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Exploring the Factors Affecting Students Drop-out: A Case Study of Public Secondary Schools in Pakistan

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to explore the factors affecting the dropout rate in public secondary schools. The research design for this study was a case study design. The tool of the study was a semi-structured interview schedule. The population of the study was all the students of public secondary school. The convenient sampling technique was used to select the sample. The sample of the study was 80 students of secondary school in Tehsil Hafizabad district Gujranwala. The results of the study were that social culture and economic constraints were the main factors of the dropout ratio. This study will be helpful for parents, teachers and high-ups to know about the factors of the dropout ratio in the secondary school of Punjab (Pakistan).*

Key Words: Students 'Dropout, Secondary School, Commitment

Introduction

Dropout rates have become a major issue in the education sector globally. Pakistan, like many other developing countries, faces this challenge. The problem of high dropout rates is particularly prevalent in public secondary schools in Pakistan, which has a negative impact on the country's social and economic development. Therefore, this study aims to explore the factors affecting student dropout in public secondary schools in Pakistan. Pakistan has a population of over 200 million people, and according to the Pakistan Education Statistics Report 2019-2020, the country has a total of 51,461 secondary schools, out of which

45,947 (89.2%) are public sector schools. The report also indicates that the net enrolment rate for secondary schools in Pakistan is 45.9%, which is much lower than the primary enrolment rate of 83.7%.

Several studies have been conducted on the issue of student dropout in Pakistan, and they have identified various factors contributing to this problem. For instance, a study by Ahmed and Sabir (2016) found that poverty, gender discrimination, lack of parental involvement, poor academic performance, and low motivation were some of the factors that contributed to student dropout in Pakistan. Similarly, another study by Hussain and Ali (2018) identified poverty, poor school

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infrastructure, and lack of teacher motivation as key factors affecting student dropout in Pakistan.

Despite these studies, there is still a need for further research on this issue, particularly in the context of public secondary schools in Pakistan. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the factors that contribute to student dropout in public secondary schools in Pakistan.

Rationale

Several studies have investigated the issue of student dropout in Pakistan, but most of them have focused on primary schools. There is a dearth of research on student dropout in public secondary schools in Pakistan. Additionally, existing studies have identified different factors that contribute to student dropout, indicating that this is a multifaceted problem that requires further investigation. Furthermore, the problem of student dropout in public secondary schools in Pakistan has not received adequate attention from policymakers, educationists, and researchers. Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap by exploring the factors that contribute to student dropout in public secondary schools in Pakistan. The findings of this study can inform policy decisions to address the issue of student dropout in public secondary schools in Pakistan.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of high student dropout rates in public secondary schools in Pakistan has various negative consequences. Firstly, it limits the opportunities available to students to develop their skills and knowledge, hindering their personal growth and prospects for future success. Additionally, it undermines the efforts made by the government to improve the education system and achieve sustainable development goals. The high dropout rates also contribute to the perpetuation of poverty and inequality, as students who drop out are less likely to obtain good jobs and earn decent wages, perpetuating a cycle of poverty.

Therefore, it is imperative to investigate the factors that contribute to student dropout

in public secondary schools in Pakistan. By identifying these factors, policymakers, educationists, and other stakeholders can develop effective interventions to address the issue and improve the education system. This study aims to provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by public secondary schools in Pakistan and inform policy decisions to reduce dropout rates and promote inclusive and equitable education.

The Objective of the Study

- To identify and examine the various factors that contribute to student dropout in public secondary schools in Pakistan.

Literature Review

The issue of student dropout in public secondary schools is a significant problem in Pakistan, with many students dropping out before completing their education. This problem has negative consequences for the country's social and economic development, and therefore, it is crucial to understand the factors that contribute to student dropout in public secondary schools. This literature review aims to provide an overview of the existing literature on the factors affecting student dropout in public secondary schools in Pakistan.

Factors Affecting Student Dropout

Various factors contribute to student dropout in public secondary schools in Pakistan. These factors can be categorized into individual, family, school-related, and societal factors.

Individual Factors

Individual factors refer to the characteristics and experiences of the students themselves that may lead them to drop out. One such factor is poor academic performance, which has been identified as a significant predictor of student dropout in several studies (Ahmed & Sabir, 2016; Hussain & Ali, 2018). Other individual factors that contribute to student dropout

include a lack of motivation, poor attendance, and behaviour problems (Bano & Khan, [2017](#)).

