

Assessment of the socio-economic determinants of school children's dropouts in rural areas of district Peshawar, Pakistan

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Abstract

Children dropping out from schools is one of common phenomena in the modern world. Different demographic, socio-economic, psychological, school based, and community factors are responsible for the number of children school dropout across the globe. Using convenient sampling technique, through questionnaire and interview methods primary data was collected from 400 household heads whose children were dropped out from schools in rural areas of district Peshawar during last five years. For this purpose, a structured questionnaire and interviews were conducted to obtain the required data. Results of the study reveal that, in case of boys, more than 60% of the respondents were of the view that poverty is the main reason for children's school dropout. In the case of girls school dropouts, 45% left studies incomplete because of poor financial position. Other determinants such as father education, mother education, school distance, illiterate community, the parental perception was also considered more or less responsible for school dropout of the children. This study recommends that government should provide free education along with monetary incentives to those household heads who do not send their children to schools due to financial constraints.

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1. Introduction

The concerns that expand educational inequality in the society can be used to measure the growth of a society. Unequal distribution of education among male and female students stymies a country's development at every stage. According to the World Conference on Education by the year 2015, all children, especially girls, must have access to and complete a high-quality education (Loreman & Deppeler, 2001; Vaughan, 2010). We all know that both boys and girls have an equal right to an education, and that providing education to both boys and girls is critical in the development of a nation (Shahidul & Karim, 2015).

Education is a critical component of economic progress, social, and individual well-being. It also serves as a foundation for decreasing poverty and inequality, increasing health, facilitating the adoption of new technologies, and developing and disseminating knowledge. Scholars also agreed that education is essential for the formation of nation's economic, societal, scientific and political institutions (Dagneu, 2017).

Wages vary as jobs and employees differ, as per Gary Becker's Human Capital Theory. Each employee contributes a distinctive set of abilities and talents to the workforce. As a result, investments in human capital, according to this hypothesis, boost the possibilities of economic success. Obviously, the Human Capital Theory emphasises the necessity of investing in human capital, as in a high school education, for success beyond high school graduation, and so ascertain the human capital investments that drive this "economic success". Because we attend high school during our childhood, most of the investments in education that will take us to this goal must be passed from our parents to us. As a result, our family's socioeconomic status has a significant impact on our ability to accumulate human capital. Lower-income families not only have fewer money, but also less human capital to pass on to their children, putting these children at a disadvantage from the start. As a result, this article hypothesises that a decrease in parental investment in children's human capital will raise the likelihood of these students dropping out of high school (Ingrum, 2006).

District Peshawar is one of the oldest cities in South Asia. In 2020, This historical city has a population of 2,203,000 inhabitants, showing an increase of 3.28% in the population as compared to 2019. In district Peshawar, the education sector especially at the school level is under serious pressure. The education sector is having a persistent problem of quality education. Statistics reveal that number of primary schools in the district is 1060 in the district, where 1 teacher is available for 45 students. Similarly, at the middle level, this teacher-student ratio has reached 1:70. In a similar vein, teacher to student ratio at secondary and higher secondary schools is 1:140 and 1:32 respectively. Being the provincial capital, Peshawar had also faced challenges to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target of "providing universal primary education by 2015".

The gross enrolment rate at the primary level is 91%, but only 56% among them complete primary education. The literacy rate in rural and urban areas varies as such 45 percent and 62 percent respectively. The dropout rate at the primary level of schooling between boys and girls is 45 percent and 54 percent respectively. The current net growth rate of school enrolment is 0.92%, which reveals that it will be 60 years from now to accomplish the goal of zero dropouts among school-going children (Khattak, 2017). In South Asia, the Literacy rate in the Maldives is 99%, 93% in Sri Lanka, 71% in India, Bhutan has 65%, while Nepal and Bangladesh have

64% and 62% respectively. Pakistan has only a better literacy rate than that of Afghanistan (38%) (Khattak, 2017).

