

Causes of School Dropouts at the Secondary Level in the Barani Areas of the Punjab (A Case Study of Rawalpindi District)

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Abstract: The present study had evaluated the social and economic factors responsible for low literacy in Pakistan. Among others, major cause of school dropouts at secondary level was weak primary education system, non availability of trained teachers, parent teacher relafter the completion of secondary level.

Key words: Barani areas, education, dropouts, socio-economic factors

INTRODUCTION

Education, which has rightly been conceived as a preparation for life, is a productive activity and an investment in human resources. A progressive and welfare state would never ignore its indisputable need for socialization of its masses and education is considered to be the chief organ for this purpose. Education is an important component of economic and social development and contributes significantly to a country's progress. It is considered to be the investment in human capital as it builds human capabilities, which is a vital nation-building ingredient. Without spread of literacy, the dream of socio-economic development of the country can never be realized.

Secondary education is an important sub-sector of entire education system. It varies from country to country. It is the schooling designed for students in the age bracket of 12 to 16 years who are enrolled in high school or academy. Secondary education is a stage where, a student enters at adolescence, the most crucial stage in one's personality development. It comes at a time when a child is in his/her most impressionable and formative years. At this particular time the features of the future men, women and citizens are beginning to appear and require full encouragement and sympathetic help in the development.

Pakistan has been confronting with gigantic problems of human resource development. The low literacy and participation rates have added to the gravity of the problems. These problems have been so challenging that they not only have attracted the attention of the national government but also of the development partners and international financial institutions. Education is the most important factor which distinguishes the poor from the non-poor. There is close linkage between poverty and

illiteracy. South Asia and South East Asia were at the same level of development in 1660 but the only deference was literacy rate^[1]. In South Asia, literacy rate ranged between 9-15% while it was around 70% in South East Asia. East Asian developing countries achieved the formidable task of educating most of their people. Now the East Asian countries are well beyond the comparable range of Southern Asia. The onslaught of East Asian nation's rapid economic progress in the 1980's was based on educated human capital endowment. Education remains inequitable distributed among income groups and regions in the country. The target of minimum essential requirement for quality education has not yet been achieved. There is shortage of trained and qualified teachers, especially females. Educational institutions lack proper physical facilities. The teacher lack dedication, motivation and interest in their profession. Curricula are mostly non-relevant to the present day requirements^[1].

The government has given due importance to education, that is, it has endeavored not only to increasing the literacy rate but also to improving the quality of education levels. The efforts are being made to revise and update the curricula as well as provide necessary training to teachers to meet the challenge of the time to achieve the objective of universal primary education. In this regards, an ordinance of compulsory primary education has been promulgated.

In the last fiscal year i.e. 2001-02, the number of schools was 169, 087 at primary stage, 19,180 at middle stage and 13,108 at secondary stage. Enrolment at primary, middle and at higher levels was 19.92 million, 4.28 million, 4.28 million and 1.79 million, respectively^[1]. Nevertheless, the overall results in the education sector remain disappointing. Pakistan's net primary enrolment rate is well below its neighbors in South Asia. Net primary enrolment rate is 65% in Pakistan, 75% in Bangladesh,

77% in India and closed to 100% in Sri-Lanka. Pakistan's lower school enrolment rates and poor quality education means that it will lag behind its neighbors in improving literacy in future. The main reasons for the decline in the enrolment at government schools include rising poverty and decline in the quality of education. Also there exist significant gaps in enrolment rates between urban and rural areas still exist. These gaps are the product of inequality in the distribution of resources, higher teacher absenteeism, lack of access and higher opportunity cost for the parents in the rural areas.

Although the literacy rate is very low in Pakistan but still the dropout rate is very high. In order to investigate the major reasons of dropout problem the present study was formulated having the following objectives:

- To identify the major academic, social, family and personal causes of boys dropout at secondary level.
- To make recommendations for reducing the chances of high dropout.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the causes of student dropout at the secondary school level. The study was limited to the higher secondary schools for boys. There are 37 secondary schools in the public sector of Rawalpindi city. A sample of 20% of schools was taken by simple random sampling technique. In the round figure, the sample schools were 8 in number. Samples of 50 teachers and 50 dropped out boys were taken. The samples were drawn purposively so as to fulfill the objectives of the study.

The data were collected through separate questionnaires, one for the boys and one for the teachers. The data were tabulated and analyzed statistically. Spearman rank correlation was applied to see the agreement or otherwise between the teacher-students opinions regarding causes for dropout. The significance of these coefficients were checked at 0.05 level of probability. Data were also presented by bar charts (with error bars) to compare response patterns of teachers and students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 shows opinion of the teachers and of the students regarding dropout at secondary level due to academic causes. By comparing the results of both the respondents, the major reason for dropout is educational weakness at primary level. Of the teachers, 96% and 86%

of the student expressed this reason. Both blamed the lengthy courses as the major reason. The next main factor indicated by the teachers for the dropout is the non-availability of adequate teaching facilities in schools. There were 78% student respondents who said that things taught by teachers seemed to be far from reality and they got bored while attending the lectures. These findings are in line with those of Hussain^[2]. Also they considered inadequate training and lack of refresher courses for teachers a cause. Same opinion has been reported by Asian Development Bank^[3]. A large proportion of the teachers i.e. 84% emphasized that if teacher were properly facilitated with A/V tools, classrooms are well maintained by proper writing boards, charts and other helping equipments, the learning interest of students would increase and hence the dropout rate would be lower. Behavior of teachers is also very important because 60% of the students left their schools counting the behavior of teacher as a big factor. But the teachers themselves did not take responsibility of this factor as only 30% of them counted this as a school-leaving factor. Shortage of teachers is also a vital contributing factor for dropout because in such situations, a teacher has to bear more than the prescribed workload and thus his teaching ability, command over subject and concentration all are adversely affected. Point regarding in-capacious classrooms is also not ignorable. A majority of i.e. 68% of teachers and 60% of students counted this as one of the reason. The overcrowded classrooms become a problem for teachers to pay proper individual attention to students which is immensely required at this level.

