



Major Causes of Female Dropouts at Different Educational Levels in Karachi

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Abstract: *This research revolves around the causes of female dropouts in Karachi at different educational levels, including primary, secondary, high school and university levels. In this research exploratory sequential mixed method has been used. After the literature review, the phenomenological research method for the qualitative phase of research has been adopted. In this regard, the interviews have been taken by different educationalists in Karachi on the basis of their experience and age via the convenience sampling method. All the hypotheses have been tested and accepted at this stage. Under the umbrella of results of the first phase, the questionnaire has been designed for quantitative research, i.e. the second phase of the research. The sample size for the second phase is 200; the data has been collected via quota sampling. The frequency of every element included in the quantitative phase has been detected separately by using descriptive analysis through SPSS. Finally, conclusions have been made on the basis of data analysis.*

Key Words: Female Education, Female Dropouts, Education in Pakistan

Introduction

Even this progressive world lacks some necessities such as health and education. If we look around different parts of the world, it is obvious that a progressive society considers education as a basic requirement for it to develop and grow. Men and women play their roles equally when it comes to everyday activities in society. For accomplishing certain goals, it is mandatory to utilize manpower to its maximum level. It can be said without any doubt that education plays a vital role in the betterment of any nation, and more specifically, the requirement of women's education cannot be neglected. This is necessary due to the role of women in society, especially as a mother- the capability of a mother to change society is unquestionable. (Fatima, 2011). Through means of education, splendid social development can be seen, especially considering mothers' education. An educated mother can enhance their lives in

both cases, whether it is about their social life or their reproductive experiences. All this happens through the expansion of their vision towards life through education. In underdeveloped countries, mothers' education leaves a profound mark on a child's health and other activities. The health of the children of an educated mother seems to be better, even in situations where medical support is limited. (Khan, Soomro, Soomro, & Hafeez, 1994). It has also been observed that children facing dropouts are more under the effect of health and social issues rather than those of completing their studies.

Education is an element that has the power to enhance the person pursuing it as well as the people around that person. In the case of limited possibilities of contact with humans, in reality, the expansion of vision can be done easily and quickly through education without having to experience it

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physically. (Nayak & Nair, 2005). While looking towards education, it plays a vital role in women's lives in different dimensions. Such as when an educated girl moves towards the phase of being a mother in her life, multi-dimensional benefits can be seen, which do affect not only one life but also the life of her children. This, in turn, can be beneficial for both individuals and society. All around the world, education plays a key role in minimizing the barriers women face in life. (Mishra, 2005). Education also helps in making the minds more analytical and logical towards the home management aspect of life. (Goel, 2004).

There are many countries practically promoting education. Among them, Chile is on the top giving free education for 15 years, i.e. from 6 to 21 years. Moreover, Germany, Belgium, and Italy are providing whole school education for free. Similarly, in some countries like Britain and New Zealand, 11-year education is free and must. There are 19 more nations that are providing free education from 5-15 years or 6-16 years. 34 countries which comprise nations like Japan, Finland, Russia, and Sweden, have made 9 years of education compulsory. On the contrary, there are some countries, including Sri Lanka and Pakistan, which still do not have any specific laws regarding education. (The Hindu, 2010). Educational policies and plans regarding the betterment of school enrolments and minimizing the number of student dropouts are not effective enough if the aim of these policies is considered to be Universal Primary Education (UPE). Almost everywhere around the world, student enrolment in schools is increasing, but still, the dropout rate is huge. (Sabates, Akyeampong, & Hunt, 2010). Although Pakistan has come up with several policies regarding education but still the practical implementation of those policies cannot be seen. While going through the educational policies of Pakistan, it is evident that from the first policy to date, every policy has some elements regarding women's education. Some common points presented in all the policies include (a) Primary education for girls should be widespread. (b) Girls should be provided with opportunities that help them to access education easily. (c) If a qualified female can serve as a teacher, primary level teaching will be assigned to them. (d) Women literacy programs will be funded additionally. (e) Out of school educational programs will be held, especially for girls. But even after such factors are