Moreover, in Pakistan, Punjab is the largest province concerning population has a 62% of literacy rate, Sindh has 55%, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa is ranked third in literacy list, Balochistan has the lowest level of literacy rate 41% only (Khattak, 2017). An estimated 22.8 million children aged from 5 to 16 years are not attending school. Which is 44% of the total population in this age group. In the 5-9 age group, 5 million children are out of school, this figure of out-of-school children doubles, with 11.4 million between the age of 10 to 14. Gender disparities, geographical factors, and socio-economic status are important determinants of children's school dropout.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 54% of females are dropped out of school, in Sindh, 58%, Balochistan, 78 percent of girls could not complete schooling. Global Education Monitoring (Health, 2020), a report of UNESCO stated that 21.5 million children are still out of school in Pakistan, 5.6 million children among them are primary school level children. This indicates that these children left school before they start learning something (Gul *et al.*, 2021).

This issue of school dropout is mainly caused by family's poor socio-economic conditions, deprivation of basic facilities also badly affect the learning environment in schools. According to Pakistan Education Statistics (2015-16), in Balochistan, 30% or fewer public schools have toilets for kids, 50% of public schools have no clean drinking water facilities in Sindh. Almost 13% of public schools in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa have no protection boundary walls, 7% of schools in Punjab do not have electricity connections (Latif *et al.*, 2015).

This study is aimed to determine the causes of drop out specifically checking for poverty on school drop out in district Peshawar. The is to suggest measures for formulating strategies to reduce the school dropout rate of children schooling. The significance of this study lies in the fact that the children drop out ratio is higher especially in rural areas of Pakistan. Therefore, it is necessary to find out the possible determinants of school dropout among children and recommend educational policymakers to put possible efforts to eradicate this issue of children dropping out up to a possible extent.

This research was carried out in Peshawar's district five union councils. The study focused on the primary causes of children dropping out of school. Due to time and budget constraints, the sample size of this study is limited to 400 people. The research sample size of the study was limited to five union councils of district Peshawar due to funding and time restrictions. The researcher's main issue was a lack of financial support, which forced us to travel from one locality to another in order to collect data from the respondents.

The study also aided in the discovery of the key parts of children's school dropout that are most prevalent among students, allowing them to receive suitable assistance and counselling to help them get the most out of their education. The study also revealed useful information about school dropout among youngsters, which will be used for future research and reference. The rest of paper is structured as follows. Section 2 describes the literature review. Section 3 explains the conceptual framework of the study. Section 4 discusses data and methodology. Section 5 is about results and interpretation. Section 6 and section 7 are conclusion and policy recommendations consequently.

2. Literature review

Asif *et al.*, (2021) examined the causes of children's high school dropouts in district Malakand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa of Pakistan. The results of logistic model reveal that Academic performance, employment, boredom, and a lack of learning ability were all key individual traits that influenced high school dropouts. Furthermore, parental traits such as financial situation, lack of awareness, and education have been linked to high school dropout rates. Other important factors that dramatically influence the dropout rate in schools Malakand district of KPK province are adaptation and effect of peer groups, abandonment of school by siblings, more responsibilities at home, and a joint family system. Atta *et al.* (2020) analysed teachers' perceptions regarding dropouts of children in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Collected data through questionnaire were analysed using the percentage method. Most of the teachers opined that parental illiteracy, student absenteeism, home, and school distance, rising expenses, etc are all determinants of children dropouts from schooling.

Casey (2014) worked on understanding dropout rates in primary schools in Mozambique. The results of the study indicated that dropouts are characterized by situations of extreme income poverty interacting with exogenous factors which create vulnerable livelihoods and where the quality of education is considered low. The causes of dropouts generally relate to families' lack of resilience to cope with socio-economic shocks and the paucity of post-school opportunities. The consequences are severe for the individuals, their families, and Mozambique, resulting in a limited capacity to create sustainable livelihoods. There is also a likely transgenerational effect, with future generations afflicted by persistent vulnerability due to a lack of capabilities and opportunities from not completing school.

Dakwa *et al.* (2014) examined poverty related causes of dropouts in Zimbabwe. Content analysis approach applied for data analysis. Results of the study revealed that poverty is main cause of children school dropouts.

