



RESEARCH PAPER

**Limited Access to Education for Out-of-School Children in Pakistan:
Exploring Barriers and Suggesting Measures**

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ABSTRACT

Human resource development stimulates sustainable economic growth of a country. In Pakistan, 16 percent of children aged 5-16 not attending school. The out-of-school children, due to socio-economic and cultural reasons, are deprived of their fundamental right to education and face bleak economic and social prospects. To uncover the varying perspectives of the educational experts, schools, parents and children, semi-structured interviews and surveys will be conducted. The use of technology, model of schooling, parental behavior, smart schooling amongst others drive the high dropout rate in public schools and discourage others from enrolling. Through quantifying the key underlying reasons obstructing access to education, this study aims to capture the local nuances and facilitate the policy makers to design the policy framework with efficient allocation of resources, in order to improve enrollment rates of out-of-school children.

Keywords: Enrollment, Out of School Children, Smart Schooling, Socio Economic Disparity

Introduction

The socio-economic disparity coupled with cultural norms has resulted in a high rate of out-of-school children (OOSC). According to UNICEF, approximately 44% of children between the ages of 5 -16 are out-of-school (UNESCO, 2022). These children can be categorized as those who never attended school and those who dropped out. These individuals are at a greater risk of remaining in the poverty trap, as education leads to a multigenerational cycle of prosperity and is likely to be a tool for breaking through the poverty cycle. Earning a living wage and securing a job opportunity to consume the basic necessities of life is a lot more challenging for these children as they face bleak economic and social prospects compared to those who have attained education. The adverse impacts are not confined to the health and life of these individuals but affect the country's sustainable economic growth. The education system is a major determinant of a country's human resource progress. It raises productivity and stimulates innovative ideas, and may lead to technological breakthroughs. Labor knowledge and skills are the key factors of economic growth and unsubstantial investment in human resources hinders the roadway to achieving the set economic goals. A crucial indicator to evaluate the level of education and prosperity of a country is its literacy rate. While for Pakistan, this has been stagnant at 60 percent since 2014-15 (Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan, 2021). This reflects the loopholes in the education system and deteriorating growth of human resources. With the vision to increase access to education and literacy rate, many international commitments were signed by Pakistan. Under the agreement at Dakar, the country pledged to progress towards the goal for Education for All (EFA). To honor the commitment, Pakistan developed a National Action Plan. The main objectives were to reach disadvantaged groups with emphasis on out of school girls, and promote community participation and basic education programs and emphasize on quality education (Government of Pakistan Ministry of Education Islamabad, 2002). It aimed to institutionalize and recognize the katchi (prep) class to promote early education in public schools (Ministry of Education, Govt of Pakistan, 2004). Pakistan also signed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), targeted to achieve that by 2015, all children will have completed primary schooling. These development goals dominated the

EFA movement (UNESCO, 2015). With the alarming number of out of school children, the country failed to achieve the target. The multiplicity of education system, economic poverty, lack of infrastructure amongst many others hindered the pathway to meeting the commitment. Under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aiming to end poverty, the top priority for Pakistan is quality education. It targets to provide access to free and quality primary and secondary education with effective learning outcomes to all children; boys and girls by 2030 (UNESCO,2017) .To accomplish the national agenda, SDGs have been localized and embedded into the provincial planning and policy frameworks. Learning from the past experience of the planning process to achieve MDGs, in order to ensure effective communication and implementation, the Punjab advisory council comprising government officials, consultants, academia representatives and more overlook the cluster groups and district focal persons. Despite these efforts, UNESCO projects that one in four children will not be completing primary education in Pakistan, leaving the country off track to achieve the targets (Ahmed, 2019). In 2010, under the 18 th amendment services such as education were decentralized and provinces were given legislative and financial autonomy. Under Article 25-A, it says “Right to education: the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children from age of 5-16 year in such manner as determined by law”. However, a study conducted on the data from the PSLM surveys indicates that the change in overall status of education declined for all provinces except Balochistan in the post amendment period (Jaml,2021). The comparison of performance of provincial governments in tackling the problem of low enrollment rate shows the low improvement in Punjab. In 2017-18, Punjab had the lowest percent (55 percent) of actual expenditure record, the remaining budget remained unspent (Institute of Social and Policy Sciences, 2019). The Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) shows that the national primary enrollment of age 6-10 years excluding the katchi class declined to 84 percent in 2019-20 in comparison to 91 percent in 2014-15 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2020). The decline in primary enrolment shows the increasing number of out-of-school children and drop-out rate. According to UNICEF an estimated 22.8 million population is out of school in Pakistan ,as of 2020, Punjab - the most populated province, has 24% children not attending school (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2020). One of the major roadblocks in improving the development in education is the implementation and wise spending of allocated budgets. This study aims to identify the key drivers of the high out of school children rate to bridge the gap and facilitate the policy makers in efficient allocation of resources while designing policies while keeping in view the local nuances.

