

Inner Lives and Outer World of Rural People: Educational and Socio-economic Perspective



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Abstract: The objective of the study was to look into the inner and outer lives of rural people from the standpoint of their education and socioeconomic status. It was investigated why rural students could not continue their education after elementary school. The study was exploratory in nature and qualitative approach was applied. The purposive sampling technique was applied to select fifteen participants. A semi-structured interview was conducted to collect data from ten participants. The collected data were analyzed after the themes of the respondents' responses were determined. Findings of the study revealed that rural people were also willing to get education but their outer world was not supportive. The findings revealed that rural people have dreams of getting higher education, but they were lacking better facilities for it. They could not afford finances to move to big cities to acquire higher education.

Key Words: Inner lives, Outer world, Socio-economic perspective

Introduction

The education of rural students is an important topic of concern for policymakers, educators, and researchers alike. While significant strides have been made in improving access to education for rural students, they continue to face numerous challenges that impact their academic success (Bradshaw, 2020). Pakistan is a developing country with a rich cultural heritage, and a significant portion of its population is living in rural and low-lying areas. Despite efforts to improve educational and socio-economic conditions in these areas, there is still a significant gap between the rural and urban areas of Pakistan. This ethnographic research article aims to explore the inner lives and outer world of rural Pakistani people from an educational and socio-economic perspective. The article aims to examine the educational and socio-economic challenges faced by rural communities in Pakistan, and how these challenges affect the lives of individuals living in these communities (Ali et al., 2019).

More than 70% population of Pakistan lives in rural areas. In comparison to urban areas, rural areas have fewer educational facilities. According to Eshetu and Beshir (2022), there are a few schools in rural areas, so that the students have to go by foot to the school. Only a few parents can afford to buy bicycle for their children (Ni et al., 2021). Fortunately, if there are few schools, then there is the issue of unavailability of efficient teachers (Chaudhry et al., 2006). Teachers with higher degrees from colleges and universities do not prefer to teach in rural areas schools. Most of the teaching seats remained vacant in rural areas. Rural students face problems as a result of these issues. The inner lives and outer world of rural Pakistani people are shaped by a complex interplay of factors including education and socio-economic conditions. It is pertinent in this context to consider how these factors affect the daily experiences and perceptions of people living in rural areas of Pakistan (Ejaz & Mallawaarachchi, 2023).

Challenges Facing Rural Students Rural students face numerous challenges that impact their academic

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success. One of the most significant challenges is access to educational resources. Rural schools often have limited funding, which can impact the quality of education that they can provide. In addition, rural schools often struggle to attract and retain qualified teachers, particularly in subjects such as math and science. This can lead to a shortage of experienced teachers, which can impact the quality of education that students receive (Hutchison & Brough, 2021).

Another challenge facing rural students is isolation. Many rural communities are geographically isolated, which can impact students' access to extracurricular activities and social support. This can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness, which can impact students' academic performance and overall well-being (McGee & Robinson, 2020).

Education plays a critical role in shaping the inner lives of rural Pakistani people. Access to quality education can have a profound impact on a person's sense of self-respect, aspirations, and opportunities for social and economic mobility (Anlimachie & Avoada, 2020). Unfortunately, access to education in rural Pakistan is often limited, with many children, particularly girls, not receiving a formal education. This can result in a lack of knowledge and skills which can limit individuals' ability to improve their economic prospects and lead fulfilling lives (Saleemi & Kofol, 2022).

Socio-economic conditions also play a significant role in shaping the outer world of rural Pakistani people. Poverty, lack of access to basic resources and services, and social inequality can all contribute to feelings of hopelessness, frustration, and despair. For many rural Pakistanis, economic opportunities are limited and they may struggle to provide for their families. This can lead to a sense of helplessness and a belief that their lives are predetermined by their circumstances (Mughal *et al.*, 2019).

The interplay between education and socio-economic conditions may further compound the challenges facing rural Pakistanis. For example, limited access to education can perpetuate poverty and social inequality, while poverty can prevent children from attending school and accessing educational opportunities. This can create a cycle of disadvantage that may be difficult to break (Llorent-Bedmar *et al.*, 2021).

To address these challenges, it is essential to take a holistic approach that considers both educational and socio-economic factors. This may involve investing in

education and infrastructure in rural areas, providing economic opportunities and support to rural communities, and addressing social and cultural barriers that prevent girls and women from accessing education. By taking a comprehensive approach to these issues, it may be possible to improve the inner lives and outer world of rural Pakistani people and promote greater equality, opportunity and prosperity (Anlimachie & Avoada, 2020).

Impact of Socio-Economic Status on Rural Students Research shows that SES has a significant impact on the educational outcomes of rural students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in the United States, 20% of students in rural areas live in poverty compared to 17% in non-rural areas (NCES, 2022). Low SES is associated with a range of challenges that can affect educational attainment, including poor nutrition, inadequate housing, lack of access to quality healthcare, and limited educational resources (Pell *et al.*, 2021).

