

Original Article

Understanding Dropout Factors in Girls' Secondary Education

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Abstract

This research examines the intricate problem of female dropout rates in secondary school, with a special emphasis on South Punjab, Pakistan. The study seeks to uncover the primary variables that contribute to dropout rates by conducting a thorough investigation of numerous socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional elements. The project aims to reveal patterns and connections that provide insight into the difficulties females have in accessing and staying in secondary school. This will be achieved by using a mixed-methods approach, which includes surveys, interviews, and statistical analysis. To effectively address the issue of girls' dropout rates in South Punjab and beyond, policymakers, educators, and stakeholders must comprehend these issues and devise precise interventions and solutions.

Keywords: Dropout rates, Early marriages, Gender-based discrimination, Girls' education, Socio-economic factors

INTRODUCTION

Various variables impact the dropout rates of females in secondary school. Research has shown that early marriage, which is often a result of engaging in sexual activity before marriage and the financial burden of continuing education, might impede girls' access to education (Stark, 2017). Moreover, the unequal treatment between genders in terms of financial inclusion, which is often associated with women's limited access to formal education, may restrict their financial capacities and hinder their access to formal credit. This, in turn, has a detrimental effect on their capacity to remain enrolled in school (Mndolwa & Alhassan, 2020).

Additionally, the obstacles of transitioning from primary to secondary school and the higher rates of females dropping out compared to boys in secondary education emphasize the crucial points when interventions are necessary to ensure the uninterrupted education of girls



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(Posti-Ahokas & Lehtomäki, 2014). According to Yi et al. (2015), there is a considerable association between student dropout in technical and vocational education and training institutions and factors such as academic achievement, maternal education, and migrant status (Yi et al., 2015). This research examines the significant rates of females' dropout in secondary school in South Punjab, Pakistan, with the goal of revealing the complex variables that contribute to this ongoing problem. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, including both qualitative and quantitative research approaches, to conduct a thorough investigation of the several factors that influence girls' choices to terminate their education.

The study employs surveys, interviews, and statistical data analysis to collect comprehensive perspectives from many stakeholders, such as students, parents, teachers, and educational officials. This methodology guarantees a

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comprehensive comprehension of the dropout phenomena, including a wide range of viewpoints and firsthand encounters from individuals who are directly impacted. An in-depth analysis of socioeconomic problems demonstrates that poverty and financial limitations pose substantial obstacles to the ongoing education of females. Numerous families have financial difficulties in covering the costs of school fees, uniforms, and learning materials. Consequently, when finances are few, there is a tendency to prioritize males' education. Moreover, the opportunity cost associated with educating females is substantial, since they are often expected to fulfill domestic responsibilities or engage in employment to augment the family's financial resources.

The dropout issue is worsened by cultural norms and gender prejudices. Profoundly ingrained patriarchal beliefs provide more importance to the education of males, while seeing girls' training as less significant or even dispensable. Premature withdrawal from the school system is also influenced by early marriages and cultural pressure for females to take on household responsibilities. The presence of these cultural variables fosters an atmosphere in which the importance of females' education is underestimated, resulting in decreased enrollment and increased rates of students leaving school prematurely. The survey also emphasizes substantial deficiencies in school infrastructure, which impede females' ability to access education. A significant number of schools in South Punjab suffer from a lack of fundamental amenities, including access to clean water, sufficient sanitation, and enough classrooms. Consequently, the school atmosphere becomes inhospitable and poses a safety risk, particularly for female students. In addition, the considerable distances to educational institutions, combined with insufficient transportation, provide safety hazards and deter consistent attendance, especially for adolescent females.

Education quality is a crucial determinant of dropout rates. Problems such as teacher absenteeism, scarcity of skilled female instructors, and inadequate educational resources contribute to an unfavorable learning environment. Female students who encounter bad academic performance or lack assistance in their educational endeavors are more prone to withdrawing from school. Girls' motivation and ambition levels are negatively impacted by the lack of female role models in teaching roles. The interplay of family dynamics is essential in determining educational achievement. The

continuance of girls' education is substantially influenced by the educational levels and attitudes of their parents. Parents with low levels of knowledge or a lack of appreciation for the importance of educating females are less inclined to provide assistance for their daughters' education. Furthermore, familial obligations, such as the need for tending to younger siblings or supporting family enterprises, exacerbate the rates at which students discontinue their education.