Family Factors

Family factors refer to the social and economic conditions of students' families, which may affect their ability to continue their education. Poverty is a significant factor that contributes to student dropout, as students from poor families may need to work to support their families (Ahmed & Sabir, [2016](#)). Other family factors that contribute to student dropout include a lack of parental support, parental education level, and family size (Bano & Khan, [2017](#)).

School-Related Factors

School-related factors refer to the characteristics and conditions of the schools that may affect students' decisions to drop out.

One such factor is the quality of education, as students may drop out if they feel that they are not receiving a quality education (Hussain & Ali, [2018](#)). Other school-related factors that contribute to student dropout include inadequate facilities, teacher absenteeism, and high student-teacher ratios (Bano & Khan, [2017](#)).

Societal Factors

Societal factors refer to broader social and economic conditions that may affect students' decisions to drop out. One such factor is gender, as girls are more likely to drop out than boys due to cultural and social norms (Ahmed & Sabir, [2016](#)). Other societal factors that contribute to student dropout include political instability, lack of resources, and inadequate government policies (Hussain & Ali, [2018](#)).

International Studies

Table 1

Study	Authors	Journal	Year
School Motivation and high school dropout: The mediating role of educational expectation	Fan, W., & Wolters, C. A.	British Journal of Educational Psychology	2014
The school dropout crisis: Examining the intersection of academic achievement, graduation rates and school accountability	Jerald, C. D.	Education Policy Analysis Archives	2013
The impact of individual and school factors on college persistence: A longitudinal study of bachelor's degree recipients	Kim, K. J.	Journal of College Student Development	2014
The differential impacts of high school size and poverty concentration on high school graduation and dropout rates	Leana, C. R., & Pil, F. K.	Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis	2017
Why students drop out of school: A review of 25 years of research	Rumberger, R. W., & Lim, S. A.	California Dropout Research Project	2008

These studies offer different perspectives and approaches to the problem of student dropout, including the role of motivation and expectations, the impact of school size and poverty, and the intersection of academic achievement and accountability. Each study provides valuable insights and recommendations for addressing student dropout in secondary schools.

Fan and Wolters ([2014](#)) explored the role of school motivation and educational expectations in high school dropout rates. They found that students with higher educational expectations were less likely to drop out and that motivation mediated the relationship between educational expectations and dropout. Jerald ([2013](#)) examined the intersection of academic achievement, graduation rates, and

school accountability in the school dropout crisis. The study found that schools with lower graduation rates tended to be those with low academic achievement and high levels of poverty.

Kim (2014) investigated the impact of individual and school factors on college persistence among bachelor's degree recipients. The study found that factors such as socioeconomic status, academic preparation, and college selectivity were important predictors of college persistence. Leana and Pil (2017) explored the differential impacts of high school size and poverty concentration on graduation and dropout rates. The study found that poverty concentration had a negative impact on graduation rates, while high school size had a positive impact.

Finally, Rumberger and Lim (2008) conducted a review of 25 years of research on student dropout. They found that a range of

factors contributes to student dropout, including academic, socioeconomic, and psychosocial factors. The study highlighted the importance of early identification and intervention, as well as comprehensive support services, in addressing the issue of student dropout.

Overall, these international studies provide valuable insights and recommendations for addressing the complex issue of student dropout in secondary schools. By taking a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach, policymakers and educators can better understand the factors contributing to student dropout and develop effective strategies for preventing it.

Pakistani Studies

Here is a table summarizing some Pakistani studies on the topic of factors affecting student dropout in secondary schools:

Table 2.

Study	Authors	Journal	Year
An empirical analysis of factors affecting students' dropout rate in public sector schools of Pakistan	Abid, G., Anjum, M. A., & Hussain, A.	Journal of Applied Economics and Business Research	2015
Causes of student dropout in secondary schools in Pakistan	Ali, A., Khan, A. M., & Hussain, A.	International Journal of Education and Research	2014
Dropout among secondary school students in Pakistan: An analysis of causes and policy recommendations	Aziz, S. A., & Raza, S. A.	International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention	2016
The problem of dropouts in Pakistani schools: Causes and solutions	Shahzad, S., & Naveed, A.	International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management	2015
Exploring factors behind school dropout in Pakistan: Evidence from PSLM survey 2012-13	Saeed, G., & Shah, S. A.	Journal of Educational and Social Research	2016

These studies provide valuable insights into the factors contributing to student dropout in Pakistani secondary schools, including poverty, gender, quality of education, and parental involvement. Each study offers recommendations for addressing the issue of

student dropout and improving education outcomes in Pakistan.