Literature Review

The right to education is one of the fundamental human rights. The discourse on development across the world recognizes education as the “premise of progress,” but for this, it must be inclusive and equitable. This is distinctly reflected in the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG-4), which focuses on ensuring access to equitable education (UNESCO, 2022). The responsibility to provide access to quality education for all lies with the state governments. In recent years, Pakistan has made commendable progress to advance the right to education. The introduction of Article 25-A in the Constitution and an increase in education budgets are of great significance in this regard. In spite of the continued efforts to improve the education situation, Pakistan is among the E9 countries that have the world’s highest out-of-school population (Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training, 2018). Research suggests that approximately 44% of children between the ages of 5 -16 are out-of-school (UNESCO, 2022). Considering the gravity of the concern and to address the challenge using a strategic approach, there is a need to explore and understand the reasons that prevent children from attending school or result in their dropout. Many research studies have been undertaken around the globe to identify the barriers to education. The country study of Ghana for the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children (OOSC) divides the barriers into categories, which include sociocultural, economic demand-side barriers, supply side, political governance, capacity and financing barriers. Some of the reasons identified in the study are lack of child’s interest in schooling, negative

attitude towards children with disabilities, and child labor. In addition to these, the cost of schooling, distance to school, inadequate school infrastructure, the language of instruction, and lack of voice of marginalized groups are also among the other factors that hamper the access and retention of children in schools. Likewise, a study conducted in Brazil highlights that extreme poverty and early parenthood have detrimental effects on a child's school attendance (Cardoso & Verner, 2006). Olaniyan in his study, reported that factors such as parents' education also affect the child's educational attainment (Olaniyan, 2011). A study was conducted in India to evaluate the efforts done by the state government to reduce the out of school children no. By highlighting the issues like educational infrastructure, parents' role and gender issues are refocused by the operation of SSA (Mukherjee, 2010). In the context of Pakistan, according to the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey, "child is not willing" and "too expensive" are some of the most commonly reported reasons for leaving school (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2020). With almost 22% of the population living below the poverty line (ADB, 2022), poor households continue to struggle with meeting the expenditure of educating their children. Although the government schools charge no tuition fee, there is a wide range of expenditures that are associated with studying in a government school, such as the uniform, school bags, private tuition, and others. Research suggests that for a primary-level student, the average cost per annum is approximately Rs. 31,000 (Alif Ailaan, 2015). As we go up the ladder, the cost of studying at a government school increases. For secondary school students, the expenditures increase to Rs. 51,000 (Alif Ailaan, 2015). This leaves parents with no choice, rendering it unaffordable for them to teach their children. Research suggests that Pakistan spends 2.8 percent of the total GDP on education, which is still less than the 4% target (UNESCO, 2022). As a result, there is a lack of investment in schools. There is a far lesser number of schools in rural areas. Due to an insufficient number of schools close to their localities, children have to travel long distances incurring increased transportation costs. Furthermore, the shortage of schools results in overcrowding of classrooms. The unmanageable class sizes affect the quality of education in government schools. All these factors result in turning children away from attaining education and driving them out of school. A report by Human Rights Watch, grounded in research conducted in four cities of Pakistan, highlights the barriers to girls' education. The research was based on interviews with girls and women who either missed or dropped out of school. Parents, teachers, education experts, and community workers were also interviewed. Some salient barriers and bottlenecks include child labor, gender discrimination and social norms, insecurity on the way to and in schools, and quality in government schools. Evidence suggests that child labor is prevalent throughout Pakistan, with more than 12.5 million children trapped in it (Rodriguez, 2017). Many children are out-of-school because they are engaged in paid labor. Most of the children are involved in agricultural activities and domestic work. Moreover, about 70% of the bonded labor in Pakistan is children, which accounts for one-third of the four million people working in brick kilns (Ghani, 2019). In addition to this, girls are also involved in the home-based industries such as embroidery, brewing, and others. Factors such as poor quality of education, overcrowding in classrooms, and high cost of education further worsen the condition and encourages parents to engage their children in child labor, which becomes a major hurdle in attaining education. Another significant factor in obstructing literacy rates for girls, which was also reported in PSLM Survey, was that "parents did not allow" (Moosvi, 2022). Due to some cultural and social norms, parents do not allow their girls to study after a certain age. According to the 2018 Human Rights Watch report, girls are often removed from school as they reach puberty, and it is perceived that for girls, it is very unlikely to find work ("Shall I feed my daughter, or educate her?," 2018). These negative perceptions established within society hinder girls' education attainment. Moreover, people are reluctant to send their girls to school due to security concerns, especially in rural areas where girls have to travel long distances to go to school passing the agricultural fields. In addition to this, one of the significant hindrances is the lack of basic facilities in schools. A study conducted based on random sampling in 12 districts reports that unavailability of facilities such as furniture and toilets, boundary walls and clean drinking water in schools are some of the main causes of

