps made possible by transfer of academic records. This result builds on previous research by emphasizing the importance of institutional information systems to serve mobile learners, which many current studies have ignored because they are majorly concerned with classroom learning or peer networks (Swanson and Schneider, 1999).

Although there was academic continuity, a few of the students indicated that they had initially found it difficult to adjust to the different teaching styles and classroom schedules. Despite the same content covered by the curriculum, pedagogical climate and expectations of teachers were different in various branches, and the students had to learn new teaching standards fast. This type of variation is reminiscent of the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) that highlights that although curricula may be uniform, the

microsystem, such as classroom interactions and instructional approaches, still stands as an exciting and powerful mediator of learning.

### **Socio-Emotional Adaptation and School Belonging**

Although the academic support systems alleviated education impacts, socio emotional adaptation became a long term vulnerability. Literature records that the psychosocial cost of high frequency of relocation is common, and students felt anxious and initially isolated upon joining new branches (Lucas and Banks, 2023; Simpson and Fowler, 1994). The deprivation of well established peer networks and trust relationships may lead to a loss of emotional stability and a sense of belonging; fundamental elements of well being (Wilks, 2008). These experiences were greatest during the initial months of relocation and this implies that there is a critical period of adjustment.

The method of socio emotional support used by the schools such as organized orientation programs, peer buddy programs, and access to counseling was also reported to have been helpful in hastening socialization and decreasing stress. These practices are a manifestation of asset based and resilience frameworks that considers that the supportive relationships and inclusive environments have the capacity of neutralizing stressor-related to transitions (Yosso, 2005). The proactive attempts to create connectedness in the form of co curricular activities and mentorship are also in line with studies that show the value of school belonging as a protective factor of mobile learners (Berryman and Eley, 2019).

However, the socio emotional adaptation was still disproportionate, especially among the younger students who were more reluctant to make new friends. This finding is aligned with the developmental studies that indicated that younger children lack the advanced social regulation and coping skills, which complicate the process of peer transitions (Cordes et al., 2019). The older students, in their turn, were more agency and integrated faster, which implies that the adaptive capacity is increased by previous mobility experience and developmental maturity.

### **Parental and Teacher Perspectives on Support Structures**

Parents unanimously recognized the school as a continuity of academic performance often citing the comfort of synchronized testing and clear performance monitoring. These tests enabled parents to track progress in transitions, which is a significant element of parental involvement, and it has been linked with better academic results (Epstein, 2018). Still, the parents also found persistent issues with emotional adaptation, and it is possible to agree that mobility interventions are not limited to academics but should be supported with holistic well being support.

Educators and principals expressed a high level of engagement in catering to the needs of mobile students by referring to professional training that enables them to be able to identify and address the academic and social emotional requirements. Specifically, teachers explained the peer mentoring, small group facilitation, and teacher led bridging sessions as important practices that promote belonging and engagement. The results are consistent with other studies on social capital and teacher support, which found classroom relations to be the key factor in adaptation and academic confidence of students (Berryman and Eley, 2019; Coleman, 1988). Interestingly, there is an indication of the power of the institutional capacity to respond to the effects of mobility through the school system investing in coordinated teacher development, which has policy and scalability implications.

### **Integration with Theoretical Frameworks**

The results of the study can be used in the interpretation of mobility in several theoretical perspectives. Ecological Systems Theory points to the importance of the

environmental contexts, both the family and classroom to the institutional policies, in the form of nesting settings that influence the experiences of students. The exo-system of standardized curriculum and systemic support structures is the factor that promotes continuity whereas the processes in the microsystem level such as classroom practice and interaction with peers mediate the socio emotional adaptation. Equally, asset based pedagogy and resilience models focus on the positive aspects of students and the importance of positive environments in enhancing positive outcomes despite negative factors (Fergus and Zimmerman, 2004). Lastly, Critical Race Theory invites us to question the conditions of systems that could disproportionately impact students to remind us that even well equipped systems should also consider equity in the inclusion of relational and cultural aspects.

