

Grade Inflation in Pakistan: How Last Decade Depicted

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Abstract

Researchers in Pakistan have discovered grade inflation among the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) to control student achievement concerns. Many experts have said that during the 1980s, the grading system in schools has seen an incredible beneficial shift. The scholarly study brings attention to the deteriorating quality of education in Pakistan. It is descriptive research using numbers. Grade inflation in Lahore, secondary schools of Pakistan, focuses on new research that uses data from students who finished their SSC examinations between 2012 and 2018. A descriptive study was carried out. It has been determined whether or not BISE Lahore students are experiencing grade inflation regardless of whether the average grades of BISE Lahore students have increased significantly over the last five years. Additionally, the research explains the reasons and circumstances that lead to grade inflation. To improve the students' evaluation method, BISE Lahore was advised to update its grading system and compare it to the worldwide grading system.

Keywords: Grade Inflation, Assessment System, BISE Lahore, Secondary Level.

Introduction

The assessment methods and criteria are different for students, but students vary in their capabilities. Educational reformists often examine the past to identify areas for improvement related to grade inflation and other aspects of assessment (Nuffic, 2013; Webster, 2011). Another group of scholars has a different perspective on grade inflation. Some feel that the decreasing usefulness of grades in evaluating students' performance is part of a student accomplishment paradox in certain schools. Myford (2012) claims that if a student's grade does not accurately represent other people's perception of their expertise, it may be inflated. In the last three decades, a gradual rise in high school and college grades has been the primary catalyst for grade inflation. Some academics have raised questions about whether or not grade inflation is real and how to quantify it, particularly regarding establishing a method to measure academic performance reliably. When one mentions "grade inflation," it's reasonable to say that some subjectivity is associated with the concept (Ediger, 2001; Sajjad, Taseer, & Siddique, 2021). Empirical research shows that grade inflation both exists and doesn't. Researchers differ on what causes inflation and what can be done to avoid it; thus, this theory cannot be proven. These empirical investigations show that teachers have

not been involved or contacted, which implies that the individuals who evaluate and give grades do not have a voice in this discussion. While some researchers contend that grade inflation demonstrates that children's quality of education is compromised, other researchers believe it is not (Kohn, 2002). The results of this study call attention to the importance of learning, which comes ahead of grades. Teachers who believe that grades are more important than student learning may interpret test results to be incongruent.

According to Grimes (2010), grade point averages do not always fairly and correctly judge the quantity of learning or the quality of learning in most classes. Teachers must place pupils into particular groups because report cards do not include narrative reasons. Grade inflation indicates poorly prepared students, inadequate teaching materials, and outmoded evaluation methods. Another assumption regarding grade inflation is that instructors are pushed to evaluate students' work more leniently to avoid raising concerns about grade inflation. Most instructors want their pupils to get good grades, and every school offers many incentives for kids who do well (Sajjad, Taseer, & Bukhari, 2022; Welsh & D'Agostino, 2009).

Previous studies have concluded that there is no substantial evidence of grade inflation in American schools, but many academics disagree, and despite their differing views, most acknowledge that grading standards in American schools may be improved. One of the biggest problems with assessment and grading standards is that they are difficult for educators, parents, and students to understand. Also, basing the validity of grade inflation on such criteria is dubious. In addition, while many parents are happy with their children's results, they will only dispute the evaluation if the marks are low or insufficient. Research from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement, published in 1994, and concluded that happy parents generally have no issues with the grades assigned by school evaluations that represent the A through F range.

However, in addition to making parents and kids happy, grade inflation may also be caused by other reasons. Bailey (2012) points to school entrance rules, school budget referendums, and the usage of standardized tests in contrast to grades as the causes of these issues. Students who use their class rank and grades to encourage instructors to "dumb down" classes, provide plenty of additional credit, ignore grading standards, alter percentages and assignments, switch schools, or leave the profession make heavy use of an approach called "dummy down."

This investigation reveals grade inflation in the Lahore Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, where private and regular students have the same grades. In addition, find the general inflation rate in stages and grade inflation at the Secondary Level from 2012 to 2018.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Grades

The concept of grades has to be defined to study grade inflation. Random House Dictionary defines these meanings as easily understood: Grade indicates the quality of work in a course, test, or particular assignment, based on a number, letter, or another identifier. Gainful employment in our culture is believed to begin and finish with academic achievement, with high marks being seen as an indicator of moral and personal values. It is

more significant for a student's grades than his standards and beliefs (Beatty, Walmsley, Sackett, Kuncel, & Koch, 2015). This view is held by both Brimi (2011) and Brumfield (2005). Teachers may be offering their students marks in return for anything else. As studies have shown, grades are kept as a historical record of what has happened and serve as evidence regarding the capabilities of a particular student.

According to Taylor's (1975) definition, grades are a student's efforts made evident by assets such as assignments, homework, and extra-curricular activities.

- i. The best knowledge of the topic is when a student fully comprehends the relevant components and ideologies.
- ii. Skills in the areas of these concepts and mindsets of those who espouse these concepts.
- iii. Authorization to connect the topic to other divisions as well as other subjects.
- iv. The capacity to apply knowledge in real-world situations and produce outstanding outcomes.

This passage, written by Taylor (1975), suggests that the researcher can make more precise claims regarding various grades in various disciplines. When critics use the word grades, they usually consider it to mean measuring a student's performance and career experiences in the area of study (Duncan & Noonan, 2007; Swan, Guskey, & Jung, 2014). Research on "fair play" by Adrian (2012) analyzed how grades are applied in daily life.

The purposes stated were as follows:

- i. Mission/missional/inspirational
Ultimately, grades are the most excellent motivator and source of pleasure for students.
- ii. The number of peers standing for the purpose
Because of his grades, the student is more highly regarded than his classmates.
- iii. Purpose: screening
Students' grades play a crucial part in student admissions to various universities.