children dropping out (Shah et al., 2019). Research suggests that 65% of the schools in Lahore do not have separate toilets for girls. In addition to this, only 22% of the schools have access to clean drinking water (Humqadam, n.d.). Consequently, every 7th child in district Lahore is out of school. To encourage the maximum enrollment of out-of-school children (OOSC), many initiatives were taken in Pakistan. In this regard, the introduction of the Education Support Scheme, under Iqra Farogh-e-Taleem, is of great significance ("Education Support Scheme," 2020). The program was launched to help children who did not have access to government schools. Vouchers were issued by the government to poor households, which can be redeemed at a partner low-cost private school in return for free education. The Punjab government also launched the Insaf School Program under which existing school buildings were utilized for evening shifts to ensure maximum enrollment of out-of-school children (Sulaiman, 2019). Under the noticeable Sustainable Transition and Retention in Delivering Education "STRIDE", in addition to evening classes, students were also given bicycles and transport vouchers in order to provide them with unobstructed access to education. The efforts made by Alight and other local partners in providing access to quality primary education to out-of-school children are also commendable. Under their "Educate A Child" program, 1,101,549 out-of-school children were provided access to education through community mobilization, teacher training, and school construction ("Million kids to school (EAC)," 2021). Moreover, the initiatives such as the introduction of mobile schools are also under consideration. According to this, mobile schools will be set up in the buses to provide education to out-of-school children working in business areas (The Express Tribune, 2019). Although access to education in Pakistan has considerably improved over the last few decades as a result of these interventions, the number of out-of-school children is still on the rise. This implies that there is a need for an in-depth understanding of the underlying reasons that are obstructing access to education. Therefore, this study will be based on a localized setting and will be focused on quantifying the key barriers that will help the government and policymakers in designing targeted policies to improve the enrollment rates of out-of-school children.

Pakistan's education system is faced with multiple challenges. Despite prioritizing education facilities and increasing the budget for the education sector, the government has not been able to fully achieve its goal of increasing enrollment rates of out-of-school children. Like other provinces, Punjab is host to a large number of children who have never been to school and those who drop out before completing education. The closure of schools and complete lockdown during COVID-19 have further intensified the condition. The planning and implementation of education policies is undertaken at the provincial and sometimes at the district levels. The planning process and policy-making is mostly based on the data from provincial Education Management Information System (EMIS) and surveys, such as Punjab Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM). Although these datasets give a comprehensive national picture of various variables and indicators of education, these are of limited significance for planning and designing policies for a localized setting. For instance, in the case of Lahore, research suggests that approximately 16% of children are out-of-school (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Despite Lahore being the educational hub and having significant representation in the political leadership, the out-of-school children rate is still very high. This indicates that there are factors, specific to this particular geographic region that are obstructing children's education attainment. A significant factor in this regard could be, for example, migration or negative mobility. People, such as daily wagers mainly belonging to rural areas, migrate back to their villages in the season of harvesting wheat and other crops. For factors like these, there is a need for planning at a local level. In addition to this, the planning process involves minimal participation of the civil society and the marginalized communities. There is no contact point between the policy-makers and the local community. This results in the formation of ineffective policies as the policy makers do not get into a direct contact with real-life obstacles faced by the out-of-school children. This implies that if the situation remains the same and the key barriers that are hindering children from going to school are not identified and tackled, the country will

not be able to achieve its targets. There is a need to devise and prioritize specific policies to bring all children into the education system