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

The findings of this research are of great policy and practice implications in the education field especially in areas where frequent mobility is the order of the day. Firstly, the unified nature of curricula and performance assurance appears to be a contributing factor in the continuity of academics. Multi branch systems or national education networks may find policies that strengthen common curricular models and standardized assessment of particular value. Second, academic alignment is enhanced with structured transition aids in which orientation programs, peer buddies and counseling services are employed to address socio emotional needs, which would have otherwise not been addressed by academic alignment.

Third, teacher preparation should not only be based on the instructional coherence but also the cultural responsiveness, relational pedagogy, and belonging nurturing strategies. It is important to note that actually educators are to be considered active in the form of mentors and emotional supports, and the development of this aspect is expected to be the priority. Lastly, the data systems facilitating a smooth flow of academic records and performance histories can be introduced to aid the teachers in the custom-made intervention and mitigate learning process gaps.

The implication can also be applied to other systems beyond Pakistan that aim at accommodating mobile people such as children of government service members, expatriate professionals or internal migration related families. They have highlighted the roles of interdisciplinary and holistic approaches that would not only focus on the academic continuity, but also on the psychological and social needs of the students.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

One of the strengths of this research is that it has a multi stakeholder approach, as it incorporates the student voices with the perspectives of parents, teachers, and principals. Triangulation was facilitated by the fact that several data sources were used to increase the validity of findings. There are however some limitations. First, the research is conducted in a single school system that is highly institutionally coherent; hence, the results might not be applicable to less integrated environments. Second, the qualitative design, though rich in content, fails to measure the extent of the effects of mobility over a period.

Longitudinal tracking of academic and emotional outcomes of mobile students should be incorporated in future research to determine long term trends. The comparative examination of various school systems in Pakistan, both rural and private would also help in explaining the contextual differences. Also, the incorporation of quantitative indicators of well being and school connectedness might contribute to better knowledge of the interaction between systemic and individual factors over time.

### **Conclusion**

The paper has examined the extent of academic continuity and socio-emotional adaptation of the highly mobile students in a semi-government multi-branch school system in Pakistan which has been established to reduce the effects of the postings of parents. These findings indicate that the institutional coherence in the aspects of a standardized curriculum, centrally constructed tests, transfer of records and training of teachers are critical in mitigating the academic disruption that is usually associated with student mobility. The standardization of the curricula in various campuses helped in transfer of students between the schools that had rather low rates of the continuity of instructions. The findings are in line with prior studies, which found out that the adverse impacts of school mobility on academic performance can be mitigated by curricular congruence and efficient transfer of academic records (Felner et al., 1981; Rumberger, 2003).

Through these structural supports, the findings indicate that socio-emotional adjustment is a major challenge among mobile students especially in the first week of school transitions. Students complained of not knowing, social hesitation and inability to establish new relationships with their peers. However, the supportive teacher practice, peer-buddy systems and formal orientation procedures were important in the adaptation of students and making them feel included.

In general, the analysis proves that institutional systems that are properly designed can contribute greatly to the decrease of academic discontinuity but comprehensive support should be offered to address emotional and relational needs of highly mobile learners to guarantee them equitable educational opportunities.

### **Recommendations**

Mobile schools will be aimed at the structured framework of transition, including orientation programs, peer-mentoring systems, and counseling support, to facilitate the social integration. The teachers should also be provided with professional development in order to cater to the mobile learners.

Education policy makers should encourage system level alignment in school systems like standardized pacing of the curriculum, standardized system of assessment and the digital transfer of student records. Such mechanisms can help to a long extent reduce learning deficits at school transitions. Whole-child support arrangements should also be encouraged in the policies, comprising of academic continuity and mental health and wellbeing services.