Muzenda (2014) analysed determinants of college dropouts focusing students' views. A sample of 258 students from private institutions in three provinces was randomly selected and a structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The differential impacts of the three key determinants on college dropout were investigated using a univariate ANOVA technique based on the General Linear Model. The Tukey HSD and Games-Howell post-hoc analyses show that the impacts of institutional characteristics and socioeconomic level differ significantly. The mean scores show that socioeconomic position had the greatest impact on dropout, followed by student-related factors, while institutional factors had the least impact.

Jamil *et al.* (2010) investigated parents' and teachers' perception regarding the factors that influence early school dropout. The required data was collected using a standardised questionnaire, and the data was analysed using SPSS version 12. The study's findings revealed that poverty was the most prominent cause, with laypeople speculating that "working for aliveness is significantly more vital than schooling". Distant schools, overcrowded courses, a lack of individual attention, excessive punishment, and unjustifiable grade retention were also identified as major causes of early school dropout.

Mughal (2020) investigated the causes of school dropout in rural Pakistan. Primary data for this study was gathered through comprehensive, one-on-one interviews with 14 fathers whose

sons had dropped out of secondary school. According to the findings of the study, family poverty, low academic achievement, and concerns linked to teachers' commitment with teaching at school were all major factors in a kid dropping out.

Musimenta (2018) also worked on determinants of school dropouts in Ghana. Using data from Uganda National Household Survey UNHS (2016-17) survey, they employ a logit model, correlation analysis, and marginal effects. Results of the study revealed that school distance, whether the child is an orphan or not, gender, region, household head education level, and poverty level are the main factors that constitute school dropout in Ghana.

Perera (2015) examined school dropouts in Srilanka and found that in a single year, 45000 students were dropped out of school. Analysis of study also showed that boys drop out is higher than girls. Socio-economic deprivation and lack of facilities are the main reason for school dropout in lower-class families.

Rahaman and Das (2018) conducted a study on school dropout determinants of elementary education in Manipur. The study mainly considered psychological, school-based factors, demographic, socioeconomic and community level factors. According to the survey, school-related and socioeconomic problems were the leading causes of students dropping out of school. Furthermore, despite their parents' poverty and illiteracy, the children in the study area are forced to drop out of school due to political instability in the area. Both parent's education, household income, number of family members, age of the child, type and distance from the school, participation in school activities, skipping classes, parent's guidance in teaching at home, and help in domestic works at home are key determinants of dropout from school, according to the regression results.

Naz *et al.* (2019) analysed the school dropout and school enrolment determinants in Islamabad, Pakistan. The finding showed that, aside from the distance between school and home, financial restrictions are the leading cause of dropout. Furthermore, the father's education, the child's age and gender are additional important factors to consider that influence the likelihood of a child dropping out.

Milon *et al.* (2018) conducted a study on analysis of school dropout factors at secondary level in Bangladesh. The data was gathered using an interview strategy with a well-structured interview schedule. The study is quantitative, and the information gathered was evaluated using descriptive and inferential statistics. A logistic regression model was used to determine the likelihood of being a dropout, and it revealed that illiteracy among parents, a higher dependency ratio, financial constraints, involvement in income-generating activities, and early marriage all increase the likelihood of dropout and worsen the dropout scenario. The majority of dropout students married, and the majority of boys engaged in various income-generating activities to meet the needs of their families.

Sajjad *et al.* (2012) assessed the socio-economic determinants of primary school dropout in India. The findings of their study reveal that school dropout among females is high than male children. Their findings also show that family income, family type, parental education, and occupation affect school dropout directly. Obonyo *et al.* (2015) examined dropouts from public schools in Kiango district in Kenya. Their study mainly focused on community and household-level factors. Discriminant analysis, correlational and logistic regression methods were used to

predict the determinants of the probability of pupils dropping out of school. Poverty, which was represented by proxy variable household expenditure, gender of the pupil, education of the mother, and school expenditures added significantly to the model holding other factors constant. Findings of the study reveal that poverty is the greatest hurdle to school enrolment and those households with more than five members are mostly out of school. Results also show that households with no mother education have the highest dropout ratio. Shihab (2018) analysed determinants of school dropouts at lower secondary and primary schools in Bangladesh. The outcome of the study revealed that there are many factors other than economic factors such as parental education, age of enrolment, location and school mechanism that are also liable for school dropout in the region.