Material and Methods

This section describes the method that is used to identify the key barriers causing the high rate of out-of-school children in Lahore, despite it being known as the educational hub. Desk Research For a wider picture, educational practices and landscapes across the countries with high and low out-of-school children's rates is studied, focusing on those which are working towards tackling this challenge, for instance India. This helped identify the drivers behind this issue, and contextualize their experiences and approach in the local context. Then to gain an in-depth understanding of the issue at the country level, historical enrollment and reform patterns of the current model and structure of schooling are reviewed. This gave an understanding of how factors such as gender, socio-economic status, and geography affect education patterns. Further narrowing the approach to capture local nuances driving the children to not attend school, studies conducted in the context various cities analyzed to identify the past trends and rationale.

Through the responses by the teachers and administrator, we can have analyzed the willingness of public schools to change their methodology and show flexibility to increase the literacy rate. To develop a successful policy plan, understanding of the role of educational institutions and the extent to which they can support it is of great importance. Parents' behavior plays a crucial role in children's enrollment as the burden of expenditure and responsibility of child's security lie on their shoulders. The questions like "why do they not send their children to school". If the reason the is "too expensive", the cause behind the expense may vary; registration fee, school material (uniform, stationery and books) expenditure, travel costs, private tuitions and more,

Results and Discussion

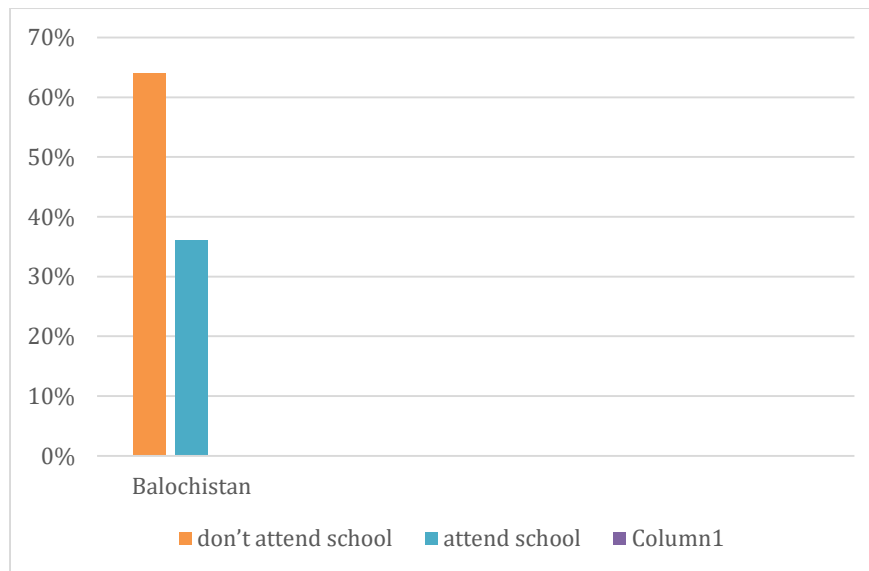
The proposed research project is focused on marginalized children who are out-of-school due to various factors and are deprived of their fundamental right to education. These children include those from lower-income households, girls, those involved in child labor, and children with disabilities. The study aims to improve the enrollment rates of these children in Pakistan by identifying the obstacles they face in attaining education and proposing solutions to tackle these hurdles. This study is aligned with the International and National Commitments and will help Pakistan achieve its goals. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG-4) requires ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all. This indicates that the disadvantaged and the marginalized should be given equal opportunities as others. This project focused on and engage the marginalized children and raise the barriers faced by them. Using this research, the policies made by the government targeted at these children. Thus, the proposed project is aligned with the country's international commitments and will contribute to achieving SDG-4. In addition to this, the project is also aligned with the aim of Pakistan to provide free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 5-16 according to Article 25-A of the constitution. By including the disadvantaged and ensuring equal representation of them and by working with both demand and supply-side stakeholders, the project contributed towards fulfilling the country's aim. The information collected through the research will be beneficial for the relevant stakeholders and policy-makers. It of great significance to the government and the local NGOs to target the policy interventions based on the impact of these factors. The policy-makers will be able to prioritize the policies and reassess the allocation of resources and education budget. Using the evidence-based identified key barriers in a localized setting of Lahore, this project will help the government generate solutions and interventions that can be replicated in other districts and scaled up to the provincial or national levels A tailor made policy is important. A more focused and targeted approach should be taken according to local socio economic conditions. As proper consciousness is required not among the policy

makers but the people in general and parents in particular is suggested to improve the situation.

