



FACULTY OF EDUCATION
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PERSPECTIVES OF DROPPED-OUT CHILDREN ON QUITTING PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KASUR- PAKISTAN

An Interview Study

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Abstract

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Aim: This thesis is an endeavour to explore the causes behind the significant rate of students leaving their primary-level education at the Primary level. The study aims at exploring the causes of high dropout rates by recording the voices of out-of-school children and examining the help they receive from their learning institutions after leaving their studies and schools in the Kasur District in Pakistan.

Theory: The Poor Family Socialization theory serves as the foundation for this study, which is a stem of the Family Socialization Theory. Poor Family Socialization Theory has undergone extensive research and development in the fields of psychology, sociology, and education. I based my arguments on this theory's main tenets, which include poverty, family socialization techniques, academic success, and school dropout.

Method: The methodology utilized in this study involves a qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews as the data collection method of choice. In this study, 6 participants were included. They are out-of-school children who left schools without completing their primary education.

Results: The findings of the study revealed that financial constraints due to poverty, poor academic performance, and lack of involvement by the parents were some of the factors that forced primary school dropouts to leave school. It has been

established that absenteeism, lack of interest in school, and COVID-19 also influenced primary school dropouts not to finish their primary education. Also, visitation, financial help, calling the parents, and counselling them were the aids received by the out-of-school children from their learning institutes.

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“The sky is not the limit. Your mind is.” (Lynette Simeone)

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List of abbreviations

SSC	Secondary School Certificate
NEP	National Education Policy
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
MoFEPT	Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training
DEO	District Education Officer
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
ERIC	Ethical Research Involving Children
WHO	World Health Organization
UN	United Nations
NGO	Non- Governmental Organization
TCF	The Citizens Foundation
IF	Ittehad Foundation
AIWS	Allama Iqbal Welfare Society

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This research study examines the experiences and perceptions of out-of-school children who are categorized as having ‘dropped out’ from schools at the primary level in Kasur District, Pakistan. In conceptual terms, dropout refers to an individual or a student who has departed from an educational institution without completing their studies and is presently not enrolled in any regular educational program (Gordon, 1996). Similarly, the study focuses on the children who dropped out of formal education and did not return to the educational institutes to further continue or complete their studies. There are numerous factors which contribute to the dropout phenomenon, which are associated with economic conditions, cultural practices in families and societies, susceptibility to violence, and educational environments (Grant & Hallman, 2006). In addition, the definition of student dropout may differ across various education systems in different countries, but there is still a common understanding of some fundamental concepts among them (Lamb & Markussen, 2011). For instance, in Pakistan, it is necessary that every student must complete cycle of study, whether it is at the primary education level, secondary education level, or college/university level, to obtain a graduate degree (Shah et al., 2019).

Pakistani Educational System

In response to my research study that focuses on finding reasons for students’ dropout at the Primary level, let us briefly observe the educational system in Pakistan. Pakistan's education system is structured into five stages which include primary level (grades 1-5), middle level (grades 6-8), lower secondary level (grades 9-10), higher secondary level (grades 11-12), and tertiary level (NEP, 2009). The Federal Ministry of Education and the provincial governments are responsible for overseeing education in Pakistan, with the federal government primarily assisting with curriculum formulation, accreditation, and research and development funding.

Figure 1 Education system in Pakistan

Age	Education Level	Grades	
15-16	Higher secondary	11-12	Secondary Education
13-14	Lower secondary	9-10	
10-12	Middle	6-8	
5-9	Primary	1-5	Elementary
3-4	Preprimary	Early childhood education	

Source: Compiled by authors.

Source: LaRocque, N & Sipahimalani-Rao, V. (2019). School Education in Pakistan: A Sector Assessment. 10.22617/TCS190039.

The first five grades of primary school in Pakistan are typically intended for students between the ages of 5 and 9. The curriculum for this phase stresses basic skills like reading, writing, and math and is required for all pupils in the nation. The next level of instruction is middle school, which covers grades 6 through 8 and is designed for students between the ages of 10 and 12. It integrates courses like science, social sciences, and languages from the high school curriculum as well as economics and expands on the fundamentals taught in primary education. After each academic year, students must take yearly or biannual exams, and they must pass them in order to advance to next grade level.