Moreover, research has shown that students from low SES backgrounds often experience a range of psychological, social, and cultural barriers that can negatively impact their academic achievement (Lloyd & Bowers, 2021). These challenges include lower parental involvement in education, limited access to extracurricular activities, inadequate support for homework, and poor social and emotional wellbeing. All these factors can lead to poor academic outcomes and increased risk of dropping out of school.

Objectives of the Study

Following are the objectives of the study:

1. To explore the inner lives and outer world of rural people from their educational perspective.
2. To explore the inner lives and outer world of rural people from their socio-economic perspective.

Research questions

Following are the research questions of the study:

1. How the inner lives and outer world of rural people effect their educational perspective?
2. What is the effect of inner lives and outer world of rural people from their socio-economic perspective?

Research Methodology

This is a qualitative study that used ethnographic research methodology. Ethnographic research is the study of the cultural patterns and perspectives of participants in their natural setting. Conducting qualitative research, specifically an ethnographic study, takes much time (Higginbottom et al, 2015). This qualitative approach is more beneficial as compared to other approaches because the information gained from it is richer and leads to a deeper understanding of the phenomena under study. To conduct this research, the researchers spent three months living in a rural village in the Punjab province of Pakistan. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 individuals, including teachers, students, farmers, and community leaders. It was also observed that the daily life activities and participated in community events to explore better understanding of the participants' lived experiences of their lives. Data were collected, recorded, and compiled on site. Through this record, we may be able to understand the lives of people and the events on which our study focus.

Sample of the Study

The participants in this study were rural residents of tehsil Pirmahal District Toba Tek Singh, Pakistan. The participants have an elementary education facility in their village. However, they are unable to continue their education because there is no secondary school or college nearby location. They also have economic issues. Fifteen respondents' (9 males and 6 females) were selected as the sample of the study from the village of Dargahi Pur using the purposive sampling technique.

Instrument / Sources of data Collection

The instrument in this study for data collection was an interview. The purpose of the interview was to explore the ideas, beliefs, experiences, and views of an individual. The instrument used in this study was comprised of fourteen questions. The questions were easy and comprehensible. All the questions were open ended so that more and more information could be sought out. The questions were classified into the following four parts.

1. Inner lives of rural people regarding an educational perspective
2. Inner lives according to socioeconomic status

3. Outer world of rural people regarding to socio-economic status
4. Outer world according to Educational Perspective

The questions were asked from the respondents in their local language, i.e., Punjabi, so that they may understand the questions and can reply easily and properly. The responses of some of the respondents were also recorded by the camera. Few of them allowed voice recording only, so the researchers could not record their interviews so as to observe research ethics.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data from interviews were collected by the researcher. The interview began with simple questions designed to make him feel at ease and easy to answer. Then the researcher proceeds to more difficult questions. All questions were open-ended. Data were collected from fifteen rural people (9 men and 6 women). After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed it carefully by developing identical themes and proper coding so that they could keep track of possible connections in the responses.

The interview questions were divided into four categories:

Inner Lives of Rural people According to an Educational Perspective

Most of the respondents said their dream was to be a government servant. One of the respondents said, "It was my dream to be a teacher." One male respondent said that "my wish was to join the Pakistan army," but he cannot do that because he was unable to continue his studies. The reason that caused was financial issues. Education is very important for a better life. They were willing to get a good education. Some people wanted to get an education, but their goal was only to get education, not a government job.

From my interviews and observations, I found that religion played a significant role in the inner lives of the rural Pakistani people. Participants spoke of their strong faith and how it helped them navigate the challenges of daily life. Additionally, family and community were also important sources of support and guidance. The sense of community was especially strong, with participants describing how they looked out for each other and helped one another in times of need.

Inner lives According to Socioeconomic Status

All respondents stated that they wanted to further their education but lacked the financial means to do so. Their family cannot afford to send them to a big city for higher education. If our rural area had all educational facilities, they could have easily continued their studies. According to respondents their inner lives may be marked by stress and anxiety related to their economic situation, and they may struggle with feelings of hopelessness and despair. They also have to experience a lack of self-worth and feel marginalized from mainstream society. At the same time, the inner lives of rural people living in poverty may be marked by feelings of hopelessness, despair, and social isolation. They may struggle with feelings of shame or stigma associated with their economic status, and may find it difficult to access mental health services or support networks that can help them cope with these challenges

Outer world of Rural people According to Socio-Economic Status

The majority of respondents stated that in order to pursue their educational goals, they must relocate to the big city. When we were not performing well in our studies, our family was not in a position to arrange tuition for us. Many friends, who were economically strong, continue their studies. Now they are doing good jobs. The majority of respondents stated that "some of their classmates who come from wealthy families did not leave school because their family supported them." "Some of the respondents stated that our family can support us, but because we are female, they are unwilling to send us to a distant school for high school education. The outside world did not support us in fulfilling their dreams.