Province-wise disparities and ratios of OOSC

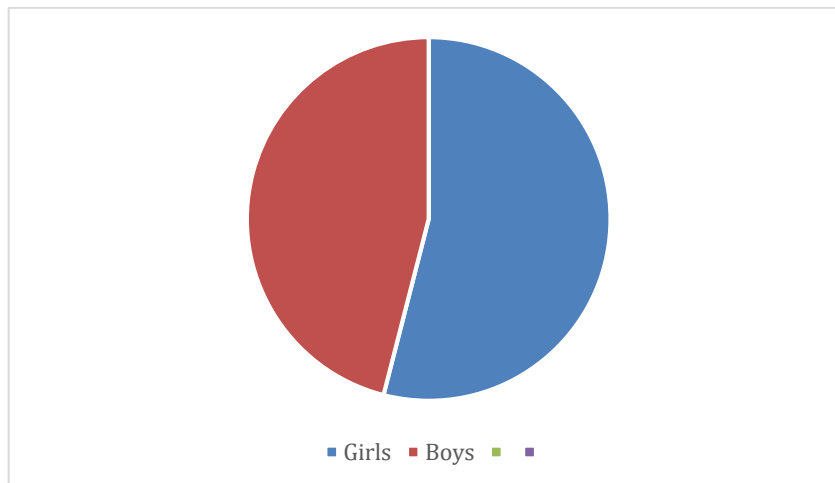
Region-wise, Balochistan ranks the lowest among the 4 provinces of Pakistan (Soomro & Tanveer, 2017) having 44 percent OOSC of the total. As per research, sixty-four percent of the OOSC in Balochistan who are 16 years old didn't go to school ever, and the rate of dropouts rises proportionately with age. If we look at the gender-based statistics, the girls in Balochistan have serious obstacles to overcome before they can enroll in school. Girls make up a far larger percentage of OOSC than boys do. In contrast to boys, who make up 46%, OOSC girls have a ratio of 54%. In total, it is estimated that approximately 10.8 million girls and approximately 9.2 million boys are not attending school. The research also stated that girls made up the majority of OOSC in about sixteen districts of the province (Shahbeer,2022).

Figure:01 Children attending school aged 16 years old in Balochistan



Shahbeer, A. R. (2022, October 2). The lack of concern at out-of-school children. *Pakistan Today*. <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2022/10/02/the-lack-of-concern-at-out-of-school-children-3/>

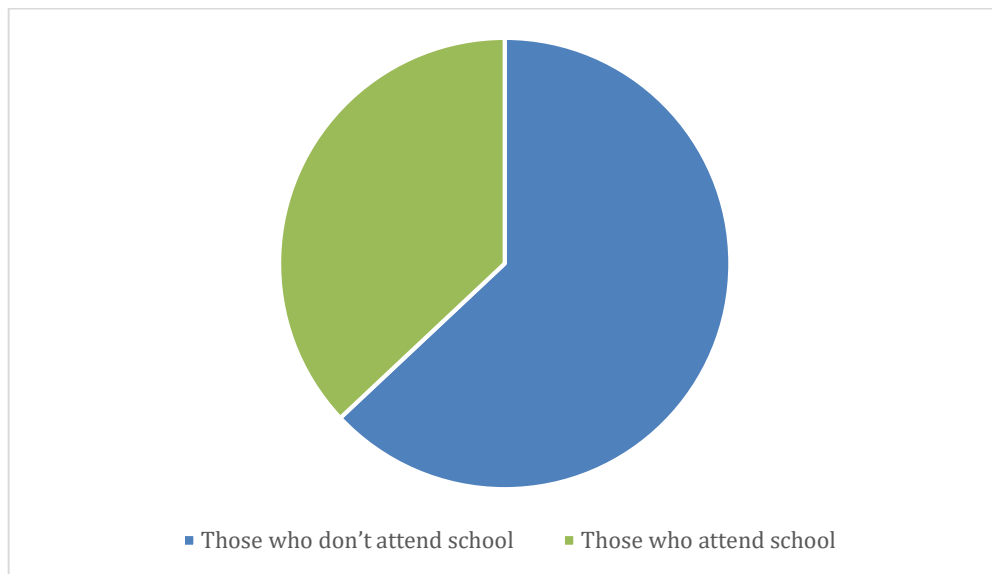
Figure: 02 Total girls and boys who go to school in Balochistan