Grades 9 and 10 make up the final two years of school, as it traditionally marks the conclusion of compulsory education, and is intended for pupils between the ages of 13 and 14. The curriculum includes required classes like English, Urdu, math, and Pakistan Studies as well as elective courses like physics, chemistry, biology, and computer science. After completing grade 10, students take the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) exam, following which they can enrol in either technical or vocational training programs or continue their education at the higher secondary level (grades 11 and 12).

Intermediate education in Pakistan, also known as higher secondary education, consists of grades 11 and 12 for children between the ages of 15 and 16. It gives pupils a variety of academic alternatives, including pre-med, pre-engineering, humanities, and business. Another name for this educational level is "college" or "higher secondary school." (National Education Policy, 2009).

Pre-primary education, which is not regarded as a formal component of education in Pakistan, is also depicted in the graph above. However, some private and public institutions do offer pre-primary education for two years beginning at the age of three.

Primary-level schools primarily employ Urdu as the language of teaching, with English taught as an obligatory subject alongside others such as Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Local languages such as Punjabi, Sindhi, and Pashto are taught in some provinces, such as Punjab and Sindh. When we talk about the medium of instruction at the middle and higher levels in Pakistan's schools, it is largely English. This is because English is regarded as a necessary language for higher education and employment possibilities in Pakistan and many other countries. While Urdu, Pakistan Studies, and Islamic Studies are taught in the national language, Urdu.

Background to the study

Education is seen as a potent tool for societal development (Thomas, 2015). Being an Educational Practitioner for more than 10 years at Government institutions in Pakistan, I was interested in knowing why the student dropout issue in Pakistan's government primary schools remains a serious and divisive issue in many educational forums including political debates, newspaper debate articles, and Pakistan-based scholarly journals. According to UNESCO, Primary education provides children with social and emotional skills along with numeracy and basic literacy skills for their well-being and future success (2021a). It also provides them a foundation for onward learning through elementary and higher levels of education. In Pakistan, Primary education is offered free of charge by the government of Pakistan and is regarded as a fundamental right of every child.

The 1973 Constitution of Pakistan approved the commitment that "*The State shall remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within the minimum possible period*" (Article 37-b, Chapter No. 2). As part of the 18th constitutional amendment, it was

added to the Fundamental Rights that *"The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such a manner as may be determined by law."* (Article 25-A, Chapter No. 1: Fundamental Rights) (Constitution of Pakistan, 1973).

Pakistan has pledged to achieve universal access to education, including elementary education, by 2030 and is one of the nations that have signed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to the United Nations Development Programme (2019b), Pakistan is dedicated to attaining the SDGs, especially goal 4, which aims to guarantee inclusive and equitable quality education and promote opportunities for lifelong learning for everyone. The SDGs will be accomplished by 2030, the government has pledged, and delivering universal primary education is one of Pakistan's Vision 2025 goals. However, despite these efforts, Pakistan still has a high primary school dropout rate. The net enrolment rate at the primary level in Pakistan is approximately 54%, which means that over half of the children of primary school age are not enrolled in school and more than 15.9% of children dropped out of primary school before finishing it, which also emphasizes how high the dropout rate is at the primary level (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, 2020).

Aim of the study

The main purpose of the current research study is to examine the reasons behind high dropouts at the primary level by documenting the voices of out-of-school children of Kasur District at the primary level and exploring what kind of support they get from their learning institutes once they leave their studies and schools. This study aims to bridge the knowledge gap after realizing that, there are very few studies that have been directly undertaken on dropouts to analyse them qualitatively in the Pakistani setting. Also, there is no research study conducted in Kasur District to examine the real causes of leaving schools according to the dropouts. Additionally, dropouts are difficult to reach since they typically integrate into the community rather than remain gathered in one place. Since it is challenging to locate them, research that is currently accessible mostly focuses on other stakeholders rather than dropouts. The necessity to qualitatively investigate dropouts and record their voices as they discuss their choice to leave elementary schools before finishing their primary schooling was highly needed. According to research by Carlson et al., (2019), including student voices in the formulation of educational policy can boost student engagement and improve learning results. In other words, a researcher can better grasp the difficulties experienced by elementary pupils by hearing their viewpoints, and they

can create specialized interventions to promote their learning and well-being. So, this study is unique in the sense that the dropouts themselves are qualitatively probed in this study, and their perspectives on the causes of their dropping out as well as the support they got, if any, from their educational institutes are also recorded.