presented in almost every policy, proper measures have not been taken. Pakistan's overall literacy rate remains static at 58 percent with a literacy rate of males' 70 percent and 48 percent of females, as due to the Population and Housing Census, the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement was not carried out for 2017-18. Besides that, Pakistan stands on the list of countries having high dropout ratios in schools. The factor of financial issues is extremely influential, and the alarming point is that Pakistan is still not in a state of stability to fight and overcome poverty. Recognizing the reasons for students leaving their education is enormously complicated. It is safe to say that a drop-out is somehow the reflection of student's individual and family life and the social scenarios the student is living in. (Rumberger, 2001) The noticeable point is that the girls' dropout ratio is always higher than that of the boys' dropout ratio. The rises in the challenges faced when it comes to human development are a result of student dropouts to a great extent. (Sing & Maringe, 2020). There is a number of researches performed in this regard and more or less the most common element present in all of the researches which could be behind triggering drop-outs in society is social status mainly influenced by the economic and financial factors. (Rumberger, 1987).

Objectives

- To identify the major causes of female dropout in Karachi at different educational levels including primary, secondary, higher secondary and higher studies.
- To identify the effects of major dropouts in Karachi.

Hypotheses

- H₁:** Society culture is one of the major causes of female dropouts in Karachi.
- H₂:** Poverty leading to gender discrimination and child labor also cause female dropouts in Karachi.
- H₃:** Lack of facilities and security in educational institutes increase the number of female dropouts in Karachi.
- H₄:** Early marriages and early pregnancies lead to female dropouts in Karachi.

Consideration of the Problem

Karachi is now on the list of fastest-growing cities in the world. But unfortunately, education is not up to the satisfactory level according to the population. Female dropout has a long history and is being considered a severe issue. Leaving education midway leads to major problems within individuals, ultimately causing social problems (Rumberger, 1987). The female dropout rate causes severe complications in society in the long run.

Literature Review

The improvement of a society can be assessed by considering the concerns that develop instructive discrepancy prevalent within society. The predominance of inequitable dissemination of instruction in male and female understudies prevents the advancement of a country. Agreeing to the World Conference on Instruction (2001).

Several studies within the last few years have shown that family, experiences in schools, social life, and personal interests and attributes play a major role in influencing the dropout ratio profoundly. Low-income family background usually is the most common factor in all of the cases which are observed in this regard. Besides low-income status families, there are more such categories that result in an increase in the female dropout ratio- a family where several family members have no interest in their child's education, etc. All these affect the dropout ratio in different variations. (Janosz, LeBlanc, & Tremblay, 1997).

Although the government has announced so many policies regarding women's education, this has been observed in so many research works that the dropout ratio of females is higher than that of boys. Now, this is the alarming part that even after so many policies announced by the government, female education is still not up to a satisfactory level. Hence, the government should now take some proper and strong measures in order to control the dropout ratio of females. (Melese, & Fenta, 2009).

In most countries, the female literacy rate is lower than the male literacy rate. Due to this, there is a lot of gap between women and opportunities which could help them get their basic rights. On the contrary, in the case of males, they have all the opportunities available to them

because they are more educated as compared to women. It can be said without doubt that education can play a significant role in the removal of this gap between females of the society and availing good life opportunities. (Khan, 2013).

Many developing countries do have an issue of female education; it is not only the case in Pakistan. The rate of female dropout is comparatively high in many other developing countries. (Greaff-Martins, Comassetto, Kieling, and Goncalves, 2006). In Pakistan, the government and several private bodies have tried to beat the issue of female dropout, but none of them till now have been able to accomplish the desired objective. The core reason for the failure of such attempts is the reaction of the people towards the actions undertaken by the government in order to eradicate female dropouts. This is because gender discrimination is deeply seated in the Pakistani social structure. The resistance towards female education is huge. This is to make sure that women stay education deprived so that they do not become aware of their rights. (Zia, 1987).

The modification of the college students persists to elevate. Various students' attributes can define their expectancy from their educational institute. The educationalists and specialists involved in students' affairs must consider that what and how the determined values can be impactful on students' behavior; by this, the change in student population can be observed. (Woodard, Love, & Komives, 2000).