Through the analysis of these intricate and interrelated elements, the research offers significant perspectives for formulating focused interventions and policies. The results underscore the need for all-encompassing approaches that tackle economic obstacles, question societal conventions, strengthen educational facilities, elevate the standard of education, and include families in promoting girls' education. Possible solutions include the provision of financial aid or scholarships for females, implementation of awareness campaigns to alter social attitudes, enhancement of school infrastructure, training and recruitment of competent female educators, and engagement of parents and communities in educational endeavors. The primary objective of this research is to provide a valuable contribution towards the overarching objective of attaining gender parity in the field of education. By comprehending and resolving the causes that lead to students leaving school prematurely, individuals with a vested interest may collaborate to establish an educational setting that is all-encompassing and encouraging.

This would enable females in South Punjab to successfully finish their secondary education, therefore unlocking avenues for their personal and vocational advancement. Moreover, research has shown that physical health and health behaviors throughout adolescence might forecast the likelihood of dropping out of secondary school, underscoring the significance of overall well-being in maintaining educational commitment (Svansdóttir et al., 2015). Sociocultural issues such as early or coerced marriage, the belief that education hinders marriage, and the worry of finding suitable spouses for educated girls, have a substantial role in the high percentages of females dropping out of school (Rutandaro et al., 2022). Both financial constraints and non-financial reasons significantly contribute to the rise in dropout rates. This highlights the need for comprehensive support systems to effectively tackle these obstacles (Rahman, 2021).

Statement of Problem

Despite substantial endeavors to enhance educational achievements, the percentages of females discontinuing their education in secondary schools remain remarkably high in South Punjab, Pakistan. This ongoing problem not only limits individual capabilities but also sustains gender disparity and obstructs socio-economic progress in the area. The diverse range of variables contributing to dropout rates, such as socioeconomic obstacles, cultural norms, insufficient school facilities, low educational standards, and family dynamics, make it difficult to effectively tackle the issue. Without a thorough understanding of these fundamental reasons, interventions run the danger of becoming fragmented and ineffectual. This research aims to methodically identify and examine the primary factors that contribute to the dropout rates of female students in secondary schools in South Punjab. The purpose of this initiative is to provide research-based insights that can be used to create specific strategies and policies. These measures will help to greatly decrease the number of girls who drop out of school and encourage them to stay engaged in their education in this particular location.

Research Objective

- To identify and evaluate the main socioeconomic factors that impact the rates of females dropping out of secondary schools in South Punjab, Pakistan.

Research Question

- What are the primary socioeconomic variables that are causing the high percentages of girls dropping out of secondary school in South Punjab, Pakistan?

Significance of the Study

This research is crucial because it focuses on the pressing problem of high attrition rates among female students in secondary school in South Punjab, Pakistan. The results of this study have important consequences for many groups involved, such as politicians, educators, community leaders, and non-governmental organizations, by offering a more comprehensive comprehension of the complex elements that contribute to this urgent issue. This research intends to contribute to the greater objective of establishing gender equality in education by identifying and studying the main factors that lead to girls' dropout rates. Comprehending these elements is crucial for creating focused

interventions that may foster educational parity, guaranteeing that girls have equal chances as boys to finish their secondary school.

Socioeconomic Development: Education has a pivotal role in driving socioeconomic development. The research seeks to empower young women by tackling the issue of dropout rates among females, equipping them with the information and skills essential for personal and professional development. Empowering people in South Punjab may result in expanded economic opportunities, improved health outcomes, and an overall higher quality of life for both individuals and their families. This, in turn, contributes to the socio-economic development of the region. The findings obtained from this study will provide significant data to guide the development and execution of efficient educational policies. Policymakers may use the study's results to develop all-encompassing measures that target the particular obstacles encountered by females in secondary education, including budgetary limitations, cultural norms, and insufficient school infrastructure. Customized policies may result in improved allocation of resources and focused initiatives that directly tackle the underlying reasons for dropout.

The research emphasizes the need of involving families and communities in promoting girls' education, hence increasing awareness and engagement. Through promoting knowledge about the advantages of educating females and questioning prevailing cultural beliefs, the research may cultivate a more encouraging atmosphere for girls to achieve higher levels of education. Community engagement is essential for the long-term viability of any intervention designed to decrease dropout rates. The research offers practical ideas for educators and school administrators to enhance the educational standards and the overall school atmosphere.