## References

- Bandelaria, C., Ilumin, J. M., Paje, C. J., Palicpic, F., & Perez, M. M. (2025). Cognitive Adjustments And Learning Strategies Of Grade 7 Students Of LCC Silvercrest: Basis For Enhancement Program. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 39(3), 1
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544–559.
- Berryman, M., & Eley, E. (2019). Student belonging: critical relationships and responsibilities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23(9), 985–1001. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1602365>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press
- Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94. <https://doi.org/10.1086/228943>
- Cordes, S. A., Schwartz, A. E., & Stiefel, L. (2019). The effect of residential mobility on student performance: Evidence from New York City. *American Educational Research Journal*, 56(4), 1380-1411.
- Diviani, N., Fiordelli, M., Ort, A., & Rubinelli, S. (2025). From preparedness to adaptation: Swiss hospitals' communication strategies in a prolonged crisis. *Frontiers in Communication*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2025.1672472>
- Epstein, J. (2018). *School, family, and community partnerships, student economy edition: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Routledge.
- Felner, R. D., Primavera, J., & Cauce, A. M. (1981). The impact of school transitions: A focus for preventive efforts. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 9(4), 449-459.
- Fergus, S., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2004). Adolescent Resilience: A Framework for Understanding Healthy Development in the Face of Risk. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 26(1), 399. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.publhealth.26.021304.144357>
- Galton, M. J., Gray, J., & Rudduck, J. (1999). *The impact of school transitions and transfers on pupil progress and attainment* (Vol. 131). London: DfEE.
- Govorova, E., Benítez, I., & Muñiz, J. (2020). How schools affect student well-being: A cross-cultural approach in 35 OECD countries. *Frontiers in psychology*, 11, 431.
- Gruenewald, D. A. (2003). Foundations of place: A multidisciplinary framework for place-conscious education. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(3), 619-654.
- Gruman, D. H., Harachi, T. W., Abbott, R. D., Catalano, R. F., & Fleming, C. B. (2008). Longitudinal Effects of Student Mobility on Three Dimensions of Elementary School Engagement. *Child Development*, 79(6), 1833.
- Hango, D. W. (2006). The long-term effect of childhood residential mobility on educational attainment. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 47(4), 631-664.
- Krueger, R. A. (2014). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. SAGE Publications.

- Ladson-Billings, G. (2020). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education?. In *Critical race theory in education* (pp. 9-26). Routledge.
- Lester, L., & Mander, D. (2020). A Longitudinal Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey of Students Transitioning to a Boys' Only Boarding School. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 30(2), 67. <https://doi.org/10.47381/aijre.v30i2.261>
- Levinson, M., Geron, T., & Brighthouse, H. (2022). *Conceptions of educational equity*. *Aera Open*, 8, 23328584221121344.
- Longobardi, C., Settanni, M., Prino, L. E., Fabris, M. A., & Marengo, D. (2019). Students' Psychological Adjustment in Normative School Transitions From Kindergarten to High School: Investigating the Role of Teacher-Student Relationship Quality. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01238>
- Lucas, J., & Banks, M. (2023). Managing risks: improving the health, safety, and well-being of mobile students. In *The Handbook of International Higher Education* (pp. 182-202). Routledge.
- McKenzie, M., Bieler, A., & McNeil, R. (2015). Education policy mobility: Reimagining sustainability in neoliberal times. *Environmental Education Research*, 21(3), 319-337.
- Noble, T., & McGrath, H. (2014). *Well-being and resilience in school settings*. In *Increasing psychological well-being in clinical and educational settings: Interventions and cultural contexts* (pp. 135-152). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Rumberger, R. W. (2003). The Causes and Consequences of Student Mobility. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 72(1), 6. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3211287>
- Simpson, G. A., & Fowler, M. G. (1994). Geographic mobility and children's emotional/behavioral adjustment and school functioning. *Pediatrics*, 93(2), 303-309.
- Skinner, E. A., & Pitzer, J. R. (2012). Developmental dynamics of student engagement, coping, and everyday resilience. In *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 21-44). Boston, MA: Springer US.
- South, S. J., Haynie, D. L., & Bose, S. (2007). Student mobility and school dropout. *Social Science Research*, 36(1), 68-94.
- Swanson, C. B., & Schneider, B. (1999). Students on the move: Residential and educational mobility in America's schools. *Sociology of Education*, 54-67.
- Voight, A., Giraldo-García, R., & Shinn, M. (2020). The effects of residential mobility on the education outcomes of urban middle school students and the moderating potential of civic engagement. *Urban Education*, 55(4), 570-591.
- Voight, A., Shinn, M., & Nation, M. (2012). The Longitudinal Effects of Residential Mobility on the Academic Achievement of Urban Elementary and Middle School Students. *Educational Researcher*, 41(9), 385-392
- Wilks, S. E. (2008). Resilience amid academic stress: The moderating impact of social support among social work students. *Advances in social work*, 9(2), 106-125.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69.