Grade Inflation

Sonner (2000), as part of his investigation into grade inflation, discovered that the topic had been widely covered in the media for many years. The number of students receiving A or B grades is increasing, and it is becoming harder to tell which students are performing well from those who are merely average. Because of this, academic institutions and corporations prefer test results over transcripts. When it comes to establishing an institution's public image, he feels that transcripts and grades are the only tools. Increasing the number of A's or giving out A's may reduce the quality of education, harm the reputation of institutions, and hamper the advancement of gifted students (Welsh et al., 2013; Wiggins, 1994).

Causes of Grade Inflation

The Bloomington Campus Faculty Council created an educational policy committee to keep track of inflation in grades at the undergraduate level, as Whitbeck (1977) reported. The committee recommended that steps be published and a grading system be adopted. Grade inflation is an issue that has spread internationally, and much higher education institutions are widely recognized for it. Many changes have been made in the grading system to decrease grade inflation (Geisinger, 1979; Schneider & Hutt, 2014; Thorsen, 2014).

According to Sajjad, Siddique, & Tufail (2022), grade inflation is also caused by a shift in the quality of students. Other than that, institutions are compelled to decrease

performance standards due to financial constraints and low enrollment rates. According to him, if institutions boost their grading requirements, they would lose students, money, and professors. Mohnsen (2013) & Wiley (2011) emphasized, "Students need grades, and institutions need students; thus, the emphasis on grades will continue to increase in level and decrease in value."

Concern that their high standards would not attract enough new students pushed some schools to replicate grade inflation recorded elsewhere, Allensworth (2013) observed. In addition, he said that teachers might not give failing grades to pupils for reasons of shame or fear. When asked about their desire to help students by delivering grades, most teachers claimed they wanted to help them stay in school and avoid being deployed in Vietnam. According to Allensworth (2013), the Pass/Fail system was established at intermediate and undergraduate levels because scholars believe the old grading system must be replaced. It was a system alternative with consequences on pupils and the school system. Specific benefits and drawbacks of the Pass/Fail concept:

Advantages:

- In doing so, it will scupper the superiority of the rivals.
- Students will feel less stressed and study more as a result of this.
- Students should be able to take as many classes as they choose without worrying about failing.
- It will help students become more creative.

Disadvantages:

- Reduce motivation for optimum learning.
- Comparatively less descriptive of student achievement than the grading system.
- It will reduce students' anxiety, and they will lose the desire to perform and a desire for success.
- It would be unfair to gifted pupils.
- It will not distinguish between outstanding and average work.
- The instructor may not target students' weaknesses (McMunn, Schenck, & McColskey, 2003; Bonner, 2016; Brookhart, 2015).

Grindberg (2014) investigated the reasons for grade inflation among college students via their study on grade inflation. Their research indicates that total grades would also rise by raising the number of students in a class at the undergraduate level. Moreover, their study suggests that participants' grade inflation varies. Some topics have more grade inflation than others. According to the results of their investigation, instructors also have a part in grade inflation. Part-time instructors and teaching assistants provide more fantastic grades than permanent faculty members, particularly at the undergraduate level. Goldman and Widowski (1976) performed a study and concluded that when the same courses are assessed for various students, there are significant differences between them. The standard science courses had much lower averages than other subjects. As Goldman, Schmidt, Hewitt, and Fisher (1974) predicted, slow learners would get poorer marks in subjects with lax grading requirements,

while quick learners will study subjects with stringent standards. Critical sectors with large numbers of slow learners seem to have adopted approaches that consolidate lower skill levels without a corresponding reduction in standard assessments. Mohnsen (2013) did a study, and his results indicate that grade inflation is analogous to a student with a disadvantage and that a college degree is equivalent to a salable commodity, resulting in a decline in demand for higher education.

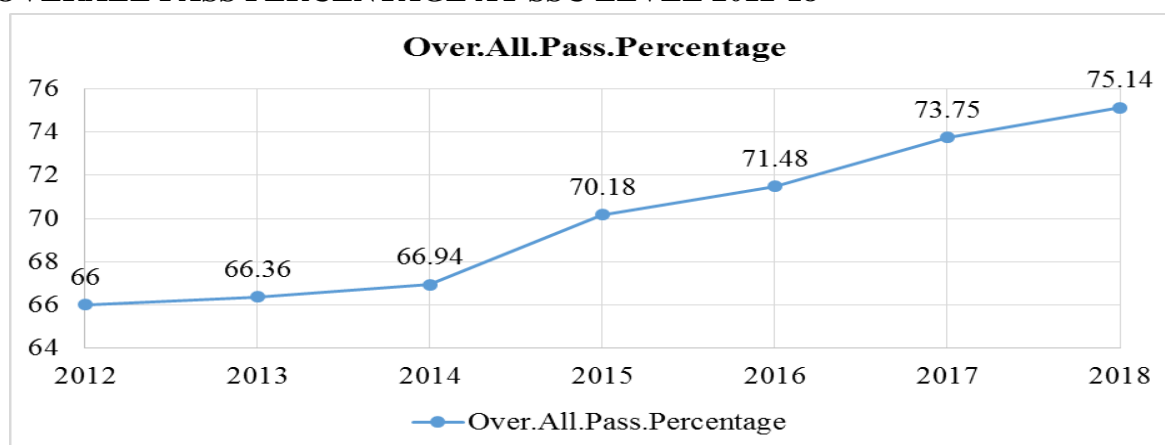
Research Design

A descriptive survey study was conducted. To study how students' grades have increased over the last few years at BISE Lahore, the researcher analyzed data from the 2012-2018 academic years in BISE Lahore. The research was made up of students who earned passing grades of A, B, C, D, and E. Year to year, the student samples varied.