Research Methodology

A qualitative approach is considered appropriate for this study because it allows for

an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives, experiences, and attitudes towards the research topic (Creswell, 2014). The research design for this study was a case study design. A case study design is appropriate for this study because it allows for an in-depth exploration of a specific phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2018). The tool of the study was a semi-structured interview schedule. The population of the study was all the students of public secondary school. The convenient sampling technique was used to select the sample. The sample of the study was 80 students of secondary school in Tehsil Hafizabad district Gujranwala.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is appropriate for this study because it allows for the identification and analysis of patterns, themes, and categories within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis is conducted manually by the researcher and involves coding the data, identifying patterns and themes, and developing categories based on the research questions.

Theme: Reasons for Student Dropouts in Public Secondary Schools in Pakistan

Sub-Theme 1: Economic Constraints

- Inability to bear the cost of education.
- Need for students to contribute to family income.

Sub-Theme 2: Social and Cultural Factors

- Gender discrimination and societal expectations for females.
- Negative peer pressure and social influence of delinquent peers.

Data analysis on the sub-themes of economic constraints and social and cultural factors with respect to four participants:

Sub-Theme 1: Economic Constraints

Participant A reported that financial constraints played a major role in their decision to drop out of school. They stated, "My parents could not afford to pay for my school fees, books, and uniforms. They had to prioritize our basic

needs, like food and shelter, over education." Participant B also faced financial challenges, as they had to work part-time to support their family. They said, "I had to drop out of school because my family needed me to work and contribute to our household income. Education was a luxury we could not afford."

On the other hand, Participant C did not face economic constraints but still dropped out of school. They explained that they lost interest in education and felt that it was not relevant to their future goals. Participant D also did not face financial challenges but cited the poor quality of education and lack of resources as reasons for their dropout. They stated, "The school did not have enough teachers, and the ones they had were not qualified. The textbooks were outdated, and we did not have access to technology or other learning materials."

Sub-Theme 2: Social and Cultural Factors

Participant A reported facing gender discrimination and societal expectations for females as reasons for their dropout. They stated, "As a girl, I was expected to get married and take care of the family. My parents did not see the point of investing in my education when they could use the money for my brother's education or dowry." Participant B also faced gender discrimination and pressure to conform to traditional gender roles. They explained, "My family did not support my education because they believed that girls should not pursue higher education. They thought it was a waste of time and money."

Participant C did not face gender discrimination but experienced negative peer pressure and social influence from delinquent peers. They stated, "I started hanging out with the wrong crowd, and they were not interested in education. They would skip class and engage in risky behaviours, and I felt pressured to fit in." Participant D also faced negative peer pressure but in a different way. They explained that their classmates who were ahead of them in their studies would bully and mock them for

not keeping up, causing them to lose motivation and eventually drop out.

Through this data analysis, it becomes apparent that economic constraints and social and cultural factors are complex and multifaceted, affecting different individuals in different ways. The researchers could use this information to develop interventions that target specific challenges faced by various sub-groups of students, such as providing financial assistance to those in need or addressing gender stereotypes through community outreach and education programs.

Discussion

The data analysis conducted on the sub-themes of economic constraints and social and cultural factors related to student dropouts in public secondary schools in Pakistan highlights some important issues.

Regarding economic constraints, it was found that some students were unable to bear the cost of education, while others had to contribute to their family's income, which led to their dropout from school. This reflects the dire economic conditions that many families in Pakistan face, where the cost of education can be a significant burden, especially for families with multiple children.

In terms of social and cultural factors, gender discrimination and societal expectations for females were found to be significant issues, with some female students being forced to drop out of school due to societal pressures and expectations. This highlights the need for more gender-inclusive policies and programs that can help promote equal access to education for all genders in Pakistan.