Shahbeer, A. R. (2022, October 2). The lack of concern at out-of-school children. *Pakistan Today*. <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2022/10/02/the-lack-of-concern-at-out-of-school-children-3/>Following

Balochistan, Sindh has the second-lowest literacy rate. According to reports, 63% of Sindh's school-age population (sixteen years old or younger) has never enrolled in schools. Similarly, according to the research, Sindh has a ratio of 70% of children under the age of 9, followed by 69% of children under the age of 11. The survey also showed that enrollment rates increased between the ages of 5 and 9 and progressively decreased around the age of eleven. The same patterns apply to both sexes, with boys enrolling at higher rates as compared to girls. In addition, girls miss school more frequently than boys in seventeen districts of Sindh, whilst boys miss school more frequently in eleven districts. Thirteen of Sindh's twenty-nine districts have OOSC rates that are higher than fifty percent, whereas six districts in Hyderabad and Karachi have the smallest OOSC percentages (Shahbeer, 2022).

Figure: 03 Literacy Rate in Sindh



Shahbeer, A. R. (2022, October 2). The lack of concern at out-of-school children. *Pakistan Today*. <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2022/10/02/the-lack-of-concern-at-out-of-school-children-3/>

Thus, both Balochistan and Sindh contributed significantly to Pakistan's peak OOSC rate. KPK and Punjab are comparatively stable and have the required number of students enrolled in their schools (Shahbeer, 2022). Still, in terms of general distribution Punjab is home to over fifty percent of the OOSC. The results also show significant geographical variations in the availability of girls' educational options, with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) exhibiting the highest variation. In remote communities, it is more challenging for both boys and girls to get to school, and the disparity worsens as students move up the educational ladder (Rajper, 2015)

Factors behind OOSC in Pakistan

Numerous studies have been undertaken that focused on OOSC and highlighted some major factors contributing to the problem. This section tends to thoroughly discuss some of these factors.

Socioeconomic status

According to a study completed in 2010 by Shafiq, there is a significant correlation between family income and OOSC. As high-quality schooling in developing nations is quite costly and there are numerous expenses associated with schooling, such as uniforms, textbooks, educational costs, and conveyance, families who experience financial difficulties find it difficult to educate their kids. Because it is too expensive for poor and underprivileged families to pay for all of these educational expenses, these families often choose not to enroll their kids in school or risk having them expelled (Shafiq, 2010). Additionally, findings show

a significant link between households' income and school dropout rates for kids (Effiong & Edet, 2020). Numerous studies have examined the relationship between poverty and the percentage of children who are not in school. In Pakistan, poverty is one of the major factors that encourage dropouts and encourage parents to pull their kids out of school. Poor parents are unable to enroll their kids in educational institutions, so instead they opt to have them work to help pay for other essential requirements (Kamran & ul Deen, 2017; Bibi & Ahmad, 2018).

Cultural Constraints

Due to several variables like cultural norms, social conventions, and inadequate distribution of labor, girls are more prone than boys to miss education. In accordance with cultural obligations, the females must perform domestic tasks. Parents choose not to enroll their female kids in school, especially in rural areas and instead encourage them to assist with household chores. Girls are thought to be temporary people who would depart after marriage, which is why parents are reluctant to spend on their schooling. In traditional societies (like Pakistan) males are given greater priority than girls. Consequently, girls are denied the basic right to an education (Shahidul & Karim, 2015; Fatima, Fatima, & Alwi 2021). Moreover, girls have a greater impact than boys when it comes to the dropout rate due to early marriages. Early marriage is encouraged for a variety of reasons, which has a detrimental effect on society (Mcckleary-sills et al, 2015; Sekine & Hodgkin, 2017).

Family Structure

Numerous studies have provided data that one of the key factors in children's school abandonment is the family's structure. These studies claim that children in homes with single parents or stepparents are kept out of schools. Children in homes with a female head of household are more likely to drop out of educational institutions, and shoulder the family's financial obligations. Similarly, stepchildren, have their basic needs and rights less prioritized than those of their biological parents (Song Benin, & Glick, 2012).