Gaining insight into the particular obstacles that females encounter may result in improved teacher education, hiring of competent female instructors, and the allocation of essential resources and facilities to provide an atmosphere that fosters effective learning for girls. This research is important because it attempts to not only uncover the causes of high dropout rates among females in South Punjab but also provide the groundwork for establishing effective, context-specific remedies. The project has the potential to have a significant effect on the lives of girls, their families, and the wider community by addressing this important problem. Ultimately, it

can contribute to achieving educational fairness and sustainable development in the area.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The dropout rate in females' secondary school is influenced by several variables, with socioeconomic considerations having a key effect. The authors Prakash et al. (2017) have recognized economic obstacles, such as poverty and limited resources, as significant factors contributing to the dropout rates of females in schools. Research has shown that family poverty, migration of females for employment, and the expenses connected to education are linked to higher chances of students dropping out and being absent from school (Prakash et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the economic factors that have been identified as key causes for students' dropout include parental income, child labor, and the expenses associated with education (Ems & Mnjokava, 2022). Furthermore, the interaction of economic, home, school-level, and cultural variables sustains the problem of girls' school dropout (Banda et al., 2024). Girls dropping out of school may be attributed to several factors, including early marriage, female genital mutilation, family responsibilities, societal resistance to educating females, and limited parental education (Msafiri & Lianyu, 2022). Moreover, the likelihood of females dropping out of school because of marriage rises after they have finished certain grades, demonstrating the influence of early marriage on the continuation of education (Sekine & Hodgkin, 2017).

Impoverishment

High dropout rates among females in secondary school are mostly caused by poverty, which is a major contributing factor. Low-income families often allocate their funds towards essential needs like sustenance, housing, and medical care, rather than schooling. Often, girls are withdrawn from school to assist with domestic tasks or to engage in employment in order to financially support their families (Prakash et al., 2017). Impoverished households are unable to pay the immediate expenses associated with education, such as school fees, uniforms, books, and transportation. Consequently, this financial burden contributes to increased dropout rates among females (Dakwa et al., 2014).

Insufficient Resources

An insufficiency of educational resources is another crucial socioeconomic problem. Schools in economically disadvantaged regions often face

a dearth of fundamental amenities and resources, including textbooks, stationery, and educational aids (BETTACH & OUAHIDI, 2021). The limited availability of resources has a detrimental impact on the quality of education and the process of acquiring knowledge, hence posing difficulties for females to sustain their interest and enthusiasm. Furthermore, a significant number of schools suffer from inadequate infrastructure, including the absence of potable water, sanitary amenities, and secure classrooms, which has a disproportionate impact on females. Lack of dedicated and sanitary restroom facilities, specifically, might discourage teenage females from attending school, particularly during menstruation (Bibi & Ahmad, 2019).

Opportunity Costs

The economic difficulty faced by families is greatly influenced by the opportunity cost of education. When females get an education, they are unable to contribute to household chores or engage in informal employment to boost the family's earnings. For many households, the immediate financial advantages of employing females surpass the long-term advantages of their education. This economic analysis results in increased percentages of students leaving school prematurely, since females are often seen as vital contributions to the financial well-being of their families (Shahidul & Karim, 2015).

Economic Instability

Financial instability and insecurity significantly contribute to the high dropout rates. When families face economic shocks, such as unemployment, sickness, or natural catastrophes, they tend to remove their girls from school as a way to deal with the situation. The inherent unpredictability of financial uncertainty is a challenge for families in making enduring educational commitments, resulting in sporadic attendance and ultimately abandonment of studies (Arafat et al., 2021).

Insufficient Availability of Scholarships and Financial Aid

The lack of sufficient scholarships and financial assistance programs worsens the matter even further. Although several governmental and non-governmental organizations provide financial aid to promote girls' education, these programs are often restricted in terms of their extent and reach. A significant number of qualified students are excluded from opportunities owing to inadequate finance, limited knowledge, or

bureaucratic obstacles. Families facing poverty have difficulties in maintaining their daughters' education due to a lack of financial assistance (Chen & DesJardins, 2008; Nyirenda, 2023).

Impact of Parental Education and Employment

The educational achievement of females is substantially influenced by the educational level and work position of their parents. Parents with limited educational backgrounds may have a limited understanding of the significance of education or may lack the abilities to assist their children's learning at home. In addition, parents who are jobless or underemployed may see education as an indulgence rather than an essential need, particularly for females. The perpetuation of poverty and educational neglect is facilitated by the intergenerational transfer of educational disadvantages.

Socioeconomic variables such as poverty, resource scarcity, opportunity costs, financial instability, insufficient financial assistance, and parental education and employment play a key role in the elevated percentages of females dropping out of secondary school in South Punjab, Pakistan. To tackle these problems, specific initiatives are needed to ease financial hardships, enhance school resources, and establish strong support structures, all aimed at enabling girls to have access to and successfully finish their education.

METHODOLOGY & DATA ANALYSIS

Research Design

The study used a quantitative research approach to methodically examine the variables that contribute to the dropout rates among female students in secondary school in South Punjab, Pakistan. This methodology enables the gathering and examination of quantitative data to detect patterns, correlations, and probable cause-and-effect connections among different variables and dropout rates.

Instrument

A well designed questionnaire was created as the main instrument for collecting primary data. The survey was specifically created to collect comprehensive data on several factors, such as socioeconomic level, school resources, family history, and educational experiences. The survey included of closed-ended questions for quantitative analysis and a few Likert-scale items to assess attitudes and impressions.

