

IDENTIFYING THE SCHOOL DROPOUT IN VARIOUS AREAS OF LODHRAN

Jawad Rasool, Akram Hussain*

School of Art and Design, Superior University, Pakistan.

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ABSTRACT

This research paper investigates the relationship between child growth and school dropout rates in Lodhran- a city in Punjab, Pakistan. The primary objective is to identify gender differences in school dropout rates linked to growth-related factors. Child growth is operationalized to encompass increasing chronological age, physical maturation, and the social significance of reaching puberty as a marker of adulthood. The study involved a survey of children who had dropped out of school in Lodhran, with participants randomly selected from district Lodhran. Data were gathered using a questionnaire featuring a three-item scale designed to evaluate the role of child growth in school dropout. The findings indicate that a relatively small percentage of children in Lodhran leave school due to financial constraints, and physical growth. Notably, a higher proportion of girls leave school due to puberty as reasons for their dropout (42%), where in boys leading cause was financial reasons recording 51.7%. Data analysis reveals a statistically significant difference between genders regarding school dropout rates related to growth issues.

Keywords: Physical growth, Child age, School dropout, Lodhran, Punjab, Pakistan

*Corresponding Author. E-mail: akram.najfi1@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Education and gender equality are key indicators of a country's socio-economic development. Pakistan is working diligently to provide free and compulsory education for all citizens and to eliminate gender-based discrimination across social spheres. However, progress in both areas remains insufficient. The goal of achieving universal education for Pakistani citizens remains unfulfilled, with numerous challenges hindering this objective. The literacy rate stands a significant number of children are still out of school. While enrolment rates

have increased rapidly in recent decades and the gender gap in enrolment is narrowing [1, 2], these gains are undermined by high dropout rates.

Gender discrimination continues to permeate all aspects of life in Pakistan, leaving women and girls significantly disadvantaged compared to men. They experience higher illiteracy rates, lower educational attainment, restricted mobility in public spaces, and limited access to resources necessary for developing their human capital. Traditionally, women and girls are expected

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to spend most of their lives in the private sphere of the home and are often overlooked in decisions regarding their education compared to their male siblings. As a result, with fewer educational qualifications and skills, they are underrepresented in the paid labor force. Many are relegated to stereotypical gender roles, performing unpaid work within households and family businesses. For those who do enter the paid labor market, they often encounter glass ceilings that hinder their ascent to higher professional positions [3-8].

School dropout rates pose a significant barrier to educational attainment for both genders, particularly affecting girls. In Pakistan, more girls than boys drop out of school. Various factors contribute to the differing dropout rates among girls and boys. This research paper examines the gendered patterns of one barrier that affects educational attainment differently for men and women, considering the socio-cultural context of Pakistani society and its patriarchal structure. While personal growth is often viewed as a biological phenomenon that affects both genders equally in terms of access to education, it actually contributes to higher dropout rates among girls [9-11]. This paper focuses on personal growth in a comprehensive manner, exploring its chronological, biological, and social dimensions, and their distinct impacts on the educational attainment of girls and boys in Lodhran.

Objective were to report cause of school dropout in Lodhran, and to identify gender differences in school dropout of children in Lodhran.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research paper is part of a broader study aimed at exploring the causes of school dropout in Lodhran, with a particular focus on the personal growth of children as a contributing factor. The concept of a child's

growth has been operationalized by breaking it down into three key aspects: chronological age, physical appearance, and the social interpretation of puberty as a marker of adulthood. These three aspects form the basis for the measurement tool developed for data collection in this research.

The study was designed as cross-sectional research, utilizing quantitative data collection and statistical analysis. Data was gathered through a survey targeting school dropouts across Lodhran province. Respondents were randomly selected from various districts, resulting in a total sample of 300 cases, which included 170 boys and 130 girls who had already left school [12-15].

Data was collected using a closed-ended questionnaire. The three-item scale developed for this study assessed the potential impact of a child's personal growth on school dropout rates, based on reports from the dropout children. The items addressed the three aspects mentioned earlier, successfully operationalizing the concept of child growth as a reported cause of school dropout in Lodhran. The three-item scale demonstrated strong convergent validity, loading as a single factor with high factor loadings and no cross-loadings in the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of the complete tool used in the broader study. The reliability of the tool was confirmed with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.79.

Statistical analysis of the collected data was conducted to identify gender-related patterns and to test the stated hypotheses. Cross-tabulation results were presented to showcase gender-segregated data for each of the three aspects of child growth as reported causes of school dropout. The observed gender differences, derived from the segregated data, were further confirmed using an Independent Samples t-test. The results of the t-test are presented below to illustrate the differences in mean scores between male and female

students on the three-item scale related to child growth as a reported cause of school dropout.

This research examines school dropout rates among male and female students in relation to issues related to their growth. Three aspects of a child's growth are explored: chronological growth (being older than peers), biological or physical growth (appearance of maturity), and the social aspect of growth (puberty, viewed as a marker of adulthood). The results of the data analysis are presented below.

Firstly, gender-segregated data regarding these three growth aspects is shown through cross-tabulation, highlighting the gender-specific impact of each aspect on school dropout rates among boys and girls in Lodhran. Finally, t-test results are provided to confirm the statistical significance of the differences in school dropout reports linked to growth between the two genders [16].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research study aimed to explore children's growth in terms of their age, physical appearance, and the traditional milestone of reaching adulthood through puberty. The focus is on these three aspects of growth, particularly among girls, to determine their respective and cumulative effects on school dropout rates in Lodhran, Pakistan. The major findings, discussed below, align with the social realities of the tribal and feudal society in Lodhran.

