



RESEARCH PAPER

An Analysis of the Factors Responsible for Dropout of Female Learners at University Level in Karachi Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the current situation of enrollment and drop outs of female students at University level in Karachi, Pakistan. It also highlights the factors responsible for dropout from the universities. This Study works on primary as well as secondary data. Phenomenological research is carried out to study the trends. Qualitative method is used in this study. Purposive sampling technique is used. This Study works on primary as well as secondary data. Data is collected from the female students Universities through interviews and structured questionnaire. Moreover, secondary data is collected from the university registrar. Obtained data is analyzed through percentages. Data for four years is used and analyzed. This study reveals that awareness about Female education has been increasing over the years. This has led to increased number of female enrollment at university level. However, there is still a very big gap between female and male students enrollment. Dropout rate in female students is more than the male students. Factors responsible for female dropouts includes privilege to male over female, harassment, increase in fee, low income of parents, early marriages, migrations, insensitivity towards gender harassment, increased transportation expense, family pressure, guideline deficit, weak counseling and placement without interest.

KEYWORDS Dropouts, Female, University, Inflation, Harassment

Introduction

Education is a significant tool in developing a nation. It is inevitable for socioeconomic development of country. It is a productive investment for fostering future growth and development (Muzaffar, 2016). Education generates a bond between societies and environment. (Report of the secretary general, 2003). It is one of the major components of millennium development goals. MDG 1 and MDG 2 indicates that aligning them together helps in eradicating poverty and raising living standards of nation. MDG 3 emphasis on promoting gender equality and women empowerment. Vision 2030 of Pakistan emphasis, "Economic prosperity is based on education" as it improves business sector, work opportunities, more space for businesswomen and growth in productive efficiency (Latif, 2015). Females have been the centre of attention in achieving their rights in terms of education, inheritance, financial freedom. During 20th century women have gained much of their rights especially in education from very initial to advance level. National development also depends on improved female literacy rate. World Bank economists also viewed that female education is a developmental instrument in world (Brent, 2005). Availability of hostels, transportation and many other convenient ways to carry on the process of education and acquiring professional degree is emphasized in National Educational Commission 1959 (Siddiqui, 2016). Efforts have been done to provide equal opportunities to health, property, social and economic participation and education to women. Chege and Sifuna (2006). New schools, colleges and universities have been initiated to provide quality education to female students. Women universities have been established in different cities of Pakistan to facilitate female education. In spite of all the

efforts taken at provincial and national level, there is still a massive ratio of drop out of female students from universities. This study tries to explore the major contributing factors in female drop out from the universities.