Research Questions

The study answered the following research questions:

1. What factors in the opinion of primary school dropouts forced them to leave school before finishing their primary education?
2. What kind of support do they receive from their learning institutes?

Introduction to Theoretical Framework

Creswell (2014) argues that a theoretical framework is a conceptual and theoretical foundation that gives the study problem a framework for comprehension and analysis. It is a collection of related ideas, presumptions, and hypotheses that serve as a road map for conducting research and a foundation for understanding the results. This study was guided by the stem of Family Socialization Theory called Poor Family Socialization Theory, which has been developed and improved over time via investigation and study in the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and education. I will rely on the key components of this theory which include: poverty, family socialization practices, academic achievement, and dropping out of school. Eventually, the aim of including this theoretical framework is to allow me to identify and understand the high dropout rate among primary school students in the Pakistani context.

Research Methodology

The current study used a purposive sampling technique to select six out-of-school children as study participants from two primary schools in Kasur District- Pakistan. The study employed a qualitative research approach since it is appropriate and manageable for social science studies, particularly educational research. Semi-structured interviews were used to interview six out-of-school students. Their voices were recorded and transcribed, and themes were identified by using thematic analysis. Semi-structured interviews were ideal to use when using complex and sensitive issues as the participants of the study were young children. It provides adaptability and receptivity to the children's individual needs and perspectives (Creswell, 2014).

Organization of the thesis

This thesis is composed of seven chapters. The first chapter provides a summary of the research study that includes an introduction, background of the study, aim, research questions, introduction to the theory, methodology, and an overview of how the thesis is organized into various chapters. The second chapter focuses on the literature review that includes a few definitions of dropout and an overview of various factors of primary school dropout phenomena. The third chapter explains the theoretical framework that will give the problem of the study a framework for comprehension and analysis. In the fourth chapter, the methodology is explained, that involves various sections. Firstly, the research design, data collection method, area of study and sampling are discussed. The next section is about analysis and interpretation and then comes the Ethical considerations, issues of trustworthiness, and limitations of the study. This section ends with a statement on sustainability which maintains the relevance of the study to Education for sustainable development. In the fifth chapter, I have presented the presentation of my findings established after conducting semi-structured interviews with the participants in the form of themes. The sixth chapter discusses and summarizes the results of this study. The final chapter includes a conclusion and recommendations.

Limitations of the study

The research is limited due to the lack of time and resources, small sample size, and financial constraints. The study is also limited to only male participants which could result in biased results. On the other hand, the limitations I set for myself in this research was to focus on children of a specific city even though children of other cities of Pakistan are also part of this and could be included in analysing the phenomenon, however this paper only focuses on a single city.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will provide detailed information on the literature review for the study. The literature review includes a few selected definitions of dropout, defines dropouts as used in this study, and gives an overview of the factors behind the primary school dropout phenomenon globally, regionally, and from local perspectives.

Literature Search Strategy

I accessed several search engines to review the literature and research, which included University of Gothenburg Library, Google scholar, google, and Taylor and Francis. I used several combinations of search terms, such as drop outs, primary education, dropout phenomena, primary schooling, dropping out of primary students, school improvement, causes of dropping out, causes of dropping out from students' perspectives, dropped-out children, dropout rate, and public primary schools.

Selection Process

The literature review has been developed by including the scholarly literature which is covering academic books and chapters, academic journal articles, formal academic reports, and the master doctoral thesis articles. The full text review of articles was included since it helped with the clear objective of the research, findings of the research, research methodology use, and also how the result is presented.