Geographical location

The geographic location is also an important factor in encouraging the OOSC ratio (Shah Haider, & Taj, 2019). In developing nations like Pakistan, a large bulk of people reside in remote regions where there is little organization. Due to the majority of the villages' remote locations and sparse populations, developing nations with limited resources find it difficult to establish schools that provide every community with a high-quality education. Thus, kids are unable to travel between villages for schooling, and they continue to be OOSC (Ghaffar, Riaz, & Dehraj, 2022).

Child labor

Child labor is one of the main causes of boosting the OOSC ratio. Over fifty percent of OOSCs earn to provide for their households (Haider & Qureshi, 2016). Since child labor regulations are ignored or improperly applied in underdeveloped nations like Pakistan, children can easily find employment possibilities (Zafar Sarwar, & Haider, 2016) The youngsters are given extremely difficult tasks in which they not only lose their schooling but also experience health problems and are mistreated at work (Ashfaq et al., 2017).

Educational Environment

At times, the education system itself is the cause of rising absenteeism and dropout rates. The upkeep of the learning environment is the responsibility of institutes; failure to do so results in children's poor academic performance, which then results in dropouts (Simić & Krstić, 2017). For instance, children who are exposed to drugs frequently, particularly in schools, are more likely to develop drug addiction. Due to their inability to keep up with their

academic setting and routine after engaging in any drug-dependent activity, students who indulge in substance abuse are more likely to drop out (Townsend, Flisher, & King, 2007). Thus, in order to regulate the dropout and OOSC ratio, it is crucial to preserve the standard of education and the learning environment (Dagneu, 2017). A study by Badar and Mason (2020) shows that families in Pakistan who sent their kids to public schools voiced concerns about the atmosphere, the security of the kids, and the instructors' lack of commitment. So, many families favored enrolling their kids in a madrasah since it allows them to continue their religious studies while also receiving a formal education.

Recommendation

The fundamental right to schooling in Pakistan was not as clearly defined or as legally binding as it is today. Previously, in accordance with Article 37 B of the constitution, the government was bound to eliminate illiteracy by offering free and obligatory secondary education within the shortest period of time (Malik et al., 2014). It is obvious that the aforementioned article was insufficient to launch initiatives or file lawsuits to compel the implementation of the constitutional right to education. The Constitution of Pakistan of 1973, nevertheless, has undergone substantial modifications since the enactment of the 18th Amendment in 2010, and the addition of Article 25-A to the Section of "Fundamental Rights" has altered the conditions and duties of the government. It made education a constitutional right. As per Article 25-A, the government is obligated to offer free and required schooling to all children between the ages of five to sixteen in a way that may be specified by law (Soomro & Tanveer, 2017).

In light of the 18th Amendment, education is officially a provincial matter. Provinces are in charge of all administrative and legal functions relating to important aspects of education, such as policymaking, planning, curriculum, and standards (I-SAPS, 2012). But in 2015, the Pakistani government started a process of federal curriculum revisions after acknowledging the value of maintaining national unity, especially due to the rise of extremism (Soomro & Tanveer, 2017). Although each province's educational ministries are mandated to create their own rules, no official provincial policy has yet been presented. While Baluchistan and Sindh educational authorities have made a few small changes to the existing policies KP and Punjab's educational authorities are still operating on the 2009 NEP and the policy they drafted in 2017 (Ambreen & Hussain, 2020).

To ensure that the passed bills are implemented, the Rules of Business have not yet been created. To guarantee that the country meets the SDGs or at least comes near to its essential targets, provincial administrations must also lay the foundation upon which subsequent authorities can grow (Malik et al., 2014). The budget for 2014–2015 saw a significant change in that all provinces quadrupled the amount of budget allocated to their ministries of education, placing a greater emphasis on the development of infrastructure and the enrollment and retention of pupils. But there is still work to be done (Haq, 2016).

Two significant changes to education policy occurred during the previous 20 years: the National Education Policy of 1998–2010 and the National Education Policy of 2009. Despite the fact that the NEP 2009 covered all crucial concerns in education, planned proactive measures, and established specific goals, no system could be set up to monitor the policy's implementation.