Pakistani society incorporates an inclination for children, hence loaning a hand to male mastery. Since Pakistan's public is concentrated in country regions, where 65% of the people are unschooled, interpretations of Islam have changed and are often restricted to "hearing and believing" knowledge declared by devout researchers. Devout researchers, lawmakers, and medieval masters tend to make use of Islam for their purposes to limit, control, and persecute, mostly on individuals in provincial zones. Young ladies are the prey of this frame of patriarchy. (Latif, 2009).

Methodology

In this study, the exploratory sequential mixed method research design has been adopted. According to (Creswell, Klassen, & Plano Clark,

2011), this research method consists of two phases. First, the Qualitative phase and then the Quantitative phase. The research proceeds in a way that the qualitative phase provides a more general and wider picture of the research, followed by the quantitative phase, where the general frame of the research is explained and refined.

Population Size

The population were the educationalist in Karachi, which comprises of both genders.

Sample Size

By including male and female educationalists available in Karachi, 5 educationalists have been interviewed (including 3 females and 2 male respondents). For this research, a convenience sampling technique has been used.

Criteria

The criteria for choosing the interviewers included:

- Their experiences in the relative field, the considered experience is at least 10 years.
- The people who are approachable.
- Their age was considered for at least above 40

Population Size

The population was the females of Karachi city, either belonging to the city directly or those who had migrated from rural areas.

Sample Size

Collectively 200 samples have been collected, among which 65 samples are those of rural immigrants, and 135 samples are from families belonging to Karachi. For this purpose, a quota sampling technique has been used, and the data has been collected in two quotas- one is females belonging to families that are Karachi residents, and the other is immigrant females from different villages and towns.

As in Karachi, almost 33% to 35% of people are immigrants. Thus the data has been collected in a way that quotas could cover the targeted population in a better way.

Results

Empirical observation and results from the qualitative study lead towards the formulation of quantitative questions as the results of the qualitative research showed how the evidently affected patriarchal society is depriving females from getting education. As mentioned in literature review the girl's opportunities of availing her rights depends on the family she belongs to, even if she is able to fight for her rights marriage plays a major role in holding her back from ceasing opportunities and gaining success in life. This is a clear observation that several socio-economic and cultural issues affect girls more than boys in both repetition and dropouts. (Yasin, 2020). It is therefore important to investigate the agenda in order to implement strategies that reduce both in-school and out of school factors.

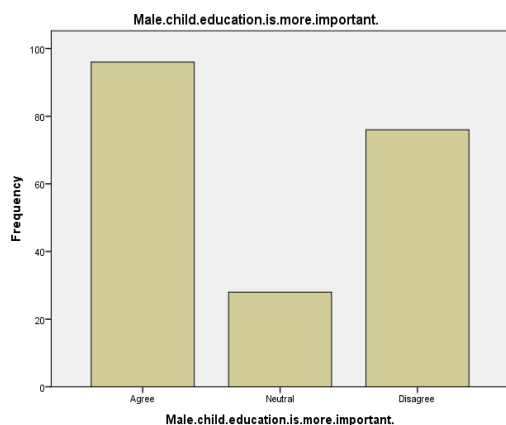
Thus, the questions for quantitative research have been formed on the factors extracted from qualitative research and literature review.

For checking the reliability of the questionnaire developed for quantitative research, the Coefficient of Cronbach's alpha has been applied. And the reliability status comes out to be good, as the value of Cronbach's Alpha is .827.

The quantitative research has been done on the basis of quota sampling. Among which quotas were defined on the basis of direct habitant of Karachi and migrant families from rural areas living in Karachi. In this study descriptive analysis has been done by using SPSS. In SPSS frequencies have been presented via Bar charts, for every question separately.