A hierarchical regression model with three levels of complexity was also estimated in Brazil by Soares, in order to analyse the proficiency of Brazilian students when they finished fourth grade in elementary school (Soares, 2005). Staduto and Collares (n.d) also analysed school dropouts in Brazil by focusing specifically on socio-economic, individual and family factors. Outcome of the study reveals that Teenagers who desire to study but still need to work see education as a way out of the shadows, which explains the negative correlation between labour market participation and school tardiness. In comparison to women who have not completed elementary school, high school, or higher education, the results reveal that moms who have completed elementary school, high school, or higher education are less likely to have their children drop out of school.

Okumu *et al.* (2008) examined the socio-economic determinants of primary schooling of children in Uganda. Results of logistic model and marginal effects shows that school distance, gender of household head, average school expenditures affect children school dropouts. Results of the study further revealed that household size, parental education and proportion of economically active members also have significant impact on children drop out.

Bibi (2018) worked on factors responsible for dropping out in private schools at the secondary level in Punjab Pakistan. Physical facilities, non-qualified teachers, corporal punishment, uneducated parents were the main factors of children dropout from schooling at secondary level in Punjab Pakistan. Likewise, Ouma (2017) analysed socioeconomic determinants of children dropouts in Tanzania. Results show that parental death, loss of interest, lack of school necessities, parental perception regarding education, school absenteeism, migration mainly causes dropouts.

Shah *et al.* (2019) looked into causes of dropouts in Pakistan at the primary level. In this study, data is being collected through schoolteachers and educational managers. Low per capita income mainly causes school dropout of children. Large family size, migration, parental illiteracy, less priority in female education, child factors including poor health, difficulty in learning, poor attendance also causing drop-out. Course curriculum, long-distance schools, corporal punishment, harsh teachers' attitudes are all causing dropouts.

Chenge *et al.* (2017) investigated school drop out of children caused by family factors in Zimbabwe. The findings of the study revealed that various factors at the family level contributed to secondary school dropouts. Financial restrictions, parental education levels, parent separation or divorce, and parent/guardian death are among the most common.

In a study, Tabuchi *et al.* (2018) analysed the determinants of high school dropouts in Japan's deprived areas. The Frequency Ratios (PRs) for high-school dropout were determined employing multivariable log-binomial regression models with Multiple Imputation (MI) to compensate for non-response at follow-up. The study's findings found that 10 days of tardiness in junior high school, daily smoking, and having severe issues were statistically significant drivers of high-school dropout. These variables have a strong relationship with one another. They should be viewed as indicators of more serious behavioural and academic issues.

3. Conceptual framework

This study was an attempt to find out the main determinants of school dropouts of children in rural areas including five union councils of district Peshawar. From the existing literature, we reviewed different determinants of children school dropouts and also included some of more important determinants of drop out in this study. In most of the studies, poverty is considered as the prime factor affecting school drop out of children. Due to extreme poverty in the country, very few people are able to educate their children's. Poverty force people to engage their children in child labour and start earning from their childhood. As a result, children do not complete their studies and dropped out ratio rises.

Another factor in this study is parental illiteracy. Educated parents are more likely to invest in children education as compared to illiterate parents because they are well aware of the long-term benefits of investment in human capital formation. Thus, school dropout becomes minimal due to parental literacy. School distance is among crucial factors responsible for children school dropout especially for girl's school dropout. In rural areas, there is a deficiency of schools, colleges, universities subject to population. Due to which, schools are located in far off areas and it becomes inconvenient for students to travel daily and study in campus. As a result, students also left schooling incomplete and dropped out ratio rises. Rising expenses whether it is educational or rising prices of commodities becomes a hurdle to school education of children. Due to rising prices real income of people falls, as a result they feel more burdened and prefer to send their children to work at early age rather than completing schooling.

