

Reasons of School dropout at Elementary level; Reflection of Teachers and Parents of dropped out Students

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Abstract

Pakistan's education system is struggling to cope with challenges related to school dropouts, increase in literacy rate and decrease in rate of out of school children. Like every other country Pakistan has also devised plans and kept it as part of educational policies so this problem can be solved. School dropout rate at elementary level is less than primary and secondary level. But it is alarming in this era of advance technologies. The mixed method research approach was used to explore the primary reasons of elementary school dropout. A questionnaire developed and validated for to collect data from elementary school teachers and open-ended interview sessions were arranged with the parents of students dropped out of schools. there are two important elements in students' life e.g., Parents and Teachers. The teachers say they have good teacher students' relationships and scarcity of the physical resources could be the reason for elementary school dropout. Parents believe that their survival is important and to survive in the world they had to withdraw their children from school to earn them financial resources. These parents don't find it easy but they are satisfied with their decisions.

Keywords: School dropout, Parents perception, Teachers' perception, reasons for dropout, out of school children, Elementary grade students.

1. Introduction

The education system of any country boosts the growth and development in this fast-changing world. The development of the is directly dependent upon its quality and quantity of human capital produced by the country. To attain this requires both quality of education and the equality in providing educational opportunities to the everyone. The countries always devise plans and policies to develop their education system to trigger the development of nation. But some developing countries like Pakistan has been struggling throughout the years to cope with the challenges hindering the education of their children. There are numerous challenges that Pakistan education system has been facing since its birth e.g., financial resources, lack of infrastructure, trained personnel, in service proper trainings of teachers, poverty political instability and rigid mindset of societies to pursue the education by leaving their family businesses.

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The major challenge is implementing the free universal primary and elementary (Article 25A, Constitution of Pakistan) education and increasing the literacy rate which is driven by the low enrollment and dropout of the Elementary Schools. According to the Ministry of Education the current literacy rate of Pakistan is 62.3% which is almost 63% of total population which means that there are 60 million of whole population are illiterate in the country. Considering the alarming situation of illiteracy in our country government is prioritizing the need the of education. The National Education policy of 1970 first addressed the issue of illiteracy provided solid grounds to work on for the eradication of illiteracy in Pakistan. Unfortunately, this issue has not been solved but the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training has included literacy in the national education priorities with devising proper plan to increase the rate of literacy. Ministry also emphasized that education up to Matric or Secondary level is necessary. In Pakistan there are three levels of Education Primary, Secondary (Secondary and Higher Secondary) and Tertiary or Higher Education. There Elementary education is the 8 years of the formal education which is after the completion of primary and before the secondary education. Elementary education is considered basic and compulsory in many of the countries of the world. It provides bases for secondary and higher secondary education (Summiya, 2021). In Pakistan the elementary education was addressed in National Education Policy 1972, that boys and girls shall be provided with universal free education by 1972 and then it shall be extended up to secondary level in 1974. This policy was not implemented because of the low socio-economic conditions of country and the civil war between east and west Pakistan. The separation between the country caused crises all over the world. The schools for elementary education were started after that policy which provides education up to elementary grades.

Since the UNESCO emphasized the right of education in 2020 to the citizens of Pakistan as their sustainable development goal 4 which is to ensure to provide access of free and quality education to boys and girls up to Secondary level leading to relevant. (#Envision2030 Goal 4: Quality Education). They also put emphasis the quality of education provided by the government of Pakistan. Every government included this SDG4 as part of their education policies to decrease the rate of dropout and increase in the rate of enrollment in the primary and secondary schools of Pakistan to attain the increase in literacy rate. The elementary education in Pakistan has less dropout rates then primary or secondary education. According to the UNESCO the dropout rate at primary education is 33% but at the secondary education is 73% which includes the elementary education. The drop out means the students who leave their schools for lifetime. There are about 54,000 government schools in Punjab and 10.6 million enrolled students. There is dropout rate at primary classes is about 50% and about half of the eight million children studying in 38,000 primary schools leave the education system before reaching to the elementary grade. Another 20% students drop out at the later stage (Abbasi 2021). This shows the alarming conditions of students dropping out of the primary and elementary schools. Primary school provides bases for the enrollment in the elementary education but dilemma with students is they drop their schools before reaching to the elementary grade.