Figure 2: Male child education is more

important than that of girl child



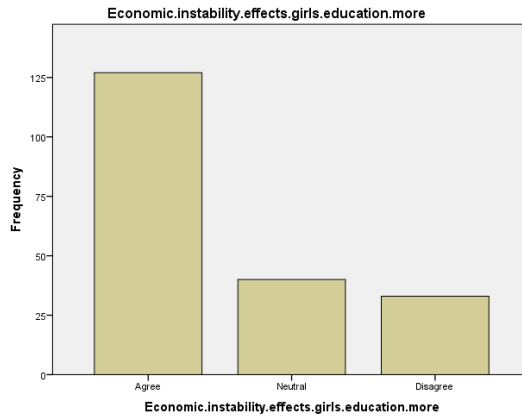


Figure 1: Economic instability affects girls' education more than that of boys

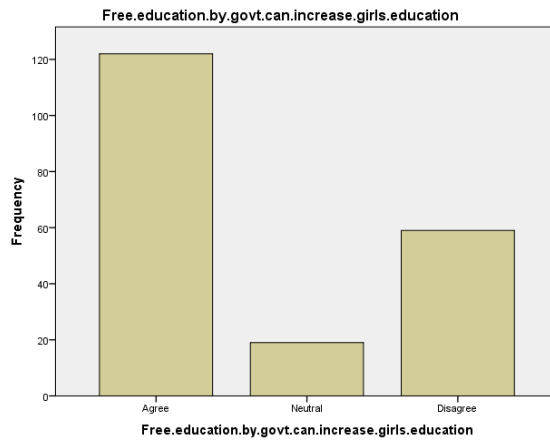


Figure 2: Free education by government can increase the ratio of girls' education