The concept of school dropout

There is a huge amount of literature about school dropout. Researchers are yet to reach a common consensus on how “school dropout” should be defined (Selda, 2014). However, I took a broad perspective by conceptualizing the term school dropout in the national context of this study. I follow Khan, et al.’s (2017) definition of what a dropout is. Khan et al. state that *the term school dropout means that any student who leaves school for any reason before graduation or completion of a program of studies or specific cycle of education* (2017, p. 27).

The above definition is of essence to this study because it covers children who abandon the education system without completing the academic year they started, i.e., those who did not obtain the right to get the final mark for that academic year and to be issued an official document to prove they finished the particular year of primary or secondary school.

However, to have a substantial definition on school dropout, I also followed Kamal's (2002) definition of what dropout is. Kamal states: *Those students who leave the school for any reason except death before completion of education programs of studies and without transferring to another school* (2002, p. 125). The definition contended by Kamal (2002) is quite a comprehensive definition and embraces all those students stopping their studies without completing their studies for any reason other than the death of the student. This definition includes students at all levels of studies, for instance at the primary level, secondary level and tertiary level. This also covers those students who are expelled by the education institution due to their weak performance or failure in studies or by any other reason that compelled them to be excluded by the school.

Elsewhere, Tsomo (2012) specified this broad conception of dropout in terms of a school dropout so that *Dropout most commonly refers to a learner leaving school before the official exit-grade level* (p. 12). This is a flexible definition covering all those students leaving their planned study program for any reason before completion.

According to Tsomo (2012), a child who disengages from school can be defined as a learner who exits the education system before completing the programme for which he or she was registered. In the context of this study, the definition by Tsomo (2012) could embrace pupils at all levels of the education system whether primary, secondary or tertiary. However, a classification difficulty arises when learners leave one institution and move to another location. The argument by Tsomo (2012) is that, if a learner soon continues his or her education elsewhere, he or she cannot be reasonably classified as a child who disengages from school.

In line with Tsomo's (2012) argument, Chadzuka (2008) defined school dropout as: *Children who disengage from school as those learners who leave school before the final year of the educational cycle in which they are enrolled, which could be primary, ordinary or advanced level or even college or university levels* (p. 67).

In the context of this study, the definition given by Chadzuka (2008), infers that if a learner exits the formal education system at a particular level without completing the programme designed for that level, he or she can be classified as a dropout. A school dropout, in this sense, is a learner who exits the formal education system at primary school level in Kasur, Pakistan.

On the other hand, Jamil et al., (2010) described dropout as *A term used to describe children who stop going to school and don't finish their education for any cause other than death* (p. 19). Arguably, the definition by Jamil et al., (2010) is very inclusive and covers any pupil who drops out of school before completion of any specified cycle of education i.e., primary, middle and high schools. This is a flexible definition covering all those primary school dropouts leaving their planned study program for any reason before completion. Hence, this definition of dropout by Jamil et al., (2010) is a quite comprehensive definition.

Malik (2002), in his review of the literature on dropout, noted the broad range of definitions used in discussions of a school dropout. According to Malik (2002), dropout can be defined as, *a student who dropped out of school before finishing a program of study*. This definition is generalized that includes all those students who leave schools before completing the courses. The complexity of the phenomenon is not covered by this definition, nor is its essence evident.

The following summary of the descriptions of school dropout proposed by Khan et al., 2017; Kamal 2002; Tsomo 2012; Chadzuka 2008; Jamil et al.,2010; Malik 2002, highlights the ideas most relevant to the current study. In the context of this study, primary school dropout was taken to mean a primary school pupil who dropped out of school before completing primary level. This means that when a primary school pupil fails to finish a program of study is a primary school dropout.

Empirical studies of school dropout according to Global, Regional and Local Perspective

A multi-level approach to the literature review is adopted by focusing on the complex factors behind school dropouts. Global perspectives are focusing on the studies particularly on Africa, as of its common experiences and studies with relation to Pakistan. Regional perspectives are more focused on the Asian countries whose goals and situations are similar to Pakistan. Then, the local approach is focusing on the dropout phenomena within Pakistan.