Data Analysis

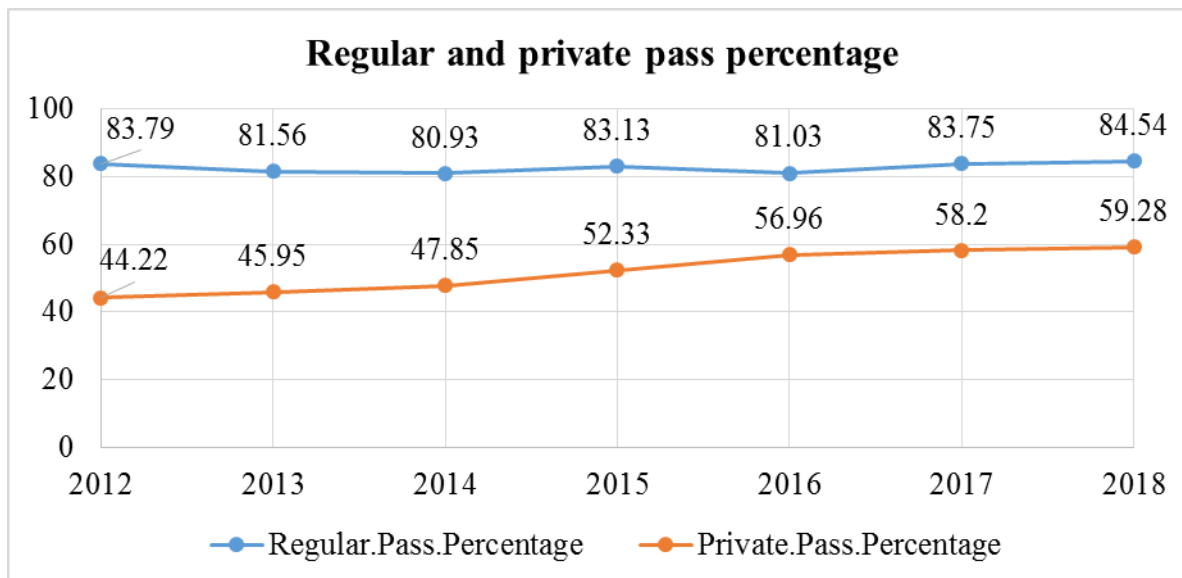
The researcher used charts to illustrate the existence of grade inflation in this area. Due to seven years of BISE Lahore board data, charts first appeared using data from the end of 2009.

OVERALL PASS PERCENTAGE AT SSC LEVEL 2012-18



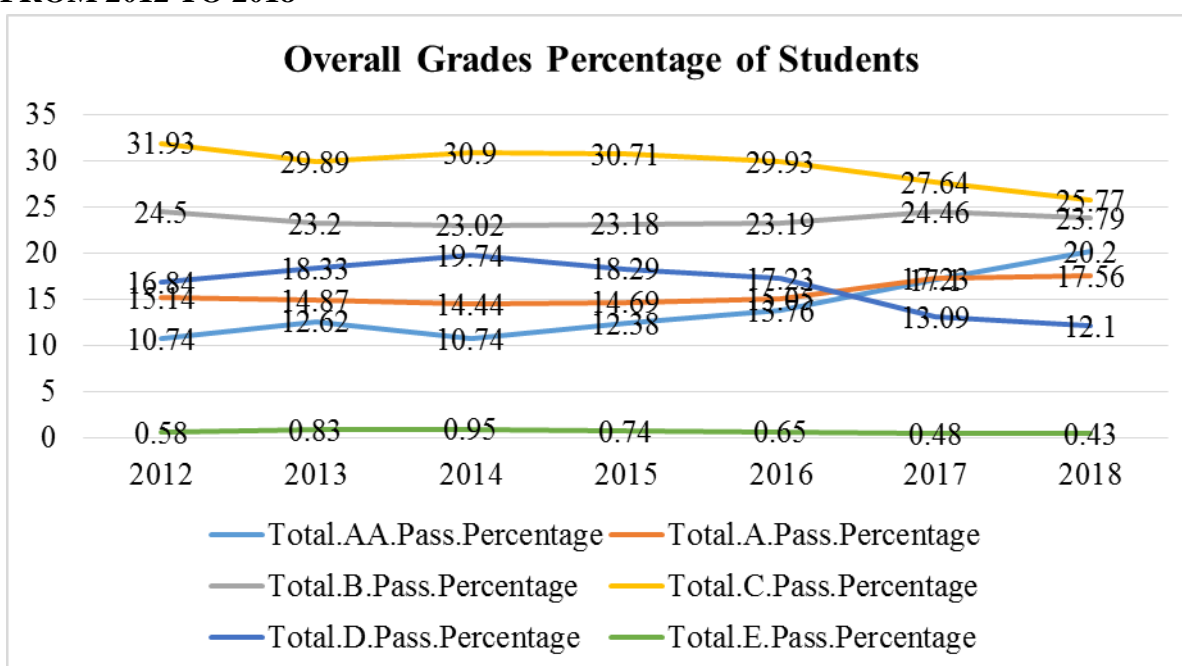
The figure illustrates the general pattern of BISE Lahore's secondary school pass percentage throughout the study. In the instance of BISE Lahore, the total pass rate of students rose steadily during the time under consideration. The failure rate almost vanished in two years, beginning in 2012. This scenario indicates that there has been a notable increase in the grades that secondary school students are receiving and their pass rate in the last few years.

PRIVATE AND REGULAR PASS PERCENTAGE STUDENT SSC 2012-18



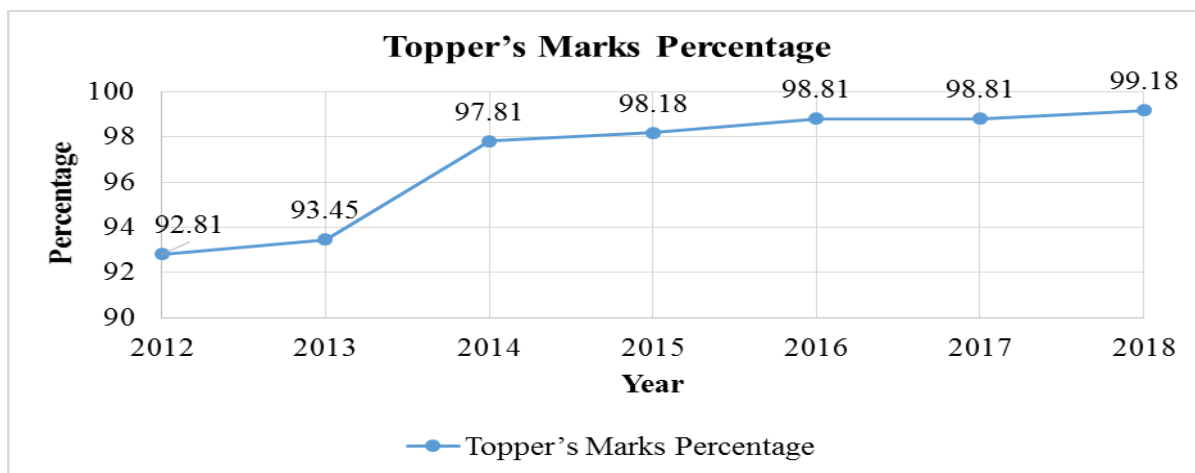
The figure shows that the overall proportion of private and regular passes at BISE Lahore has followed a clear pattern throughout the research period. This illustration shows that the total private pass percentage of BISE Lahore students increased throughout this research. The pass rate of pupils only rose when it fell in 2014 and 2016 and then increased somewhat. This scenario supports the increase in the pass rate of private secondary school applicants occurring rapidly over the last year. However, a slow rise in the proportion of regular secondary school applicants at BISE Lahore was seen.