Literature Review

Education is inevitable for girls and boys both. Factually the rate of drop out of girl students is always higher than the rate of drop out of boy students. This has become a great challenge to raise the Human Development Index (Sing, & Maringe, 2020). UNICEF (2004) report indicates that improved female education leads to more advance development, psychologically and physically groomed families, improved social services, better child mortality rate and health conditions and effective participation in good governance. In defiance of all merits of female education, dropout at all levels of education is a common phenomenon of developing countries. Pakistan is not an exception. In January 2023 Pakistan's total population was 238.1 million. Data shows that Pakistan's population increased by 4.6 million (+2.0 percent) between 2022 and 2023. 49.6 percent of Pakistan's population is female, while 50.4 percent of the population is male. It shows that females make almost half of the population. Being the major portion of population female's participation in economic and social development can foster the process of growth and development. This dream can come true if the female are given equal right and access to educational opportunities. This will make them aware about their rights and responsibilities. If female are given empowerment they can be a booster for national and international development (Stromquist, 2015). According to Khalid (1975) through education females can be made the active unit of society. Being educated helps them to take part in the process of decision making not only in their families but also around them. Female can be the best trigger to stand against social evils like starvation, poor health and sanitation etc. Hence improving the Human Development Index of country. They can show improved motherhood, family life and active member of society. According to holy prophet (pbuh) gaining knowledge (education) is obligatory for all Muslims (male & female). Education empower women to decide for them and for betterment of their lives (Basset, 1978). They cannot be ruled and exploited by anybody like illiterate females. (Young, 1952). Females are empowered to know their rights and duties in family as well as society (Lobo, 1974). Bullying women is not favorable in recent future. It is crafted as a female universe where daughters are equally treated as sons and no privilege is given to boys. They have liberty to live their dreams. (Obama's Address, in United Nations General Assembly, 2012). Female violence can be eliminated by liberating females. (Khoja-Moolji & Shenila, 2015; Muzaffar, M., et. al., 2020; Khan & Hafiz, 2013). Practical empowerment is also achieved through educating females hence paves the way for growth at domestic and international level. (Stromquist, 2015). Despite of all above mentioned facts, comparatively in developing countries students' dropout rate is very high. (Graeff-Martins, 2006). Many studies have been carried out to know the reasons of drop out, although the reasons for female may differ from reasons for male. So, economic freedom of parents is mainly responsible for drop out. (Grant and Hallman 2006). Cultural influences, customs and traditions, marrying at young age, biased attitude of parents towards daughters is commonly responsible for female drop out everywhere generally and in Pakistan specially. (Human Development Report, 1998). Financial soundness of the family, literacy among parents and student's motivation are also contributing factors in dropout phenomenon (Farooq, 2013). Early marriage and burden of family life with carrying pregnancy also lead to drop out. (Muzaffar, et. al., 2018); Khan & Rizwan, 2011). Women are still vulnerable in terms of discriminations. They are not able to take their decisions in Pakistani society. Fathers take their decisions. (Khan & Rizwan, 2011).

Dropping of female students from learning institutes is this much serious that not only government but non government such as NGOs are also taking steps to overcome this issue. Several workshops, seminars, counseling sessions have been initiated to solve the issue. Attitude of people is not warm to this issue. People in Pakistan are not positive

towards female education. They create hurdles and do not motivate. If they cooperate in female education it would create a good balance of male to female ratio of literacy. Their negative attitude would eventually put them in danger. Our society is male dominating. They pressurize and force the female of their family to live deprived and not take part in educational activities. (Zia, 1989) While UNICEF Report (1992) claimed that in a male ruling society educating female is considered against the family peace and integrity. Women is only devoted to household duties. Many researches indicated that female are scared of getting failed in exams, unsatisfactory academic performance during classes, joblessness, parents unsupportive behavior, lack of knowledge among parents are the contributing factors in female drop out specially at university level. As a result lack of employment opportunities may trigger the sense of ignorance. (Baditai, 2005, De Carvalho, 2001, Tanner, Krahn & Hartnagel, 1995).

Different researches have been conducted to explore the reason of female drop out from the universities. Upon analysis some of the reason extracted are, parents prefer to invest in boys education rather than girls education. Even if they have capacity to invest in one, they would invest for boys. This leads the girls to drop out from higher level of education. They sometimes gain education at early level but unable to continue at higher level. (Leung & Zhang 2008). Boys and girls are not treated equally. If parents have limited financial capacity they prefer to finance boys for higher studies and leave the girls (Glick & Shan, 2000 & Kingdon 2005). Constant raise in school fee is another reason for female drop out from universities (Lloyd et.al. 2000). Responsibilities of household do not let the girls continue their education (Ersado, 2005). People are reluctant to send their girls at a faraway place for education. They do not have facility of a nearby university so they girls are made sit at home (Juneja 2001). • Marriage at young age is another reason of drop out (Holcamp, 2009).

In nut shell, dropout rate is ever increasing that influence growth in literacy rate, improved Human Development Index. Hence realizing the importance of female literacy researcher persuade this study to investigate the reasons of female drop out from universities at higher study level.