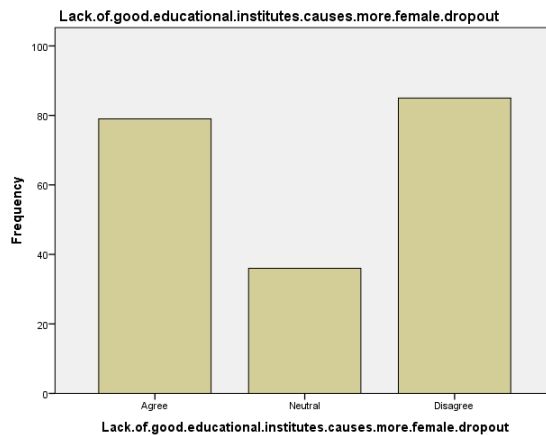


Figure 3: Lack of good educational institutes causes more female dropouts

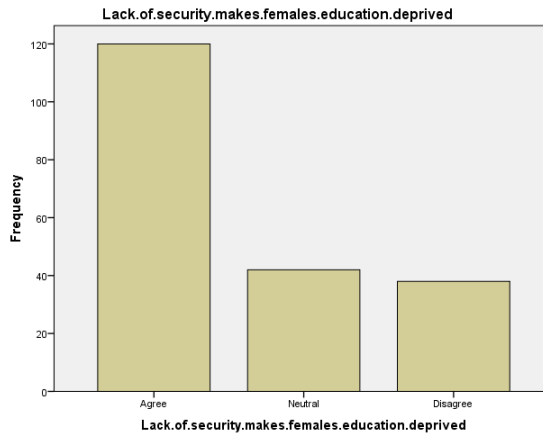


Figure 4: Lack of security makes Females Education Deprived

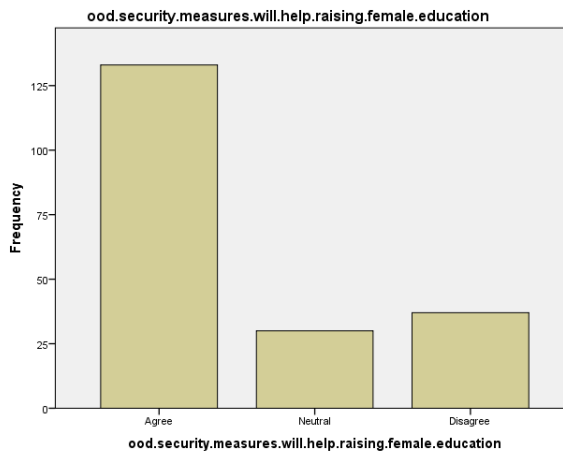


Figure 5: Good security Measures will help in Raising the Female Education

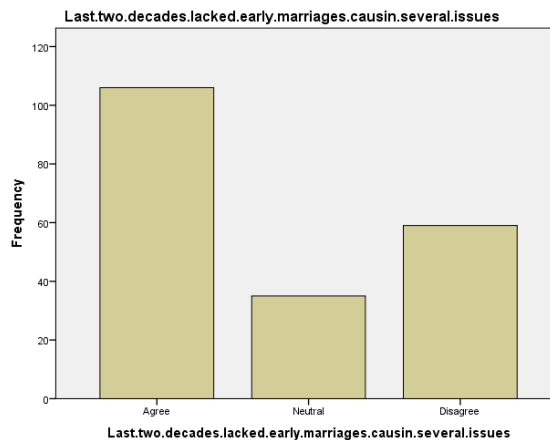


Figure 6: Last Two Decades Lack Early Marriage Trend Which Causes Many Issues

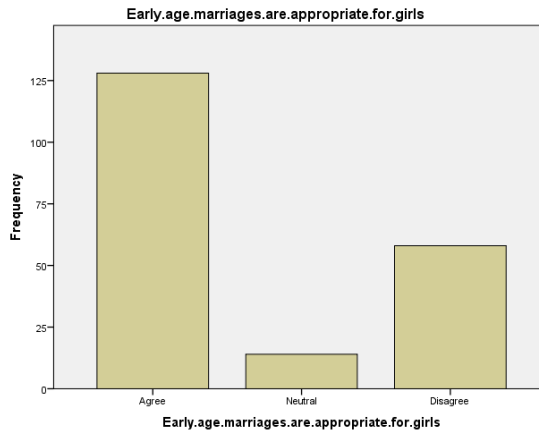


Figure 7: Early age marriages are appropriate for girls

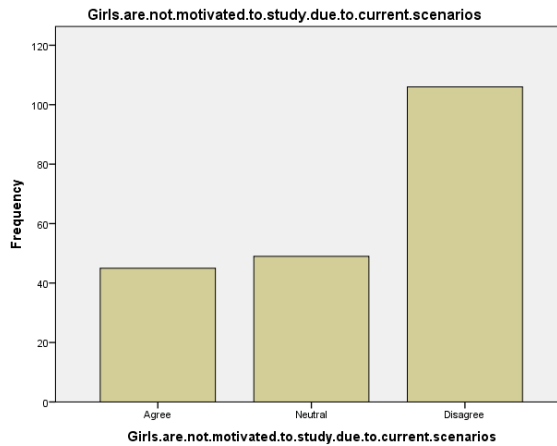


Figure 8: Girls are not Being Motivated for Education Due to Current Circumstances

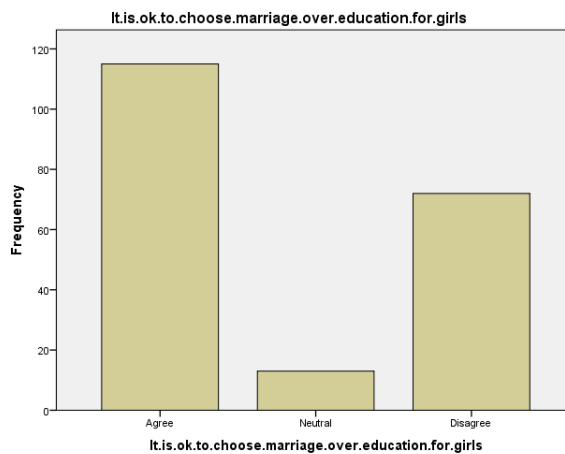


Figure 9: It is Right to Choose Marriage over Education for Girls

Qualitative Phase

The qualitative phase is the first phase in this study. The approach of phenomenological research has been applied. Phenomenology is a method used in qualitative research method, which emphasizes the cohesion of an experience of a certain group. The basic aim of this method is to describe and understand the approach, nature, and characteristics of relative occurrences. Usually, interviews are conducted with people with first-hand knowledge of the event or people who have subtle observations regarding the considered issue. Other than these interviews, the relevant documents and texts have also been considered in order to gain more relative information about the considered problem or issue. (Chamber, 2013).

After gathering data through qualitative research, the research enters the second phase, i.e. quantitative phase. Here the data has been collected through questionnaires, and then it has been analyzed through SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), a software to analyze the concerned data.