THE PATTERN IN SSC LEVEL STUDENTS' OVERALL GRADE AVERAGE FROM 2012 TO 2018



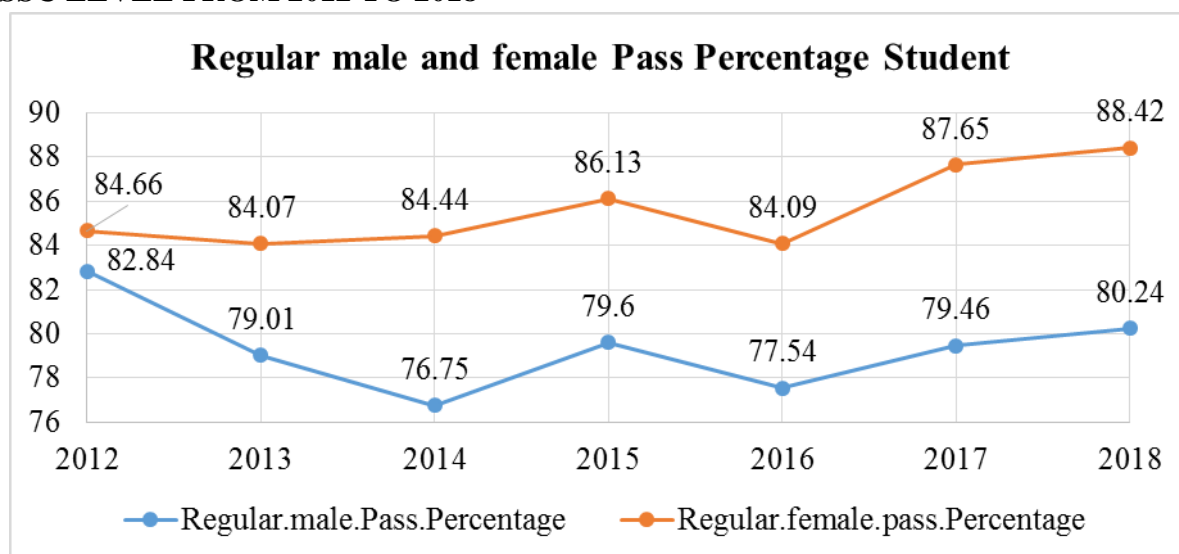
The figure shows BISE Lahore secondary school students' overall grade percentage throughout the study period. BISE Lahore had the lowest SSC average grade throughout the study period, and it plummeted to 0.43 percent in 2018. In 2014, the grade-D rate rose to 19.74 percent, then fell to 12.1% until 2014, increasing by 1.2 percent. Overall, grade C declined, except for 2014's 1% gain. Grade B varied significantly throughout time, but in 2017 it climbed by 1%. Grade A rose from 14.87% to 17.56%. Grade AA dropped from 12.62 to 10.74 percent in 2014 and rose to 20.2% in 2018. Grade AA had a 7.6% difference from the other grades. This demonstrates how fast secondary school grades have increased.

TOPPER'S SSC MARKS PERCENTAGE 2012-18



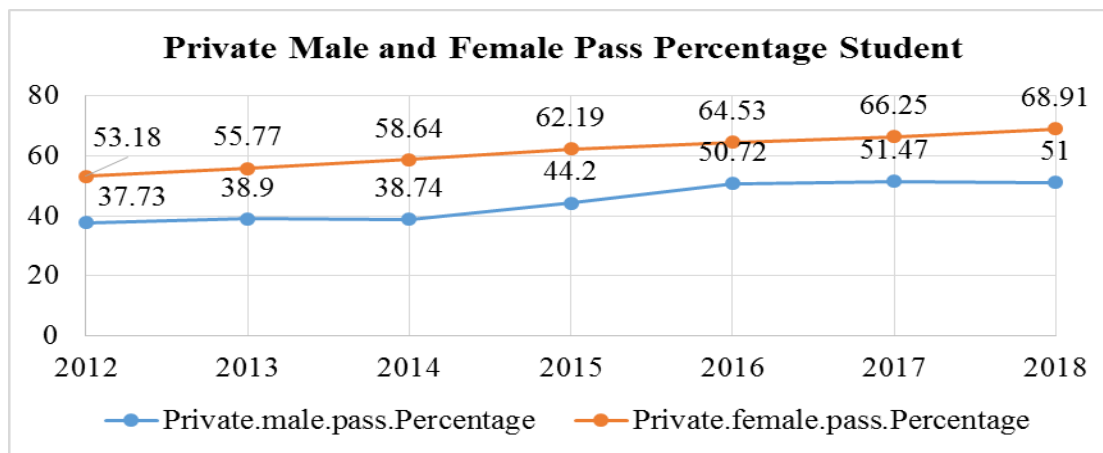
The percentage of students at the secondary school level at BISE Lahore who achieved high marks is shown throughout the study period. The graph demonstrates an upward trend in the proportion of students at BISE Lahore who had the highest scores during the period that was taken into account. This situation reflects the significant growth in the number of pupils in secondary schools earning better grades.