The legal structure for institutional-level collaboration among the provinces diminished as the 18th Amendment decentralized education. However, this significant policy document—NEP 2009—continues to function as a guide and a point of reference for administrators and planners of education at every level (Bhatti, 2011). To speed up performance in achieving the education-linked MDG/EFA objectives defined for 2015–2016, the Pakistani government created the NPA 2013–2016 in September 2013. The main goal of NPA was to hasten the process of attaining the educational MDGs in the following three

years. In particular, the Plan sought to increase OOSC enrollment in primary schools, increase turnover at the primary level and ensure that all enrolled kids finish basic education, and improve primary education quality (Alam, 2014 as cited in Soomro & Tanveer, 2017). Yet, a number of limitations and government priorities prevented the idea from becoming successful. One such limitation is a lack of trust and communication among different units operating for educational development. Moreover, according to Tikly (2011), developing policies and putting them into action need to go hand in hand. Unfortunately in Pakistan, policy development and implementation are viewed independently. So, a strong infrastructure is essential for enabling information at the province and district levels for the execution of policies (Ali, 2011). Here, it is worth mentioning that the financial constraints that are accompanying Pakistan since its inception also significantly hinder the implementation of educational policies (Ambreen & Hussain, 2020).

Another significant barrier to education in Pakistan is poor governance (Soomro & Tanveer, 2017). Pakistan has weak administration, thus, numerous attempts to execute policies were unsuccessful because the local administrative infrastructure was inadequate (UNESCO & Government of Pakistan, 2003 as cited in Ambreen & Hussain, 2020). To effectively carry out education plans and policies in their respective areas, local and provincial education executives and planners need high-quality training since they lack the necessary expertise, commitment, and drive (Soomro & Tanveer, 2017). When discussing the political dynamics of various departments, the members of NCHD and BECS stated that corruption, especially among politicians and government workers, is another main barrier to the successful implementation of policies in Pakistan. Lack of mechanisms for accountability, structural and operational corruption, unnecessary transfers, and changes in any political government are just a few of the serious governance problems that have an impact on how well policies are implemented and how accountable officials are for their actions. Every new administration developed fresh policies and programs without taking into account the work of preceding administrations. The state of affairs was better in Punjab compared to the other provinces. The literacy department had its own system for examining educational institutions, educators, student participation, and absenteeism (Ambreen & Hussain, 2020). However, the overall lack of school supervisory groups led to inconsistent and subpar service delivery by instructors and administrative personnel across schools, which is partly due to funding limitations and partially due to hiring rules (Soomro & Tanveer, 2017).

Additionally, community involvement also helps maintain the quality of education. Gilgit Baltistan has the highest rate of education among Federal Areas. For this, the participation of the community deserves more recognition than the Gilgit Baltistan Government (Ambreen & Hussain, 2020). In the rest of the country, community involvement is ineffective in educational issues, which makes it impossible to assess the caliber of education (Soomro & Tanveer, 2017).

Similarly to this, the curriculum is crucial in forming the students' minds and assisting them in realizing their full potential. It shapes the fundamental ideals and knowledge foundation of the populace. Unfortunately, the actual curriculum delivered in Pakistani schools does not meet the high standards upheld by developed nations. It continues to emphasize antiquated practices that are no longer prevalent in society. Most textbooks lack self-test questions and activity sheets. The books have to successfully convey their message in order to achieve all of their goals, and they must also organize their content in a way that is logical, comprehensible, and engaging (Rajper, 2015).

Pakistan has experienced an increase in terrorism over the past decades, particularly in the north of the country. In rural, neglected regions, educational facilities, particularly female schools, are frequently targeted and demolished. In addition, there has been an increase in criminality against young females. Thus, families are less likely to take their kids to school, especially girls, due to safety concerns. Terrorist attacks on mixed-gender schools

and even colleges have heightened concerns about security (Soomro & Tanveer, 2017). Furthermore, following the events of 9/11, madrasahs in Pakistan are the subject of increased worldwide scrutiny. Since then, global Islamic militancy has been blamed for that incident as well as for all acts of terrorism. Madrasahs are the subject of conflicting opinions among academics. Both these elements not only affect the quality of education in Pakistan but also increases the number of OOSCs (Soomro & Tanveer, 2017).

Conclusion

Thus, keeping all these aspects in mind the state must make sure that efforts are made in an efficient manner to develop Pakistan's educational system. The policies developed to address the issue of OOSC should be clearly defined, efficiently curated, correctly implemented, and monitored and revised from time to time.

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