Leaving School Due to Overage Relative

The age difference between a child and their classmates affects school dropout rates. Data analysis reveals that only a minority of children attribute their dropout to being older than their peers. Only 16.6% of respondents identified their older age as a reason for leaving school before completing their education. This indicates that most students enroll in school at the appropriate age and progress to higher grades accordingly. However, some students do enroll late or

become older due to repeatedly failing grades. While the issue of school dropout due to age remains in Lodhran, its overall impact is limited, as evidenced by the low percentage of children citing it as a reason for absenteeism.

It was highlighted the gender differences in school dropout due to age in Lodhran. A higher percentage of girls report leaving school for this reason compared to boys. Specifically, 17.6% of female dropouts cite their age relative to classmates as a factor in their decision to leave school, while only 15.8% of male dropouts report the same reason.

The data presented above indicates that more girls in the province are encountering barriers to enrolling in school at the appropriate age. As a result, they are starting school later and facing challenges in adjusting to a classroom with younger peers. This situation may lead to increased dropout rates among girls, who report leaving school due to this age disparity more frequently than boys.

In contrast, boys in the province tend to either start school at the correct admission age, repeat grades less often, or adapt better to being older students in classes predominantly filled with younger children [17-20].

Leaving School Due to Financial Issues

The research data presented highlights statistics regarding finance as a reported reason for school dropout. Notably, 46.3% of children reported that their financial situation was a factor in their decision to leave school early. The majority did not cite this as a reason for dropping out.

The gender-segregated statistics reveal differences between boys and girls regarding the impact of poverty on dropout rates in Lodhran. The data indicates that 39.2% of girls who dropped out as a contributing factor compared to boys 51.7% [21].

The study examined a sample of 300 students in Lodhran. The findings showed that the main factors affecting the dropout rate are

social, cultural, and economic restrictions. Parents, educators, and legislators will find this research useful in understanding the causes of secondary school dropouts. Results show that financial difficulties, like the inability to pay for school and the need for students to help support their families, are a major factor in public secondary school dropout rates. Significant components were also found to be social and cultural problems, such as gender discrimination, negative peer pressure, societal expectations for females, and the influence of delinquent peers. According to the data study, comprehensive policies and interventions that address the economic, social, and cultural aspects influencing student retention in public secondary schools are desperately needed [22].

Leaving School Due to Reaching Adulthood After Puberty

The research data reveals a similar trend regarding school dropouts linked to puberty. A large fraction (37%) of children who had already left school reported achieving adulthood through puberty as a reason for their dropout in Lodhran, indicating that this

concern affects only one-tenth of the students who dropped out [23, 24].

A critical aspect of young girls' life cycles in patriarchal societies is puberty, which marks their transition into adulthood. Traditionally, this biological milestone signifies the end of adolescence and the onset of womanhood, resulting in significant changes to their social roles. Consequently, they may face restrictions on their mobility outside the home, which hampers their educational opportunities and access to resources in the public sphere.

This research also highlights gendered patterns related to school dropouts. A higher percentage of girls 42% in Lodhran reported leaving school due to concerns about achieving adulthood through puberty, compared to a smaller proportion of boys 32.3%. This disparity reflects the greater social restrictions and limitations that girls face in accessing socio-economic resources after reaching puberty compared to boys in Lodhran. Such gender gaps are evident not only in educational outcomes but across various indicators of social and economic development in Pakistan.

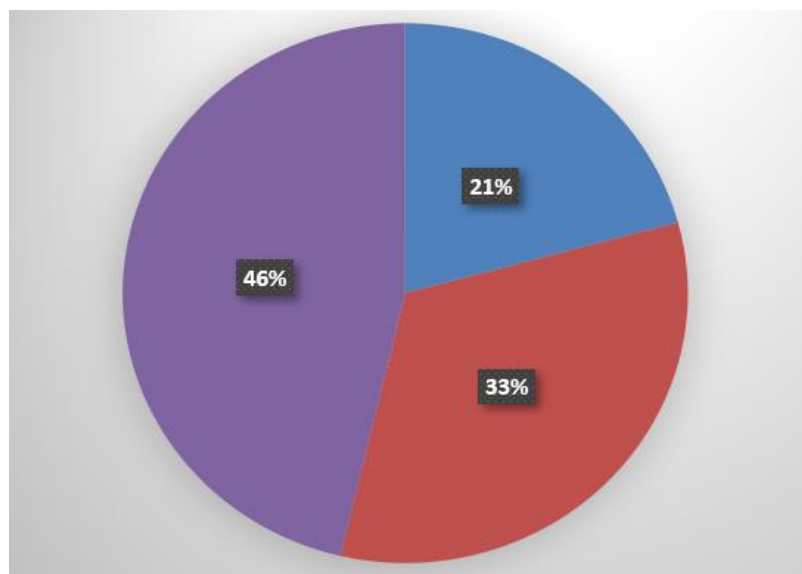


Figure 1: Percentage of root causes of school dropout
Blue-overage, Red-Finance, Purple-Puberty.

CONCLUSION

A majority of school dropouts in Lodhran do not attribute their decision to leave school to their age or physical growth. This research reveals that girls in Lodhran province are more negatively impacted than boys in terms of educational attainment due to the cumulative effects of chronological, biological, and social factors associated with growing up in Pakistani society. The data indicates a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the two genders on a scale designed to assess growth-related causes of school dropout in Lodhran. Among

the respondents who dropped out of school, a greater proportion of girls reported leaving due to these chronological, biological, and social dynamics compared to boys.

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