THE PASSING RATE OF REGULAR MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS AT THE SSC LEVEL FROM 2012 TO 2018



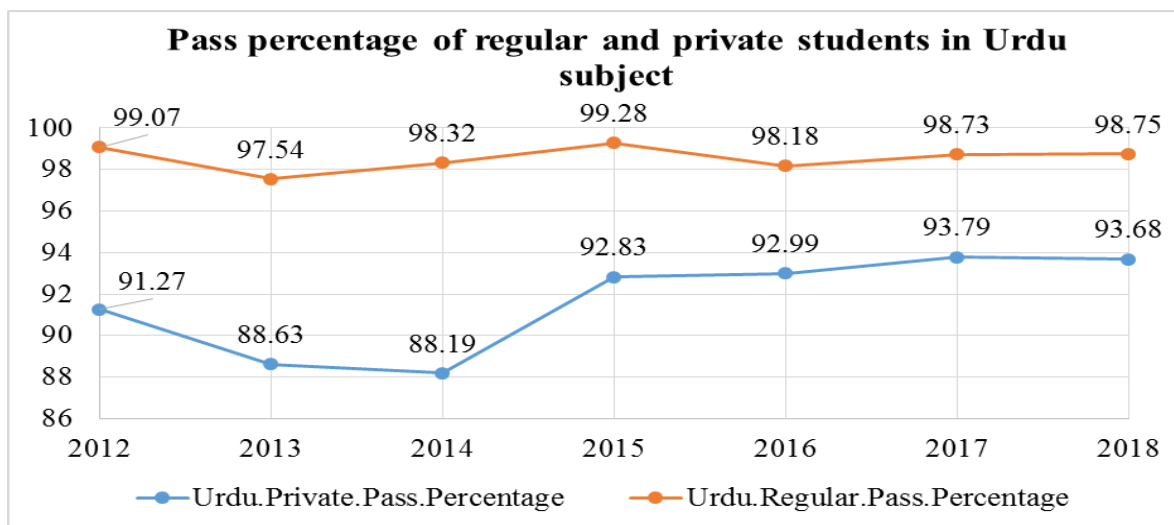
The figure displays the evolution of male and female secondary school pass percentages in BISE Lahore during the research period. The chart shows that BISE Lahore's regular female pass percentage increased every year except for 2016. In 2016, it dropped 2.04% from 2015 but rose in 2017 and beyond. Male regular pass percentage decreased in 2014 and 2016, then rose again. From 2012 to 2018, male and female regular pass rates climbed. The male regular pass percentage increased by 1% in 2012; the female regular pass percentage was higher at BISE Lahore throughout the study period.

THE PASSING RATE OF PRIVATE MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS AT THE SSC LEVEL FROM 2012 TO 2018



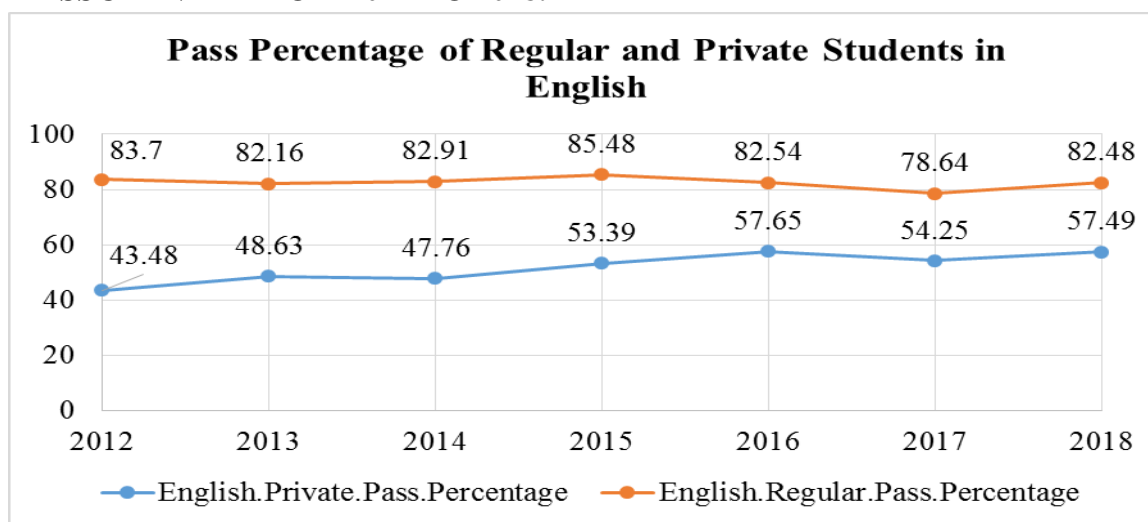
The figure shows male and female BISE Lahore private secondary school pass rates. During the study period, BISE Lahore's private female pass rate rose from 55.77% to 68.91%. While the average private male pass rate rose over time, it fell in 2014 and 2018. This pattern shows that both private male and female pass percentages rose from 2012 to 2018, and private female pass percentages rose more gradually than males at BISE Lahore over the whole study period.

THE PASSING RATE OF PRIVATE AND REGULAR STUDENTS IN URDU AT THE SSC LEVEL FROM 2012 TO 2018.