Ministry of Planning of Pakistan (2013) explained the second MDG goal and made some targets which are 100% primary school enrollment, that every child shall be enrolled to primary education and completes it without dropping, and 88% percent of literacy rate. There were increase in primary enrollment and literacy rate but unfortunately started fluctuating till 2011-2015. The last literacy rate presented by the Federal Ministry of Education and Professional training was 58%, and literacy rate of male were 58% and female were 47% (Yousef, December 29).

According to the recent reports by Federal Ministry of Education and Professional Training the literacy rate is 63% (62.3%).

Besides all the planning and decision making, government always seeks the cooperation from the community more specifically the parents of children enrolled at the school and their teachers who have more time to spend with them. Teachers creates the organizational culture of the school that holds the urge for learning for the students. And when they get home the parents gives them that environment. But if they fail to do so the factors effecting the dropout gets triggered and there would be any reason to it.

2. Review of Previous Literature

The world has been changing with fast pace and the nations are competing on the basis on knowledge. To match the speed of the world the developing countries required to create their education systems better in adaption and merging the technology with education. Pakistan is one of the developing countries and it always has been struggling to create competitive manpower through education but due to some reasons these struggles does not prove to be much fruitful. And still Pakistan is facing the same problem years back, the current literacy rate of Pakistan is 62.8% in recent survey. The aim of the education system is to increase enrollments of the students to increase the literacy of Pakistan and skilled with educated manpower can be provided to the industries of Pakistan. One of the reasons of decrease in literacy rate is out of school children. Out of school children are who have school going age but not going to school.

Concept of Dropouts

Dropout means that the children who are out of school, they attended the school but due to some reasons they leave the schools. There can be any reason socio economic conditions to their own will. The dropout means any student who leave the school because of any reason before completing their graduation or specific program (Khan, Azhar, and Shah, 2001). In simple words the dropout means being out of school before completing the specific level of education like Primary, Elementary, Secondary and Tertiary Education. The drop out means that students who leave the school without completing their education or the education programs they are enrolled in for any reason expect death (Kamal, 2002 and Attaullah, 2000).

The recent situation of school dropouts in Punjab

In Punjab, the enrollment rates vary between girls and boys expect at the age of 5 to 16. The highest enrollment rate among boys is 90% and among girls is 85% by recent past years. The enrollment rates of girls are lower than boys which decreases with the increase in the age. The highest enrollment rate that has been observed in recent past years is 88%. There is steady decline in enrollment of both after age of 11 years. There is ample room for improvement besides better conditions of enrollment and dropout in Punjab than other provinces. There are 39% of children having age of 16 never attend the school in their lives and dropout rate rises at the age after 11 to 16 with 61%. This shows that children after completing their primary level have more dropouts than before primary and during secondary level of education. More than 77% of children are out of school in rural areas which is 15.4 million of total out of school children and 4.6 million which is 23% are living in urban areas. (Huma Zia Faran, 2021).

Factors affecting Dropouts

Living in society, there are multiple factors that affect the life of children and the dropout in the schools. These factors which include the financial status, social status, school building, school infrastructure, poverty, malnutrition, behavior of parents towards children, behavior of teachers towards children, rigid mentality, early marriage of girls and concerns of security or safety of children.

Financial status and Social Reasons

The financial status of parents of children are one of the major factors of leaving school. If they do not have stability in their lives, they tend to withdraw their children and push them into child labour so they could earn something for them. The social reasons like culture, religious believes, values system and rigid mentality of families also affects the dropout rate as these factors.