Global perspective

In Tanzania, Segumba (2015) studied the factors that contribute to the dropout problem among the primary school pupils in Temeke district. The sample consisted of six primary schools, 30 teachers, 36 dropout pupils, and 1 district education officer (DEO) who were interviewed, and 30 continuing pupils and 6 head teachers who were supplied with questionnaires. Also, six dropout pupils and six teachers were involved in the focus group discussion. The study found that school factors that caused dropout among pupils included fear of teachers, excessive corporal punishment, overcrowded classrooms, ineffective teaching, persistence poor performance, long distance from school, lack of food provision in school, and poor administration. Also, the research findings indicated that children from uneducated parents were more likely to leave from schools than children from educated parents. Furthermore, the findings pointed out that girl pupils dropped out more than boy pupils. The study recommended that the parents should be sensitized on the importance of education so as to understand their role and involvement in their children education affecting their children education.

In another study, Dagnew (2017) looked at determinants of students' dropout rates in primary schools in Ethiopia. The purpose of this study was to examine determinants of student dropout rate in seven second-cycle primary schools situated in Awi Zone. Data were collected via questionnaires and interview from teachers, students who had dropped out of school, school principals, and parent-teacher association representatives. Seventy-three dropped-out students, seventy-five teachers, seven school principals, and seven parent-teacher association representatives from Awi Zone participated in this study. The study found that the government, the school, the community, and all of the stakeholders/concerning bodies should collaborate/team up to work together to assist students on the verge of dropping out to remain in school and solve drop out problem at each grade level to realize the millennium development goals and assuring quality education for all citizens.

Buop et al. (2018) did a study on School-Based Factors Influencing Drop out among Primary School Pupils in Kenya. The study sampled 96 class teachers representing 11% of teachers in Mbita Sub County. This study employed the use of questionnaires and interviews to collect data. Data were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. There was a statistically significant negative, though weak relationship between school-based factors and school dropout, with positive improvement in school-based factors associated to decrease in school

dropouts. The study recommended that the Government should plan some special policies to improve female education like introducing special stipends for female students and also making education free for them.

A study by Ampiah and Adu-Yeboah (2009) on mapping the incidence of school dropouts in northern Ghana identified some school factors that contributed to pupils dropping out of school. These included grade repetition, low achievement, over-age enrolment and regular absenteeism or previous temporary withdrawals from school. It is unclear whether grade repetition increases the chances of completion, but what was apparent in this study was that grade repetition extends the age range in a particular grade, and thus increases the possibility of repeaters dropping out. The study found that children who were made to repeat grades with a view of improving their performance ended up dropping out of school.

Simić and Krstić (2017) conducted research with the goal to investigate and identify key school factors related to dropouts from primary and secondary schools in Serbia. The research was conducted in 8 primary and 13 secondary schools from 17 municipalities with high dropout rates. In order to hear voices from different actors in the educational system, qualitative research was conducted, involving interviews and focus groups with teachers, school principals, school psychologists, counsellors, pedagogical assistants, parents, and students. The study found that low quality (individualization) of teaching, lack of learning and emotional support, and lack of positive teacher-student relationships proved to have the greatest influence on student dropout. The study also found that student and parent participation in school life is underused as a resource for dropout prevention.

Mohlouoa (2014) carried out a study on factors influencing the dropout rate in primary schools in the Teyateyaneng region, Lesotho using focus group interviews with one principal and five educators from each of three primary schools. The study revealed that some learners dropped out of school because they were orphans, while others dropped out of school after being absent for a number of weeks. Also, the study established that mainstream classrooms were also found to encourage dropping out because educators are not fully trained to address problems that learners with disabilities bring to the classrooms. Lack of parental involvement, poor financial situations, lack of necessary skills to develop the learners, high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, and being abused and neglected were found to drive learners away from schools and into the streets. The study recommended that primary school learners should be encouraged to complete their

primary-level education. The Ministry of Education and Training should develop policy guidelines on inclusive education, facilitate legislation on compulsory basic education, improve teaching and learning conditions in all schools, abolish child labor, create employment opportunities for parents to prevent child labor, and regulate traditional circumcision and solicit parental support.