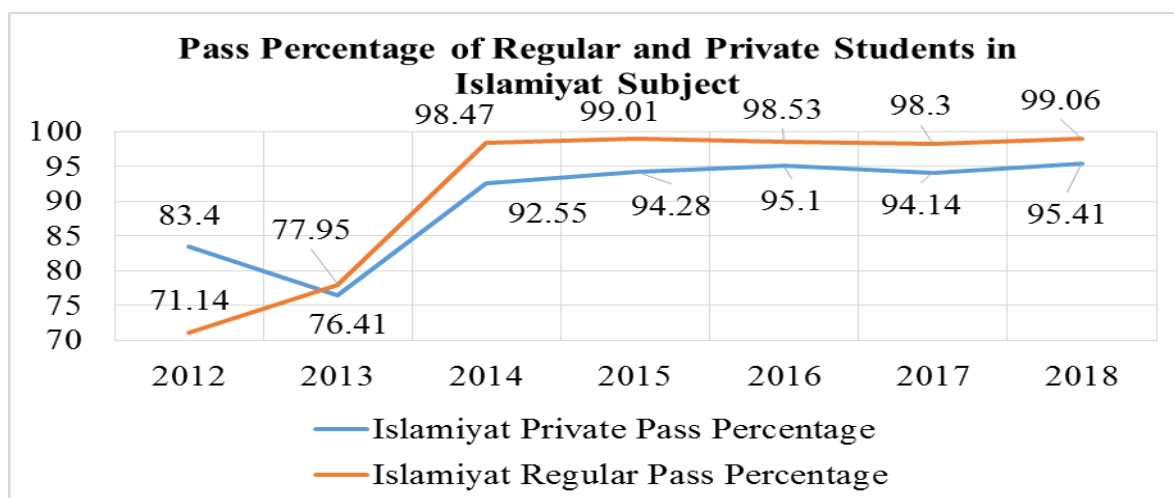
The figure shows the pass rate of private and regular Urdu students at BISE Lahore. The table demonstrates that BISE Lahore's pass rate for private Urdu pupils in secondary school grew across the period except in 2014. Regular secondary school students' Urdu pass percentage rose from 97.54 to 98.75 percent. During the study time, BISE Lahore's pass rate for private and regular Urdu students rose.

THE PASSING RATE OF PRIVATE AND REGULAR STUDENTS IN ENGLISH AT THE SSC LEVEL FROM 2012 TO 2018.



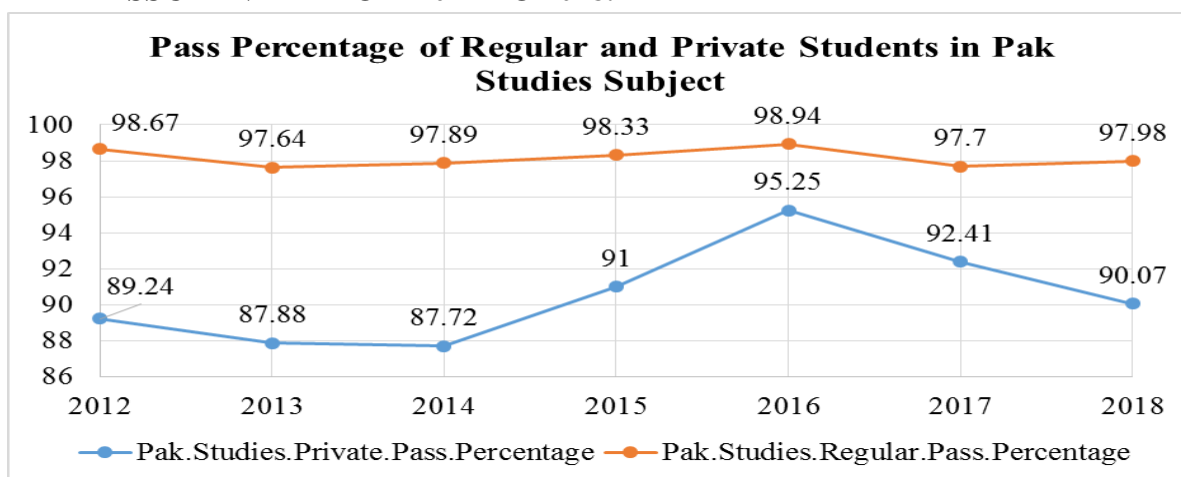
The figure shows the pass rate of private and regular English students at BISE Lahore over the study period. The data illustrates that BISE Lahore's English pass rate for private secondary school students was uneven. 2015, 2016, and 2018 grew. 2014 and 2017 were lower. 8.86% change from 48.63% to 57.49%. The English pass rate for regular high school students rose until 2015, fell in 2016 and 2017, and rose in 2018. This shows that private secondary school English students in BISE Lahore pass higher than average applicants.

THE PASSING RATE OF PRIVATE AND REGULAR STUDENTS IN ISLAMIYAT AT THE SSC LEVEL FROM 2012 TO 2018



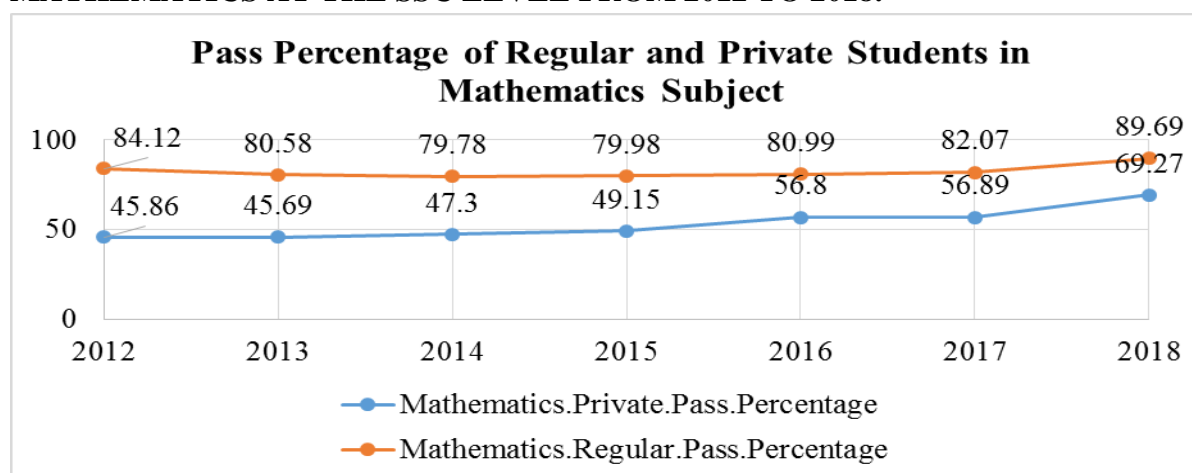
The graph illustrates BISE Lahore's private and regular Islamiyat pass rates. The pass percentage of private pupils in Islamiyat at the secondary level climbed fast in 2014 and continued rising until 2017 when it slightly fell. The pass rate of Islamiyat secondary school students climbed quickly in 2014 but dropped in 2016 and 2017. 2018 saw 99.06%. During the study period, BISE Lahore's private students' Islamiyat pass rate increased dramatically.