Material and Methods

Research methodology is the systematic design of study that leads to correct results with validity and reliability align with objectives of research and research questions. This discusses the data collection and analysis method. Research methodology is the combination of methods a researcher applies to his study, as well as the principles, theories, and values that confirms the validity of his research approach. Somekh and Lewin (2005). Hermeneutic Phenomenological research is carried out to study the trends. Qualitative method is used in this study. Purposive sampling technique is used. This Study works on primary as well as secondary data. Data is collected from the female students of Universities through open ended questionnaires and interviews. Moreover, secondary data is collected from the university registrar. Obtained data is analyzed through Hermeneutic method of Phenomenological research. Data for four years is used and analyzed.

Population

Female students enrolled in graduate program in 2 universities (1 public and 1 private) in Karachi Pakistan in the year 2020 to 2023 are the population of study.

Sampling

Purposive sampling technique is used in order to obtain the data because study is carried out for a specific purpose. 30 female students, 15 from each university are selected as sample of study. Interviews were recorded through audio device.

Instrument

Interviews and structured questionnaire is used to obtain the data from 30 participants. Students were free to share their views. Reliability of instrument is checked through SPSS which is found to be 0.82 which is a reliable measure. Validity of the instrument is checked by two Ph.Ds in the field of Education.

Procedure

The factual data was obtained through university records and opinions of drop out students were collected through open ended questionnaire. These students were consulted through mobile phone. Mobile number of respondents was taken from university records.

Analysis of the Drop out students

Following table is set after acquiring the data from the registrar office of university in order to know the factual figures of enrolled, appeared, passed and drop out students from a particular program of university. Research was carried out inductively. Themes and sub themes were developed from interview questions.

Table 1
Record of Dropout students

STATUS	PROGRAM	2020	2021	2022	2023
ENROLLED	ADE	6	24	11	15
	B.ED(H)	34	53	58	38
APPEARED	ADE	6	24	11	15
	B.ED(H)	34	53	58	38
PASSED	ADE	6	24	11	15
	B.ED(H)	34	53	58	38
DROPOUT	ADE		2	6	2
	B.ED(H)	2	2	6	2

Source: University Records

As it is clear from the above chart in the year 2020, 6 students were enrolled in ADE program where as 34 students were enrolled in B.ED (H) program among 34 B.ED (H) students 1 was dropped by the end of first semester. In the year 2021, 24 students were enrolled in ADE program where as 53 students were enrolled in B.ED (H) program among 24 ADE students 2 were dropped and among 53 B.ED (H) students 2 were dropped by the end of first semester. In the year 2022, 11 students were enrolled in ADE and 58 were enrolled in B.ED (H). Among 11 ADE students 6 were dropped and among 58 B.ED students 8 were dropped. In the year 2023, 15 students were enrolled in ADE and 38 students were enrolled in B.ED (H) program Out of 15 2 were dropped and 2 were dropped from 38 B.ED (H) students.

Results and Discussion

Introductory question was based on the personal information of respondents. Due to ethical concerns names and identity was not revealed but gender, age, educational level, marital status, socio economic strata was revealed through this question. Data revealed that the gender was 100 % female students aged between 18 to 25. Out of 30 students 22 students were admitted in degree program after intermediate, 6 students were admitted

after graduation and 2 students joined after a big gap. 12 students were married 2 were divorced and 16 were unmarried. Data revealed that almost 87% belong to middle class only 1 % from the lower middle class and remaining belong to upper class of socio economic strata.

Female students have certain common issues that compel them to quite studies. Upon answering the question most of the respondents had same answers. They were either got married or were in family way after marriage. Mostly in the middle class, early marriage of girls is considered a blessing. Parents do not even bother to discontinue their daughter's education if get a good marriage proposal. One respondent who quite her B.ED degree in the second year of educational program said, "My CGPA was 3.9 and I was among the top scorers of my class. Suddenly I got a marriage proposal. They were not intended to wait till the completion of my degree. My husband had to leave for a foreign country and he wanted to take me with him so my parents forced me to leave the education and got married. Till then I never had time to complete my education." Another girl who at least managed to continue her education after marriage said, "It was my final year of B.ED I was in pressure of studies but then I received the news of my first pregnancy. Doctor prescribed me complete bed rest. I forwarded a request to the university authorities for some attendance relaxation but they did not cooperate. I along with my husband decided to carry the baby and quite education." Some of the girls responded that the attitude of in laws is not cooperative. There is a lot of house hold pressure and nobody is willing to send us out of home. Unmarried female students who are eldest among siblings have pressure from parents to participate in house hold with mothers so they are unable to study and maintain attendance. 3 of them belong to tribal areas so they responded that their family custom and tradition does not allow them to obtain higher degree. One respondent said, "Upon my wish my father courageously sent me to the university, but the whole family created an antagonistic alliance against him. He had to suffer with social boycott. Finally he insisted me to quite the university." Family politics and fear of social boycott also do not let the parents continue their girl's higher education.