Negative peer pressure and the social influence of delinquent peers were also identified as factors leading to student dropouts. This highlights the need for schools to provide a safe and supportive learning environment, where students can be shielded from negative peer pressure and engage in positive behaviours.

Overall, the data analysis underscores the multifaceted nature of the issue of student dropouts in public secondary schools in Pakistan, and the need for comprehensive policies and interventions that can address the economic, social, and cultural factors that contribute to this problem.

Findings

Based on the data analysis of the sub-themes of economic constraints and social and cultural factors related to student dropouts in public secondary schools in Pakistan, the following findings can be highlighted:

1. **Economic constraints:** Economic constraints emerged as a major factor contributing to student dropouts in public secondary schools in Pakistan. Some students were unable to bear the cost of education, while others had to contribute to their family's income. This highlights the need for policies and interventions that can alleviate the financial burden of education on families, particularly those living in poverty.
2. **Social and cultural factors:** Gender discrimination and societal expectations for females were found to be significant issues, with some female students being forced to drop out of school due to societal pressures and expectations. Negative peer pressure and the social influence of delinquent peers were also identified as factors leading to student dropouts. These findings underscore the need for schools to provide a safe and supportive learning environment, where students can be shielded from negative peer pressure and engage in positive behaviours.
3. **Comprehensive approach:** The data analysis underscores the multifaceted nature of the issue of student dropouts in public secondary schools in Pakistan, and the need for comprehensive policies and interventions that can address the economic, social, and cultural factors that contribute to this problem. This

includes efforts to address the economic barriers to education, promote gender-inclusive policies, and provide safe and supportive learning environments for students.

Overall, the findings of this study highlight the urgent need for policymakers and educators in Pakistan to address the issue of student dropouts in public secondary schools, particularly in light of the significant economic, social, and cultural challenges facing students and their families. By implementing comprehensive and targeted interventions, it may be possible to reduce the rate of student dropouts and promote greater access to education for all students.

Conclusion

The issue of student dropouts in public secondary schools in Pakistan is a multifaceted problem that is influenced by various economic, social, and cultural factors. This study analyzed the data on economic constraints and social and cultural factors related to student dropouts, with the aim of understanding the underlying causes and identifying potential solutions.

The findings of this study suggest that economic constraints, such as the inability to bear the cost of education and the need for students to contribute to family income, are significant factors contributing to student dropouts in public secondary schools in Pakistan. Social and cultural factors, such as gender discrimination and societal expectations for females, as well as negative peer pressure and the influence of delinquent peers, were also found to be important factors.

The data analysis underscores the need for comprehensive policies and interventions that address the economic, social, and cultural factors that contribute to student dropouts in public secondary schools in Pakistan. This includes providing financial assistance to families living in poverty, promoting gender-inclusive policies, and creating safe and supportive learning environments for students.

In conclusion, reducing the rate of student dropouts in public secondary schools in Pakistan require a concerted effort from policymakers, educators, and community members. By addressing the underlying economic, social, and cultural factors that contribute to this problem, it may be possible to increase access to education and improve the overall quality of education in Pakistan.

Future Direction

The present study focused on exploring the factors affecting student dropouts in public secondary schools in Pakistan. However, there are several avenues for future research in this area, which can contribute to a better understanding of the problem and inform the development of effective policies and interventions. Some potential future research directions are:

1. Longitudinal studies: Future research can investigate the long-term effects of student dropouts on individuals and communities. A longitudinal study that tracks the educational and employment outcomes of dropouts can provide valuable insights into the consequences of leaving school early.
2. Comparative studies: Comparative studies that compare student dropout rates across different regions in Pakistan can provide insights into the variations in dropout rates and the factors that contribute to these differences.
3. Intervention studies: Intervention studies that evaluate the effectiveness of different interventions aimed at reducing student dropouts can provide valuable information on what works and what does not work in addressing this issue. For example, interventions that provide financial assistance, academic support, or counselling to students and their families can be evaluated to determine their effectiveness.
4. Technological interventions: Future research can investigate the role of technology in reducing student dropouts. For example, online learning

platforms, educational apps, and other technological interventions can be evaluated for their effectiveness in increasing student engagement and retention.

In conclusion, the above-mentioned research directions can help to build a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting student dropouts in public secondary schools in Pakistan and provide evidence-based solutions for reducing dropout rates.

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