THE PASSING RATE OF PRIVATE AND REGULAR STUDENTS IN PAK STUDIES AT THE SSC LEVEL FROM 2012 TO 2018.



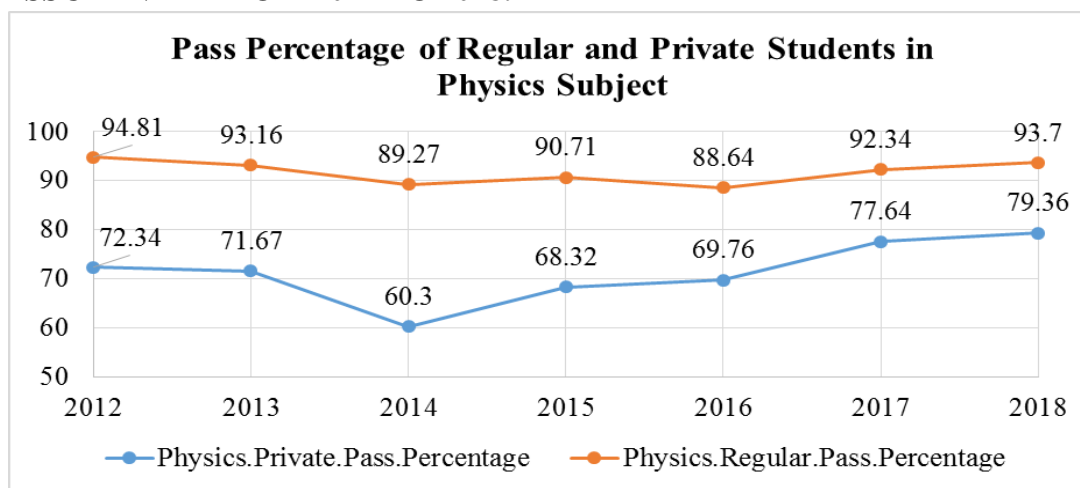
The graph illustrates the percentage of Pakistani students who completed their studies during the academic year. From 2012 to 2016, the proportion of private Pakistani secondary school students who passed their exams increased from 87.88 percent to 95.25 percent. It was 92.41 percent in 2017 and 90.07 percent in 2018. Regular high school students in Pakistan improved their pass rates. In 2012, 2016, and 2018, it rose, but in 2017 it fell. Over the course of the whole research period, the proportion of private school students in Pakistan who passed their secondary school exams at BISE Lahore climbed significantly.

THE PASSING RATE OF PRIVATE AND REGULAR STUDENTS IN MATHEMATICS AT THE SSC LEVEL FROM 2012 TO 2018.



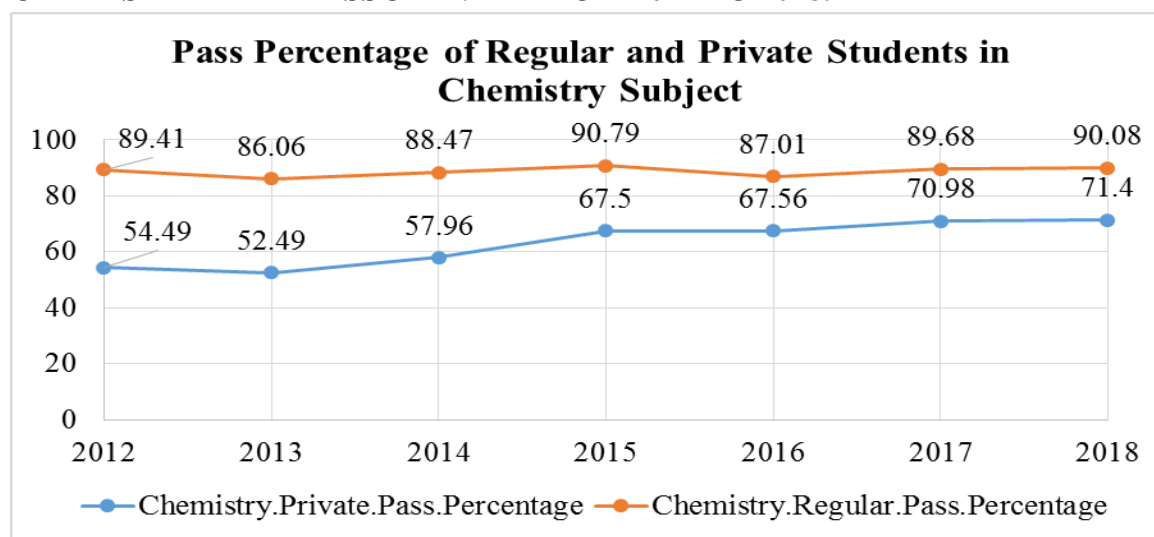
The figure illustrates the pass percentage of private and regular students in Math at BISE Lahore across the study period. In BISE Lahore, the pass percentage of private pupils in secondary school Mathematics increased from 45.69% to 62.97% from 2012 to 2018. Pass rates for regular secondary school pupils in mathematics have risen steadily, with a tiny dip in 2014. This demonstrates that BISE Lahore's pass rate for private and regular secondary school pupils in mathematics grew during the research period.

THE PASSING RATE OF PRIVATE AND REGULAR STUDENTS IN PHYSICS AT THE SSC LEVEL FROM 2012 TO 2018.