High unemployment rate of existing graduates also makes students feel that education is no more worthful for them. So, most of students perceive that spending on education is just wastage of time and money, due to which drop out ratio rises up. If somebody is living in an illiterate community, there are more chances of school dropout or leaving education incomplete as people gets affect by what happening or people doing around. A person living in literate community is more likely to complete his or her studies. Corporal punishment is also an obstacle to student's school completion, due to harsh behaviour of teachers and physical punishment a significant number of students could not complete their studies and school drop out of children increases. Lack of facilities, poor infrastructure and insufficient space for students also a reason to children school dropout. When there is lack of facilities in school, students could not concentrate on their studies, this creates lack of interest among students for education and they leave studies incomplete. Early marriages are also among important determinants of children's school dropout. Normally, people get married at early age. After marriage the girls become housewives and hardly allowed to continue their studies even if they are enrolled in college or university. Similarly, boys also become more responsible after marriage and they hardly continue their studies, if they are financially weak.

4. Data and methodology

This study has been conducted in the rural areas of district Peshawar of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The study focused on the causes of school dropout in order to recommend some prevention and control approaches. The findings and conclusions were reached using a survey-style study design. The study's population consisted of family heads, and the sample consisted of 400 questionnaires, comprising 200 about female student dropout and 200 about male student dropout determinants from five union councils: Gul Bela, Nahaqi, Khazana, Jogani, and Takhtabad. For the purpose of gathering the required data, a structured questionnaire and interview techniques were employed. Collected data was analysed through percentage, frequency distribution, histogram and pie chart.

5. Results and discussion

The provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa though initiated free education from Kinder Garden (K.G) to grade 10 or Secondary School Certificate (SSC) by providing free books, no tuition fee, free bags, and stationery. But the drop-out ratio is still at a challenging level and almost half of the students do not complete their Secondary School Certificate (SSC) or 10 grades in the whole country. The present study is based on the determinants of children's school dropouts in rural areas of district Peshawar. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaire and interview methods for this study. Collected data was analysed with the help of histogram, Pie chart, frequency distribution and percentage methods. The results are discussed below in details.

5.1. Boy's dropout

Boys school dropout's statistic are given table 1 below. Among the different causes of dropout's poverty (62%) has proven to be the prime cause of the school dropouts of boys. The reason for being such a highest factor causing school dropout is that most of the people in rural areas are poor. It is followed by parental education which is (11%), because educated parents give more attention to children education. School distance and rising expenses causes (6%) schools drop out of children. The high unemployment rate of graduate's accounts (5%) of drop out in rural areas of the district. Further, it is followed by the illiterate community (4%), Early marriages, as most of the people get marry at very young age in rural areas in Pakistan. lack of facilities, and corporal punishment (2%) play the role of boy's school dropouts.

Table-1: Possible reasons of boy's school drop out in rural areas of district Peshawar

Reasons of Dropout	Household's Frequency	Percentage
Poverty	124	62
Corporal punishment	04	02
School distance	12	06
Illiterate community	08	04
Parental education	22	11
Early marriages	04	02
High unemployment rate	10	05
Lack of facilities	04	02
Rising expenses	12	06
Total	200	100

Table-1 shows the possible reasons of boys drop out from schooling in rural areas of district Peshawar. 124 households head (62%) of total samples responded that they can't continue the studies of their children because of poor financial positions. "Mostly the respondents i.e., Households Heads said that we are hardly managing our livelihood, how can we afford educational expenditures of our children". Next, main obstacle to children schooling was parental negative perception and parental education, who thinks that after studying for years they would not be able to find a job so why should we send them to school. Moreover, "one of the respondents responded like that, if even our children do masters. still, they would not be able to find a job as we see a lot of boys who has completed their master's degrees and could not find a job. So why should we send them to schools". Rising expenses in recent years and school distance also remained hurdles to children school dropout.

Child labour remained another obstacle to completion of children schooling, which is directly linked with higher poverty, as parents are unable to bear the educational and household's expenses. 06% of the respondents of total sample responded that due to rising expenses we cannot continue studies of our children and from very early age we let them to learn any skill in order to make livelihood of their own better very soon. 12 respondents said that schools are far away from their homes, and it is inconvenient for them to manage their accessibility to schools. A respondent said that "inflation has badly disturbed our lives. Educational expenditures have also risen up. Therefore, it has become impossible for us to continue our children education". Other factors include Corporal punishment, Illiterate community (a community with minimal educated people), early marriages, high unemployment rate despite being educated and lack of facilities in schools such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of teachers in schools, lack of physical infrastructure such as protection side walls of schools, chair, desks, white/ black boards etc were also more or less important in children school completion.