School Building and Infrastructure

The availability of facilities and the development of the children have positive relationship. The resources include the building, required number of chairs and desks, Pedagogical aids, other classroom necessities. The availability of all these resources has direct impact on the interest of children and their development in education. The scarcity of these resources influences the dropout rate to push upward. According to the research conducted by Shami and Hussain (2006) the access and equity in basic needs in education. According to them if the school lacks the proper infrastructure and discipline, it helps increase in dropout rate. The retention could be gained through availability of proper school building, provision of physical facilities, but the punishment of teachers, overcrowded classes and non-conducive environment of classes makes the dropout rates get higher Pakistan (Government of Pakistan, 1998, 2008). The low level of economic development of the country, low per capita income, unemployment, and inadequate income of the parents and poor health outcomes in addition to haunting poverty of the people, poor standards of health and malnutrition are the major causes of high dropout rate in Pakistan (Bhatti et al., 2011: Rumberge, 2001: and Shami & Hussain (2005).

Teacher related Factors

Teachers are the pivot points around which the improvement of education system of a country revolves and it vital role in improvement of country with skilled and educated manpower. According to Shami & Hussain (2005) there are multiple teacher related factors which are scarcity of the trained teachers, hesitation of female teachers to teach at primary stages in rural areas and also the teacher absenteeism in Pakistan. Behavior of teachers are also factor that effects the dropout which includes the disparity among students, not paying attention to the needy ones, disparity on the basis on race or financial status, teacher punishment, grudge against students.

Family related Factors

After school the family teaches the child and plays an important role in education for their children. They are responsible for proving the free universal education according to the United Nations envision 2030. Therefor family's economic conditions matter in the children's lives ad they had to face the difficulties with their family. If a family can't afford the education of their children or they can't cope up in earning daily bread they push their children to leave school and earn for the

sake of survival of family. Poverty is the biggest and the strongest limiting factor to attain desired outcomes concerning Universal Education in the country, (United Nations Development Program, 2004).

Teaching related Factors

The teaching and learning process is very crucial in students' lives and quality of education is unconditionally important for students but in Pakistan, quality of education, at all levels in general and at primary level, the unsatisfactory condition in Pakistan causes high dropout (Saadi & Saeed, 2010). The contents of curriculum are difficult and outdated curriculum is being taught to the kids of recent era when technologies are improving with very fast pace. Revision of existing curriculum according to the needs of society and economic conditions has always been neglected. The lack of connection between recent technologies and the curriculum being taught at schools creates the room for dropouts at the elementary school.

Geographical Factors

The geographical factors that are affecting the dropout rates in Pakistan is long distances between school and residing places of students, poor transportation, natural calamities, poor communication facilities, (UK Aid, 2017). Similarly, the research studies also established positive impact of less distance on students' dropout and retention rate.

These factors can be the primary reasons for the increase in the dropout rate in Pakistan. The parents and teachers play vital role in the development of the students not only as work force but also as better human beings who are going to teach their next generation the ways of living and surviving. The insights of parents and teachers can be used to minimize the elementary school dropouts and devise to eradicate the illiteracy.

The study is significant for the elementary grade teachers and administrative authorities as it provides the primary causes of the dropout at the elementary level. They can take insights from it and try to decrease the dropout rate at their schools. This study is scholarly significant as it attempted to extend the existing data base on the school dropouts, emphasizing the study to elementary school students, teachers and their parents. This study will also provide better understanding for the prospective teachers of Education department.

3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were;

- Identify the primary reasons of dropout of students from elementary school
- Explore the factors identified by the parents and teachers at elementary school

4. Research Questions

According to objectives the study was deemed to answer the following questions;

- What are the primary reasons of the elementary school student's dropout?
- What are the reflection/viewpoint of the parents and teachers at elementary school students dropped out of the school?

5. Research Methodology

The study was mixed method in nature, the population of the interest for this study was the teachers and parents of the school from which the students have dropped school for lifetime; schools in area of tehsil Shahpur, district Sargodha. A tool as validated questionnaire tool was developed to collect data from elementary school teachers but kept interview method for the parents of children who are dropped out of their schools. The sample of whole population was 5 in service teachers and 5 parents of the children from Elementary school Shahpur.