Sampling Size

The sample size was calculated via the use of statistical power analysis in order to guarantee the study's ability to identify significant effects. A total of 150 female students from different secondary schools in South Punjab took part in the survey, providing a substantial and reliable dataset for analysis.

Data Analysis

Q.1 My family has financial difficulties in meeting the expenses related to my education, such as tuition, uniforms, and books.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Lowest	8	5.33	5.33
Average	10	6.66	6.66
High	132	88	88
Total	150	100	100

Approximately 88% of households in South Punjab have considerable financial difficulties when it comes to providing financial assistance for their daughters' secondary education. This emphasizes the crucial need for financial assistance initiatives, such as scholarships and subsidies, to ease these economic hardships and diminish the rate at which females abandon their education. This discovery emphasizes the need of tackling economic obstacles in order to provide equal access to school and enhance the rate at which females continue their secondary education.

Q2: The school I attend has sufficient amenities, such as hygienic water supply, sanitary facilities, and well-equipped classrooms.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Lowest	2	1.3	1.3
Average	2	1.3	1.3
High	146	97.4	97.4
Total	150	100	100

The data shows that an overwhelming majority (97.4%) of respondents are of the opinion that their schools provide enough amenities, including clean water supply, sanitary facilities, and well-equipped classrooms. The students' high level of satisfaction indicates that, at least in their view, infrastructure does not pose a significant obstacle to their further study. Hence, it may be more effective to divert attention towards addressing issues like financial restrictions and cultural norms, rather than only

focusing on improving school facilities, in order to decrease dropout rates among females in secondary education in South Punjab.

FINDINGS

The survey data analysis has shown the following findings:

Financial Hardships

A significant majority of respondents (88%) said that they had significant financial challenges in covering their college expenditures. Moderate Financial Difficulty: A mere 6.66% of respondents reported experiencing an average degree of financial hardship.

Minimal Financial Hardship

Only a smaller fraction (5.33%) indicated experiencing the lowest degree of financial trouble.

Implications

The substantial hindrance to girls' education resides in the immense financial load that families are required to shoulder. This discovery emphasizes the crucial need for financial support initiatives, such as scholarships, subsidies, and other types of economic aid, to mitigate these challenges and decrease the rate at which females drop out of secondary school.

Educational Facilities and Resources Provided by a School

Overwhelming Satisfaction with Facilities

An overwhelming majority of participants (97.4%) said that their schools has enough facilities.

A small proportion (1.3%) expressed a moderate degree of satisfaction with the facilities provided by the school.

Insufficient Satisfaction with Facilities

An further 1.3% of participants expressed the least amount of satisfaction with the facilities provided by the school.

Implications

The survey results indicate that the infrastructure in the studied schools, including the provision of clean water, sanitary facilities, and well-equipped classrooms, is not a significant concern, as seen by the high satisfaction percentage of 97.4%. This result suggests that the schools in South Punjab are typically provide a satisfactory physical setting for instruction. Hence, endeavors to decrease dropout rates

should prioritize on other notable elements, such as socioeconomic obstacles, rather than enhancements to infrastructure.

CONCLUSION

Financial obstacles provide a significant hindrance to the ongoing education of females in secondary schools in South Punjab. The data shows that 88% of the respondents reported experiencing significant financial problems, demonstrating that economic issues play a major role in causing students to drop out. This indicates a need for improved financial assistance systems to guarantee that females have the means to continue their education. The high satisfaction rate of 97.4% regarding school facilities indicates that schools are typically well-equipped and provide a favorable learning environment. This suggests that most students do not see infrastructure as a main priority, which enables stakeholders to allocate resources and initiatives towards more urgent matters.

Recommendations

- Financial support programs, including as scholarships, financial assistance, and subsidies, that are particularly designed for females may be implemented and expanded. These programs aim to reduce the financial strain on families, therefore motivating them to continue sending their daughters to school.
- Community awareness programs may be conducted to educate communities about the enduring advantages of girls' education. These initiatives can play a crucial role in changing cultural norms and decreasing dropout rates. These advertising should prioritize on the economic and societal benefits of educating females.
- Parental Engagement: Involving parents via community meetings and educational seminarshelpscreateanurturingatmosphere for girls' education. Disseminating information to parents on the significance of education and the many financial assistance options might strengthen their dedication to their daughters' academic pursuits.
- By integrating financial assistance with other treatments like mentoring programs, career counseling, and academic support, holistic interventions may effectively target many issues at once. This complete approach offers a more effective option to decrease the dropout rates of females in secondary school.

Competing Interests

The authors did not declare any competing interest.

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