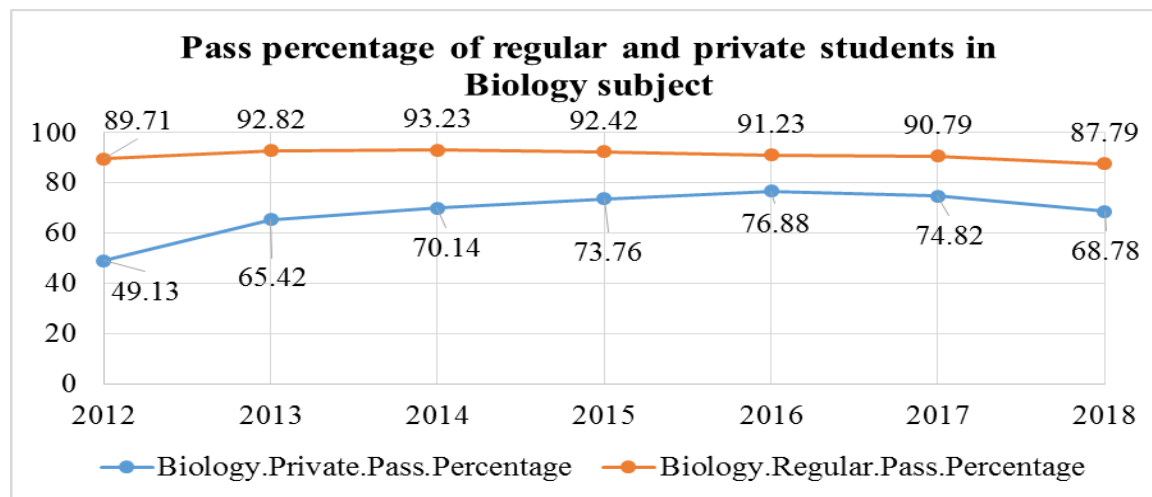
The figure shows the Physics pass rate for private and regular students at BISE Lahore. The data demonstrate that in BISE Lahore, private students' Physics pass rates grew from 2012 to 2018, except for a drop in 2014 from 71.67 to 60.3%. High school Physics pass rates were inconsistent. It climbs every year except in 2014 and 2016. This shows that private secondary school pass rates rose purposefully and significantly. During the study period, the pass percentage of regular students at BISE Lahore did not rise constantly.

THE PASSING RATE OF PRIVATE AND REGULAR STUDENTS IN CHEMISTRY AT THE SSC LEVEL FROM 2012 TO 2018.



The figure illustrates the pass percentage of private and regular students in Chemistry at BISE Lahore during the study period. The chart shows that in BISE Lahore, the pass rate of private secondary school students in Chemistry increased from 52.49 percent in 2013 to 71.4 percent in 2018. The proportion of regular secondary school pupils passing Chemistry has likewise risen, except in 2016. This demonstrates that BISE Lahore's pass rate for private and regular secondary school students in Chemistry grew during the study period.

THE PASSING RATE OF PRIVATE AND REGULAR STUDENTS IN BIOLOGY AT THE SSC LEVEL FROM 2012 TO 2018.



The figure shows the pass rate of private and regular Biology students at BISE Lahore. The figure illustrates that BISE Lahore's pass percentage of private students in Biology at the secondary school level improved from 2012 to 2016 from 49.13% to 76.88% and subsequently declined in 2017 and 2018 to 74.82% and 68.78%, respectively. In 2014, a small percentage of regular secondary school students passed Biology. This shows that BISE Lahore's pass rates for private and ordinary secondary school students in math changed in opposite ways.

Discussion

There has been much discussion about grades and grade inflation since the commencement of formal schooling. When it comes to assessing and grading students, teachers and administrators seldom acknowledge the beneficial contributions they make to education. Instead, they point to external factors that have caused grades to rise while student performance has dropped.

Grade inflation was found at Lahore's BISE, as revealed in light of results and conclusions. Failure rates are falling, while pass rates are rising among secondary pupils. Grades fluctuate, too. The levels of positive and negative grades are going up and down, respectively. There has been a growing number of pupils who have had a private pass rate for the whole study time. While the proportion of average students that graduated did not rise consistently, There have been two significant changes at the secondary school level: the pass percentage of private and regular students in various subjects has increased, and the number of schools with a more significant or equivalent number of students has increased.

A significant amount of media attention has been focused on grade inflation for many years, according to Mohnsen (2013). In addition, he also said that grades of A and B are becoming more frequent, and it is now more challenging to distinguish pupils who are doing well from those who are just ordinary. Institutions and corporations will utilize scores equitably instead of transcripts since that's the only way to get a proper return on their investment. To state his belief, he believes transcripts and grades are just a means through which an institution may establish a public image for its pupils (Svennberg, Meckbach, & Redelius, 2014).

As shown in Allen, Bauer, & Mathies (2005), grade inflation was discovered at colleges. Using data from the Georgia Institute of Technology, the research was conducted. Grade inflation is a significant issue in many school districts, and the only way to remedy it is to decrease the standards of teaching. Approximately two-thirds of the participants acknowledged that they didn't grade the test as they were supposed to.

Conclusion

Based on the evidence, it can be inferred that grade inflation occurred at BISE Lahore for secondary students. As time progresses, pupils' total proportion of passes continues to rise. The failure rate almost vanished for two years, beginning in 2012. Students' real pass rate at BISE Lahore isn't the only thing that matters. Additionally, the proportion of student passes held privately during study time rises. However, the proportion of students passing their classes did not continuously grow throughout the entire time; somewhat, it decreased in 2014 and 2016, then increased slightly in 2017.

In the total grade % of students who have graduated from secondary school certificate level, the number of A's, A's, B's, and C's continually increase with only the occasional decrease. While grades D and E—commonly referred to as "D and F" grades—decline and diminish every year, they are the most uncommon grade at the SSC level.

Recommendations

Most of the indications gathered together to conclude that grade inflation is causing an issue with secondary school education in which academic standards are steadily declining. If this is allowed to continue, students will lose faith in their school's standards and lose motivation to learn. Reforming secondary education is essential. We use our testing method and examination materials to verify that our students comprehend the course content and evaluate their ability to read, understand, and interpret. Secondly, any alterations to the SSC or HSSC examination answer scripts must be planned with dependability and validity. A more thorough study of BISE Lahore's grading criteria is required. Thus, further study is needed to learn about grade inflation and its causes. While many issues remain in grade inflation, more work is still to be done. The most accessible approach to acquiring a thorough knowledge of grade inflation and its causes is linking a group of kids to college soon. It's necessary to examine a group of students from their matriculation through to their ECAT or MCAT results. Grading quality may be assessed more precisely in this manner. The most significant way to look for grade inflation and develop a new instrument is to compare ECAT and MCAT results with their grades.

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