Culture

Several studies presented the observations that in many countries, especially in developing regions, a wide range of norms and social values are part of the cultural beliefs that push the people of those localities away from the advanced and modern world. Cultural values can vary from area to area, and in this regard, UNESCO (2010) demonstrated that cultural values are sharper in the countryside as compared to urban ranges. ([Shahidul & Karim, 2015](#)). A major reason for parents avoiding the investment of their money in the education of their female child is due to the social consideration of almost no return from female child education. This is a very good example of how dominant the cultural and social norms are here in Pakistan. ([Alderman, 1989](#)). However, the worst part about this whole situation is that these values are not just connected to the past times, but people actually want to sustain these values, and for this, they teach their children to implement the same stuff in their lives. This means that we are nowhere near to fleeing these previously ingrained values in the minds of the people. Although some improvements have been realized in this context, these changes are only taking place sluggishly. Similarly, there are several parts of

Pakistan that are still trapped in similar issues, which will probably take a lot of time to completely end. While in Karachi, the situation is no doubt better than the remote areas of Pakistan, here, even people who moved from the rural areas are also sending their female children to school. However, although being known as the mega-city, this city still has certain cultural impacts which render boys' education more vital than that of girls. Even after improvements in enrollments, the dropout ratio of girls is still alarming. According to the respondents, these circumstances of secondary school dropouts of female students in Karachi are the reflection of male dominance in society which has a drastic effect on female education. However, this can be overcome by arranging some awareness programs, especially for parents. The outcomes of several surveys and examinations have shown that some societies are deliberately following the patriarchal culture. This results in daughters compromising their lives to extreme extents, and this eventually results in a weak family structure. These factors affect not only the social foundations of the society but also the economic structure. ([Dollar, & Gatti, 1999](#)).

Poverty

According to child fund international (2013), poverty weakens a child's accessibility to school, leading to poor physical wellbeing and other physical and cognitive skills. This lessens a child's capacity to concentrate and memorize things, decreases mindfulness and interest. Children from wealthier family backgrounds usually tend to perform better than children from poor families. This has been observed in a lot of cases that, after high school or even in the middle of high school, students tend to leave their education due to several issues due to poor family background. (Child fund international, 2013). In Karachi, as the poverty rate hits harder with the high population ratio, there is a vital need for government intervention, in which scholarships and other funds related to education should be given to the youth and especially to girls. As in this society, particularly in families hitting the poverty line or even close to it, the female child usually suffers more when it comes to education, even if the male child is not so interested in studies. Female children belonging to poor families, usually in rural areas of the country, are mostly kept education deprived. And even if there is any possibility of accessing education still quality

educational services are usually available for male students belonging to the same family. However, girls from families belonging to the urban areas or well-settled families can be considered in a good position than girls belonging to families residing in the rural areas. (Farooq, 2013). So is the case with most of the migrated families in Karachi

Still, the priority in the majority of the cases is the male child when it comes to education. So, if the government comes up with better opportunities for girls, especially for secondary school female students, there are more chances that parents will be more willing to educate their daughters. As in this critical stage of secondary schooling, the students themselves start to feel the status discrimination behavior from society mainly because of their peers, which gives way to a lack of confidence and inferiority complexes. These complexes have severe impacts- like generating hopelessness and worthlessness and also anxious and furious behavior towards society as they start to get the feeling of society's non-accepting attitude towards their issues and struggles. (Child fund international, 2013).

Child Labor

As has been discussed above that poverty has a great impact on the female dropout rate; the other factor which is prevalent in society is child labor. Child labor has been discussed in different forms, through different dimensions, including the proportional relationship between poverty and child labor, the number of working hours and its impact on the education of the child, the family structure of the child], the gender and locality regarding child labor etc. However, even after looking through different aspects, still, some findings stand to be common, among which the most prominent one was finding the direct relationship between child labor and dropout ratio. (Hunt, 2008). However, when we talk about the social structure of Karachi, gender-based studies have found that female students have the highest rate of dropout ratio. This issue is mostly found in those families who move from rural areas to Karachi. In these families, it is very common for male members of the family to be alcoholics or drug addicts, whereas female family members are usually the more active earners. This means that not only do females have to be the breadwinners of the family; they also have to deal with their abusive and drug addict male spouses of brothers.