5.2. Girl's dropout

There are many similarities between the factors causing school drop out of children for both male and female children. In table 2, The prime cause of dropout among girls is also poverty (45%). It is followed by early marriages 17%, as the girls get married at very young age in rural areas of Pakistan. School distance 12.5 %, parental education and negative perception 11%, High unemployment rate and rising expenses were accounted for 5.5% and 5% respectively. and it is followed by corporal punishment 2.5% and lack of facilities in schools 0.5%.

Table-2: Possible reasons of girls' school drop out in rural areas of district Peshawar.

Reasons of Drop out	Household's Frequency	Percentage
Poverty	90	45
Corporal punishment	05	2.5
School distance	25	12.5
Illiterate community	02	01
Parental education	22	11
Early marriages	34	17
High unemployment rate	11	5.5
Lack of facilities	01	0.5
Rising expenses	10	05
Total	200	100

Table-2 reveals the possible reasons of girls drop out from schooling in rural areas of district Peshawar. 90 households head (45%) of the respondents said that they are unable to educate their girls because of poor financial positions. "One of the households head expressed that our financial positions are so weak that we hardly make our livelihood, it's impossible for us to bear educational costs of our children". Another factor that has badly affected girls' education in rural areas of Peshawar is early marriages of girls. Most of the girls get married at the age of 15-16, so parents say that it's impossible for them to continue their studies as they become housewives at very young age. 17 percent of household heads responded that their children left school because of early marriages. One of the household head responded as follow when he was asked "why your girls are not getting education"?

As these girls are not going to do job and has to work as housewife. Why should we send them to schools responded by one of the household head"? 12.5% of the parents responded that school is located far away from here. That's why it is not possible for us to send our daughters to schools. Parental education and their negative perception about girl's education also become hurdle in the way of girls schooling completion as 11% of households head responded that we do not need girls to go outside of homes. Girls will get marry and would become housewives why should we send them to schools? "Generally, in rural villages girls get marry at very young age. Due to which Girls hardly complete their 10th grade here. There is no need to send them to school responded by one of the household head." answered by one of the respondents. Other respondents said that rising expenses, lack of facilities in girls' schools, high unemployment rate, illiterate community and Corporal punishment are also obstacle in the way of girls schooling completion.

6. Conclusion

It is evident from above discussions that Poverty remained the main hurdle in the way of both girls and boys school completion. Apart from poverty, Parental education, early marriages, parental negative perception about education are also obstacles to boys schooling. School distance, Corporal punishment and lack of facilities are also obstacles in boy's and girl's school completion in rural areas of district Peshawar. Biggest hurdle to female schooling was also poverty. Parental negative perception about girl's education, Early marriages, school distance, Parental education, illiterate community, corporal punishment and lack of facilities in schools also badly affected girls schooling.

On the basis of results, it is recommended that government should provide free education along some monetary incentives (scholarships), although some countries have already taken some steps in this regard, yet it is important to expand it further for other countries to those household's head who do not send their children to schools due to financial constraints. Study also revealed that parental education, corporal punishment, poor infrastructure, negative perception of parents towards education are also causing school dropout. Government and competent authorities should make awareness in parents about children education and provide enough facilities in schools. It is also necessary to construct enough educational institutions especially in rural areas to enhance children enrolment.

This study is carried out analysing the determinants of school dropouts of children in rural areas of district Peshawar. Future studies can be conducted in this area by making a comparison of factors responsible for school drop out of children between rural and urban areas of district

Peshawar. Similarly, a more comprehensive and detailed study can be conducted at country level on this issue.

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Appendix

Survey Questions

1. What is the education level of your father?
2. What is the education level of your mother?
3. What is the distance of School from your home?
4. What is profession of your father?
5. What is profession of your mother?
6. What is monthly income of your mother?
7. What is the monthly income of your father?
8. What are the other sources of income?
9. What is the reason of not going to school?
10. What is the transportation source of going to school?
11. What is the reason of drop out from school?
12. How many years of schooling you have completed?