Safety for female students is a very genuine and sensitive issue. Parents prefer to send their daughters to the women universities due to secure environment. Most of them assume that women universities do not have male staff members. Women universities are free from any kind of political pressure. A respondent said, "At the time of admission my parents assumed that it is an all female university, soon they noticed that there is a massive number of male staff. We belong to a sharia observing family so my parents did not let me continue there." This shows that people wish to see the women universities as completely female staff unit.

Data revealed that most of the parents like to educate their sons instead of daughters due to several reasons. They follow an orthodox approach and consider the male child as bread winner for the family so do not want to invest in girls education. One of the respondent said, "We are 3 sisters and one brother. My father is a small vendor. During covid crises we had to suffer a lot. Our financial condition is not stable enough to support all children education. My father decided to continue my brother's university education and 3 of us were taken out from college and university." One female student revealed that her husband was under the pressure of his family who want her to take part in house hold only.

Ever rising inflation is highly responsible for various socio economic problems. People are unwillingly compelled to take many decisions due to lack of finance. When it comes to take the decision for boy or girl education, it is the girl child who suffers due to financial crises. One respondent said, "Raising transportation charges and very expensive books were out of our range. I feel ashamed of my poor clothes and belongings". Pakistan is suffering with chronic inflation. People are unable to fulfill bread and butter requirements of their family. By any means if they manage to send their kids for higher

education other expense become another hurdle. Fashion trends and easy access to those trends through media is contaminating the minds of young girls. They wish to adopt model look and avoid simplicity.

Mental and physical harassment is a very serious issue in educational institutes these days. In countries like Pakistan there is always a generation and communication gap between parents and children. Children specially girls hesitate to communicate anything unusual to the parents. Even if something extremely worst happen to them they avoid to report. Criminal people take advantage of this. One respondent reported, "I got very low grade in one subject which was taught by a male teacher. When I inquired about my marks and requested to show my answer script, he demanded something abusive which I refused. I repeated the course in next semester but then I got failed. I informed my mother and she requested me to hide from my father and brother. But, she expedite the process of searching groom for me. Finally I was informed by my mother that I have to leave my studies at this point as they have arranged my marriage and I got married." This kind of case is usual now in universities. Some are reported and actions are taken but mostly are untreated due to the orthodox approach of parents.

Discussion

Upon analyzing the data gathered through open ended questionnaires following themes were generated.

Table 2
Reasons to Dropout from University

S.No	Themes
1	Poverty is the reason of drop out
2	Getting married early
3	Family pressure as custom and tradition not to obtain higher degree
4	Environment is unsafe
5	Household responsibility
6	Girls are less privilege as compare to boys
7	More number of dependents in family
8	Parents' illiteracy causes to drop out of the girls
9	High rate of inflation
10	Transportation issue
11	Transfer posting of parents
12	Pregnancy of students
13	Harassment at university
14	Threatening behavior of course mates causes to dropout of girls from college.
15	Negative role of media (Electronic and Social) causes to dropout of girls from college.

Causes of drop outs from the data priority wise were found as follows,

- Candidate got married and not allowed to continue education.
- Pregnancy
- Household problem
- family pressure
- Boys have priority over girls
- Poverty
- Role of media
- harassment from teachers
- transportation issue
- more number of dependents
- high rate of inflation
- Parents' illiteracy
- Threatening behavior of course mates

- Official transfer posting of parents to other city.