Open ended questions were asked to the parents of children to ensure their insights about dropouts fully conveyed to the researcher. The aim of the study was to find out the primary reasons of dropout from elementary school and insights about the teachers and parents.

6. Results

The researchers collected data visiting the parents of dropped out kids and the elementary school to collect the required data. The descriptive and statistical tests were applied for data analysis. T-test was applied to get the frequency of questionnaire responses. The interviews were transcribed and descriptive coding was done. The collected data were analyzed within the context of objectives and research questions of the study.

The questionnaire addressed the physical resources at school, pedagogy of teachers, punishment and rewards and their behavior with students. The teacher is primary element in the process of teaching and learning and its actions put direct impact on the psychology of students, in some cases reason of school dropouts. The 90% teachers believe that they have necessary physical resources which includes Building, Playgrounds, Black Boards, Classrooms, and Books. All the teachers agreed that they lack the sufficient number of desks and chairs in their school. 40% teachers believe that unavailability is the cause of school dropouts for the elementary school students. All the teachers believe that their teaching method is good for children and they could learn easily. A question asked about their teaching method, 80% told that they use lecture method and remaining 20% told that they teach with question-and-answer method. 20% teachers believe that children dropout because of the insufficient academic attention of teacher towards them, 40 percent remained undecided and 40% disagreed to this. According to 100% teachers they smack their students if they do not pay attention to their studies. 100% teachers praise their students on their good performance. 100% teachers believe that smacking can be a cause of elementary school dropouts. The behavior of teachers impacts the child's actions, 100% teachers believe that their behavior with students is good and they have friendly behavior. 70% teachers believe that children leave school because of their family problems, 30% teachers believe that children dropout because of the teacher's behavior.

The open-ended interviews were arranged with parents of children who dropped out of school. After analyzing, the results shows that 80% parents said that they withdraw their children from school because of the poor economic conditions. Another 10% percent parents believe that because of disability their child was not able to go to school, so they withdraw him from school. 10% told the researcher that their child was not interested in formal education in elementary school, he used to leave the school before the time and they withdraw him and they send their kid to be a motorcycle mechanic. From all these parents 80% are satisfied that their children are out of school but 20% are not satisfied. All the parents that were part of sample and interviewed are illiterate.

7. Conclusion and Discussion

There are various reasons for the students leaving their schools. This study was small scale study to analyze and explore the reasons of dropout from the elementary school. The 90% of parents were satisfied with their children leaving school. 10% were not satisfied as they have to send their children to become motorcycle mechanic. The teachers added that their school building is not so good and they are not being provided with basic facilities at school. They also indicated that poor parents withdraw their children from school and push them to child labour. After the study follow can be the reasons for the dropout at the elementary school students.

Physical facilities and lack of interest of teachers in students is also the cause of the school dropouts. Punishing the children which includes smacking them is main reason that children don't like being at school and they starts to hate going to school. Not sufficient teaching material creates the gap in students' interest in school and learning, which becomes the reason for their school dropout. School infrastructure and lack of discipline is also becoming the loss of interest for students in learning activities which increases the urge to drop the school. Previous literature also showed that school infrastructure and lack of discipline with hard punishments could be the reason for the school dropout of the children from the school.

Poverty is the main cause for the parents as they withdraw their children from school to earn daily bread instead going to school whole day. The poverty is aligned with the illiteracy and not sufficient awareness of importance of education for the parents. If they let their children learn and educated, they shall earn good job that will ultimately help them uplift from the line of poverty. But according to the parents they suffer for the daily bread, they are indebted to shop owners. They have to pay the debt also. So, they withdraw their children to have them earn and help the father with finances. Children also have to leave school because of the death of the father, a mother said that she had to withdraw her 12 sons from school, so he could help her in earning.

8. References

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