From a socio-economic perspective the participants highlighted the impact of poverty on their lives. Many of the families in the village were subsistence farmers, with little access to credit or other forms of financial support. This made it difficult for them to invest in their farms or start new businesses. Additionally, the lack of infrastructure, such as roads and electricity, further hindered economic development in the village.

According to a study conducted by the Asian Development Bank, poverty rates in rural Pakistan remain high, with 28.6% of the rural population living below the poverty line (ADB, 2019). The same study

also highlighted the importance of increasing access to credit and financial services for rural communities, which can help to promote economic growth and reduce poverty.

Outer world According to Educational Perspective

The schools are not meeting the needs of the people. Teachers are not competent, and basic facilities are missing in schools that are already there. *My school had only two classrooms. Furniture was not available for the students. We have to sit on the ground to study.* Most of the respondents said that after primary education, there were no schools near our village where we could go for study. When it came to the outer world, the participants spoke of the challenges they faced in terms of access to education and socio-economic opportunities. Many of the younger participants expressed frustration with the lack of educational opportunities in their village and the limited career prospects. This led some of them to migrate to urban areas in search of better opportunities.

From an educational perspective, the participants spoke of the challenges they faced in terms of access to quality education. Although there were schools in the village, many lacked basic facilities, such as clean water and functioning toilets. Additionally, the quality of education was often poor, with inadequate teaching resources and untrained teachers.

A recent study conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) found that access to education remains a significant challenge for rural communities in Pakistan (UNICEF, 2021). According to the study, only 38% of primary school-age children in rural areas attend school, compared to 73% in urban areas. The same study also highlighted the importance of investing in the quality of education, including teacher training and the provision of adequate teaching resources.

Conclusion and Discussion

In conclusion, this ethnographic research article highlighted the inner lives and outer world of rural Pakistani people from an educational and socio-economic perspective. The findings suggest that while the rural community is tightly knit, access to education and socio-economic opportunities remains a significant challenge (Kenny et al., 2021). Efforts to improve infrastructure, access to credit, and the quality of

education could help to address these challenges and improve the lives of rural Pakistani people.

The article "Inner Lives and Outer World of Rural Pakistani People: Educational and Socio-Economic Perspective" sheds light on the challenges faced by rural Pakistani people in terms of education and socio-economic development. The article highlights that access to education is limited in rural areas, which results in low literacy rates and a lack of skilled human resources (Chaudhry *et al.*, 2006). Furthermore, the lack of economic opportunities and poor infrastructure in rural areas hinders economic development and results in poor living conditions.

Conclusion The education of rural students is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach. While significant strides have been made in improving access to education for rural students, they continue to face numerous challenges that impact their academic success (Hutchison & Brough, 2021). By increasing funding for rural schools and leveraging technology to overcome the challenges of isolation, policymakers, educators, and researchers can help to improve the quality of education that rural students receive.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, some of the following suggestions were made.

1. One of the major challenges faced by rural Pakistani people is limited access to education. The government and NGOs may work together to increase the number of schools and teachers in rural areas and provide scholarships and financial aid to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
2. In addition to increasing access to education, it is important to improve the quality of education in rural areas. This can be achieved by providing training and support to teachers, developing better curriculum materials, and introducing innovative teaching methods that are better suited to the needs of rural students.
3. Rural Pakistani people often lack access to economic opportunities that can help them

improve their standard of living. The government and NGOs may work together to create jobs and training programs in rural areas, promote entrepreneurship, and support small-scale industries.

4. Gender inequalities are a major barrier to the development of rural areas in Pakistan. To address this issue, efforts may be made to promote gender equality through education and awareness campaigns, and by providing opportunities for women to participate in economic and social activities.
5. Access to basic healthcare and sanitation facilities is limited in many rural areas of Pakistan. To address this issue, the government and NGOs may work together to provide better access to healthcare services and promote awareness about hygiene and sanitation practices.
6. Lack of infrastructure, such as roads and electricity, is a major obstacle to the development of rural areas in Pakistan. Efforts may be made to improve infrastructure in rural areas, which will help to promote economic development and improve the overall quality of life for rural communities. Our government may offer scholarships for rural students so that they can continue their studies.
7. Another approach is to use technology to overcome the challenges of isolation. For example, distance learning programs can provide students with access to courses and resources that they may not have access to otherwise. Additionally, technology can be used to provide students with access to social support networks, which can help to reduce feelings of isolation and improve overall well-being.

Consequently, these recommendations focus on improving access to education, increasing economic opportunities, addressing gender inequalities, promoting health and sanitation, and improving infrastructure in rural areas of Pakistan. By addressing these issues, we can help to create a more equitable and prosperous society.

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