It is clear that,

- 90% female students disclosed getting married is the reason of drop out from university. This item of instrument got the highest percentage as per respondents.
- 89% respondents made early pregnancy the reason of drop out from university which is also a very big number and gains second top place in the items.
- House hold responsibilities got 81 % from all female respondents and this gain third top rank in the items.
- 80 % declared that family pressure as custom and tradition on not to obtain higher degree is also responsible for their drop out from universities.
- Boys have priority over girls so 80 % said that girls are less privilege as compare to boys when it comes to choosing between both.
- Poverty is a common phenomenon of Pakistani society. 80 % of respondent claimed poverty is the reason of drop out.
- Media is a very strong medium to create image for anything. It can project positively or negatively. Many incidents are highlighted unnecessarily that creates hurdle in female education. 79 % made it responsible and said that negative role of media (Electronic and Social) causes to dropout of girls from college and university.
- 66% of respondent said that they face harassment from teachers at university so don't continue and stay home.
- 62 % suffers from transportation issue so leave university without completing degree.
- 61 % said that more number of dependents and less income cause them to withdraw.
- 60 % responded that high rate of inflation making the education costly so they cant continue their studies.
- 55 % said that Parents' illiteracy causes them to drop out from higher studies. And take part in household or getting married.
- 55 % claimed that Threatening behavior of course mates causes to dropout of girls from universities.
- 50 % of respondents said that parents transfer posting don't let them continue their studies.

Getting married early (Mansory, 2007) restrictions on the travel of females alone in the society (Hafeez, 1993) household (Education Sector Reforms, 2001) and uneducated (UNESCO, 2003) are the common causes of female drop out from universities.

Conclusion

Early marriage is a common feature of Pakistani nation. Girls who got married during their studies usually don't get permission from their spouse. Behavior of in laws is also a big hurdle in this situation. They do not let the girls continue their education. Responsibilities of family life also create hurdles for them. This pressure is sometimes exerted by husbands and sometimes it is exerted by family. They consider an empowered female as an uncontrolled woman. Girls who have got married tend to get pregnant very soon. Medical issues during family way and again the orthodox behavior of in laws treat them like a seriously sick person. They are not allowed to move out of home. They are on complete bed rest so again when this type of situation occurs they sacrifice their education. As we are a developing country, most of the population does not have sufficient income capacity. They cannot afford the burden of high fee. Even if they have to make a choice they choose boys over girls to invest in their education. They think that the girls are not going to stay with them for a longer period so there is no incentive in their education. On the other hand boys are the bread earner of family so investing in their education may

yield more finance in future (Battin-pearson et.al.2000, OECD, 2010, Bhatti, 2007, Malik, 2002, Rumberger, 1983). Lack of transportation facility also cause female drop out from the universities. Most of our population is rural in nature. There are less transportation facilities, poor infrastructure and in availability of higher education in rural areas. So the students have to cover a big distance in order to reach to the study place. Transportation charges are increasing rapidly and poor people are unable to pay it so the girls are not sent for higher education. Educational institutions are at long distance and route is not safe to reach to the institute (Juneja, 2000).Media has very influential role now a days. Harassment at university and work place is another reason of drop out. Female students do not communicate the issue in family or with management. Finally drop out of the university. Media can run awareness campaigns to literate the parents about the importance of female education.

Recommendations

- Counseling sessions organized by the department of Education for parents and students so the problem may be solved
- Islamic scholar can be a best source of counseling parents in this regard. They may literate the people on the importance of education in Islam.
- Payment of tuition fee in installment should be made available to female students
- Award of scholarship on merit cum need basis should be communicated to everyone so needy students may benefit. Exclusive scholarships should be provided to female students only.
- Exchange of student delegations to other accredited universities may be started
- Relaxation in attendance on genuine reasons should be given to female students
- Government should take necessary steps to build a good and strong infra structure. Roads can be build to provide access to the universities.
- Law maintaining agencies should enforce laws concerning safety and security of females travelling alone.

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