The little money these women earn for the livelihood of their family is mostly spent by such males on drugs and alcohol. There are significant writings with respect to how a child's work impacts their education in the case of both genders. It has widely been observed that young females, in some cases, start working at a younger age than boys, particularly in provincial regions. Moreover, young females tend to do more work within the family than boys. Various researches show that female students tend to drop out of school to look after their families and do household chores. (Shahidul & Karim, 2015). Thus, in these circumstances, girls engage in work, either as day-night maids or otherwise going to different houses the whole day. However, in both conditions, they are left with no time and money for education. But if somehow they do manage to go to school or any educational institute, terminating the girl's education is the first measure taken by the family in any sort of serious scenario.

Security

Security is yet another issue that has a great impact on female education, even in a city like Karachi. It is evident that when school is at a distance, parents feel uneasy in sending their daughters to school due to the high possibilities of sexual harassment issues. (Nekatibeb, 2002). This has been observed that if the nearby school is not providing good enough education, parents will still prefer to send their daughters to that school, despite the availability of good educational institutes. This is the case in many localities in Karachi, and since Karachi is a big city, the distance problem is very common, particularly in low-class areas, which are more in numbers than the posh areas in the city. In order to counter this problem, girls should be taught self-defence skills, and there should be strict policies and punishments for harassment at every institution. It is also important to organize an awareness program for parents so that in cases of harassment, they don't end up making their child education deprived because of the fear of it happening again. They should understand that instead of forcing their daughters to stay at home, the culprits should be punished cause they are the ones who committed the shameful act. Thus, government and other educational authorities should work in both directions, i.e. establishing more and more good schools, especially in those

localities where only low-quality educational institutes are situated. Secondly, they can work for better security measures so that girls can be kept safe from harassment.

Early Marriage & Early Pregnancies

The girls' dropout rate is high in many provincial regions because parents consider girl's education of no advantage as they have to leave the family after marriage to join another family. Moreover, it was observed that early marriage is the first reason for early school dropout of female students. ([Shahidul & Karim, 2015](#)). As in most cases, the researchers have found that in remote areas, parents do not tend to wait long enough for the completion of girls' education. In fact, as soon as they hit puberty age, they are out of school and are considered ready for marriage. Now while talking about Karachi, although a significant ratio of the original habitants of Karachi does not support this idea of marriage soon after puberty, somehow, the early marriage norm is still there. Although there has been a trend of late marriages in the last two decades, i.e. girls were getting married after entering their twenties, but now, due to several issues, the early marriage norm is back again, and girls are getting engaged even before their secondary school education. On the other hand, the migrants who are living in Karachi are usually from remote areas; thus, they still resist the education of their daughters, especially at the secondary level. Besides that, the early marriage trend and the concept of no education after marriage for girls is still accepted in society by both original habitats and migrants. The seriousness of this issue can be observed by the fact that while interviewing the female students, some universities have a question regarding the plan of marriage, especially from parents because some universities have a policy which states that if parents are interested in marrying their daughter before completion of their course, then the university won't be interested in giving admission to such students. The authorities of the universities believe that if parents are interested in marrying their daughter before completion of the course, then the time and resources of the university will be wasted according to the observable outcomes. Still, changes can be seen very rarely, or it can be said that changes can be seen more frequently in well-off families and truly little cases in normal classes. Thus, it can be said

that change is coming, but there is still an exceedingly long way for us to go as a society to achieve remarkable change for betterment. The observed outcome of child marriage is that it minimizes the chances of girls' completing their secondary education.