The Spearman's rank correlation is 0.252 in the context of teacher-student opinion. This being non-significant indicates that regarding the academic reasons for dropout as expressed by teachers and the students did differ from each other. As a matter of fact, in all factors where blame falls on teachers for the dropout, they were hesitant to accept it. The family causes of boys' dropout are shown in Table 2. According to the Table 2 the major factor in the family causes for dropout is the parent-teacher relationship because a large majority of the teachers and students i.e. 86% and 90%, respectively counted this as a main factor. The lack of the communication between the parents and the teachers leads to loss of confidence among students. Thus they fail to seek guidance from their parents to keep up their schooling in a befitting manner. Further it may also be observed that most of the boys studying in public sector schools belonged to low or lower-middle class families so

Table 1: Academic Causes of Boys' Dropout

Factors	Responses				Spearman's rank correlation coefficient
	Teacher	%age	Student	%age	
Poor Primary Education	48	96	43	86	P-value 0.585
Lengthy Courses	39	78	44	88	
In spacious Class Rooms	34	68	30	60	
Shortage of Teachers	38	76	32	64	
Non-Availability Of Facilities	42	84	25	50	
Behavior of Certain Teachers	23	46	30	60	
Untrained Teachers	30	60	39	78	

Table 2: Family causes of Boy's Dropouts

Factors	Responses				Spearman's rank correlation coefficient
	Teacher	%age	Student	%age	
Uneducated Parents	29	58	25	50	P-value 0.368
Less Devotion for Children	30	60	30	60	
Parent's Likeness for other Professions	29	58	35	70	
Parent-Teacher Relationship	43	86	45	90	

Table 3: Economic and Social Causes of Boy's Dropout

Factors	Responses				Spearman's rank correlation coefficient
	Teacher	%age	Student	%age	
Educational Expenditures	35	70	28	56	P-value 0.454
Less Chances of Employment after Education	40	80	34	68	
Standard of Class fellows of Rich Families	24	48	40	80	
Educational Environment	35	70	25	50	
Children Coming from Far Away	16	32	23	46	
Bad Company	40	80	39	78	

Table 4: Personal Causes of Boys' Dropout

Factors	Responses			
	Teacher	%age	Student	%age
Bad Health of Students	32	64	34	38
Competition with Class Fellows	34	68	29	68

less attention could be expected from the parents who were indulged heavily in their economics pursuits. A similar reason could be attributed to the uneducated parents, who are devoid of proper vision regarding studies of their children. These results are in accordance with those of Shahid^[4]. Relatively a larger correlation coefficient of 0.632 was observed among the opinions of the teachers and the students. Statistically this coefficient is again non-significant for small number of categories which shows that for most of the family factors as causes for dropout, they agree to each other's point of view.

Table 3 shows social and economic causes for boys' early dropout from school. As far as economic and social causes are concerned, 80% of the teachers indicated that there existed meager chances of employment after education. Also, the same proportion of 80% considered the bad company of the students as the key factor for dropout. However, the student's point of view was slightly different. They had difficulty of adjustment with the standard of class fellows of rich families along with the bad company as the major factor of dropout (i.e. 80

and 70%, respectively). Furthermore, the second major factor according to the teachers was the educational expenditure. These findings are supported by Bangish^[5].

The lower and lower middle class could not fulfill financial demand of their children, as they were inclined to imitate the upper class. Chances of employment after completion the education being very slim, the parents prefer their child to discontinue studies and share with them their traditional tasks. Those who considered that their school was very far away from their resident were 46% but a number of teachers did not agree to such a reason because they thought that the students, living in the city should not account this reason as there are thousands of students in different villages who have to travel several kilometers to reach schools. The Spearman's correlation coefficient of 0.383 is weak to explain any agreement between the opinion of the teachers and the students for economic and social causes of dropout Table 3.

Table 4 shows the personal reasons for boys' dropout. It shows that as many as 68% students left the

schools due to their bad health and was 64 % in teachers' point of view. Here again the economic conditions and proper attention of the parents and a vital role of teachers come into play. The second personal reason for dropout is the competition with other class fellows; some student took it too challenging to cope with the situation. These findings agree with the results of Ghafoor and Khan^[6]. Such a complex on the part of a student can be resolved if a teacher creates a healthy environment of competition and encourages the loser by teaching him the facts of life regarding rise and fall of individuals as well as of nations. Halepota^[7] also emphasized the role of teachers in boosting the moral of weak students in the pursuits of their academic carrier.

Education is in the forefront of the socio-economic development agenda of the present government. Nothing is spared to increase the literacy rate of the country. In spite of all efforts at national level, the number of literate part of the population is increasing with a slow pace. A number of factors are responsible for this. Along with academic and family causes of dropouts some socio-economic factors are very much responsible for this. In order to improve the literacy situation in the country some sort of economic help should be provided to the students. At school level some sort of medical help and social counseling must be provided to the students.

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