In rare cases, girls are being allowed to pursue education even after marriage but then comes another factor that hinders her education- after getting married, the girl soon gets pregnant due to the pressure from in-laws and husband in most cases. So usually, the families who support the girl for after marriage education, too, don't wait for pregnancy to be delayed for education. This can also happen at a very early age in the case of child marriage, which means teenage pregnancies. This portrays how a girl's responsibility is seen as taking care of her husband and children, and hence, people in this society do not see the girl's education as fruitful. Therefore, instead of educating girls and boys both, education for boys is prioritized. Boys are given so much preference that if a woman gives birth to girls, then she is expected to keep on giving birth until a boy is born since sons are seen as those who carry the name of the family forward, and daughters are treated as temporary family members by the society. ([Saeed, 2012](#)). The studies have found that the dropout ratio of girls is higher than that of boys, and the leading factor observed is teenage pregnancy. ([Shahidul & Karim 2015](#)). As in society, first of all, boys are not married at such a young age, they have to get settled or at least start to earn before they get married, and if a boy is still in the middle of education and gets married, he is usually able to complete his education irrespective of his marital status. But in the case of a girl, when she is married, along with all the household responsibilities, pregnancy also becomes an important factor in her life. At this time, the girl herself starts to think that this is the point where she should stop. This thinking is already there in her mind due to her upbringing in this society where a girl is expected to live up to the patriarchal standards, so she doesn't feel that there is anything wrong with leaving her education. As per the statement by [Grant and Hallman \(2006\)](#), getting back to school after pregnancy only works under the condition if there is a caretaker or babysitter available to take care of the child in the absence of the mother since the father is least expected to manage the infant's affairs. All these

scenarios are very common in Karachi, and many other researches show that majority of the researchers agree with the findings of this study.

Quantitative Phase

After gathering data through qualitative research, the research enters the second phase of the research, i.e. quantitative phase. Here the data has been collected through questionnaires, and then it has been analyzed through SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), a software to analyze the concerned data.

It is safe to say that gender inequality still exists as most of the respondents agree with the statement that male child education is more important than that of a female child. Economic instability mostly affects female child education in the family. If government provides some educational benefits/incentives for girls, an increase in female education can be seen, and on the other hand, there can be a decrease in the dropout ratio of girls. Karachi has a lot of good educational institutes, yet the illiteracy rate in women is so high. Security plays a major role in female dropouts when it comes to education. Therefore, if good security measures are taken by the government in this regard, there will be a decrease in the dropout ratio of females. While looking through the records from the last two decades, there was a decrease in the early marriage trend (for girls), which according to cultural and social norms, was not positive for the society as it created several social, cultural, and family issues along with threatening the patriarchal system that is prevalent. Therefore, the early age marriage trend is back in Karachi, and it is considered to be more appropriate for girls in order to settle in their married life. According to the collected data, girls are very motivated to study; however, if it comes to a decision where the selection has to be made between marriage and education, mostly marriage is preferred for girls by the decision making authorities in the family.

Conclusion

In Pakistan, socio-cultural values and norms strongly influence women's position in society. Specifically, in lower class and lower-middle-class families, economic son preference is also the major component that daughters have to face. Daughters are treated as a second option, and hence their education is not the first priority. The

stereotype that women have roles limited to reproductive and domestic roles perpetuates the notion that there is no real need for educating females. The perceived opportunity cost of educating girls then sways families from doing so, particularly in cases where resources are limited. The difference women education can create in society has been defined by so many socialists, educationalists, and other experts. As education can give women their confidence, raise their status in society, help them regain their self-esteem, enhance their efficiency and intelligence levels, make them independent, and also open several opportunities in their careers. (Noreen, 2011). The families are having an educated mother usually have a better ratio of children continuing their education because of better concepts and thoughts for the child's upbringing.

Even after so many hurdles, some girls are still able to pursue their education and somehow manage to finish their degrees by staying motivated. But still, most of the girls are not able to cope up with their education due to the social and cultural pressure of the society even while living in a city like Karachi. Girls still suffer from gender-based issues and face discrimination in both places, i.e. at home and at the educational institute. While facing the tough circumstances, the girl is left with the point to choose the way from the two; one is to compromise on their basic needs to a very severe extent or to choose the option of dropping out from the course whenever the social, cultural and environmental factors push on her so hard. The impactful factor may vary from person to person, such as having the responsibility to fill a requirement of childcare for parents, lacking safe transportation etc. (Melese, & Fenta, 2009).

Hence educational dropouts have a severe influence on the life within society. Therefore, teachers need to work on individuals in a way that their potential can be improved and enhanced. This though should also be kept in mind that by keeping students in educational institutes, teachers are actually minimizing the rate of unemployment and low-quality life for their students. Thus, teachers are the ones working for the betterment of society. (Alspaugh, 1998). In order to meet the required level of this challenge, it is mandatory that tutorial classes are arranged as a regular activity. (Yasin, 2020).

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