While these studies (Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Buop et al., 2018; Dagneu, 2017; Makame, 1998; Segumba, 2015; Simić & Krstić, 2017) informed the current study about factors that contribute to pupils dropping out of school, the knowledge gap is that these studies did not clearly explain the factors that force pupils drop out from school. The current study tried to explain how factors force pupils to drop-out from school by documenting their voices in the Pakistan context. The researcher achieved this by asking the dropout learners during interviews. Looking at this issue, and by providing suggestions to policymakers, the Ministry of Education in Pakistan should come up with interventions that enhance pupils' retention in primary schools. This was one way of establishing knowledge gap.

Also, these studies (Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Buop et al., 2018; Dagneu, 2017; Makame, 1998; Segumba, 2015; Simić & Krstić, 2017) did not establish what kind of support young people receive from their learning institutes. This is another area this study tried to address hence contributing to the knowledge gap. Therefore, there was a need for another study to specifically look at the kind of support young people receive from their learning institution in Kasur, Pakistan.

While these studies (Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Buop et al., 2018; Dagneu, 2017; Segumba, 2015; Simić & Krstić, 2017) are similar in terms of the research approach (qualitative approach), they did not only target dropout pupils but also headteachers, policymakers, parents, school psychologists, teachers, counsellors' pedagogical assistants, and non-dropout pupils. However, the current study targeted only primary school dropouts. This was among the gaps this current study sought to offer some contributions through from the Pakistan context.

Regional perspective

Sateesh and Sekher (2014) researched factors leading to school dropouts in India: An analysis of National Family Health Survey-3 Data. The study tried to understand the differentials and factors associated with school dropouts in India. Based on the data from National Family Health

Survey-3, it was found that only 75 percent of the children in the age group 6 to 16 years were attending school. About 14 percent of the children never attended school and 11 percent dropped out of school for various reasons. It was observed that the dropout was high among the children belonging to Muslim, Scheduled Caste and, Scheduled Tribe families. Parental characteristics also play a significant role in determining school education. The dropouts among the children belonging to illiterate parents were four times higher than that of the literate parents. It was also observed that if parents were not working, the possibility of dropout among their children was relatively high. The study suggests that unless and until there is considerable improvement in the economic status of households and change in the social attitudes of parents, achieving the goal of universalization of school education will remain a major challenge for India.

In India again, Paul et al. (2021) used panel study data to examine whether the lack of parental involvement during primary schooling of Indian children eventually results in school dropout when the children become adolescents. The findings from the multivariable models showed that children, whose parents did not participate in PTA meetings, discuss academic progress with the schoolteacher, and supervise their children's homework during primary school respectively had 1.15, 1.14, and 1.17-times higher risk of school dropout in secondary school. Further, a similar relationship was observed when hypothesized relationship by gender, type of school attended, and type of community of the children were examined. The study further revealed that among male children, parents' non-participation in PTA meetings was associated with 1.21 times greater odds of school dropout. The study also found that children from private schools also had a 2.17 times greater risk of dropout if their parents did not supervise their children in homework.

Hongmei et al., (2015) looked at exploring the dropout rates and causes of dropout in upper-secondary technical and vocational education and training (TVET) schools in one coastal and one inland province of China. The three objectives of the study were to produce high-quality estimates of dropout rates among students in upper-secondary TVET schools, to identify which students drop out from upper-secondary TVET, and to test whether financial constraints, math and computer achievement, and parental education and migration status correlate with TVET dropout. Drawing on data from a survey of 7414 upper-secondary TVET students in two provinces, the study found dropout rates of 10.7% across both provinces and as high as 22% in

poorer inland areas, suggesting major gaps and disparities in Chinese TVET dropout rates. Furthermore, the study found that baseline academic performance and maternal education and migration status are strong correlates for student dropout.

In China again, Shi et al., (2015) sought to explore the prevalence, correlates and potential reasons for rural dropout throughout the secondary education process in rural secondary schools. The study brought together results from eight large-scale survey studies covering 24,931 rural secondary students across four provinces, as well as an analysis of extensive interviews with 52 students from these same study sites. The results showed that the cumulative dropout rate across all windows of secondary education was as high as 63 percent. The study also found that dropping out is significantly correlated with low academic performance, high opportunity cost, low socio-economic status, and poor mental health.

Noori (2017) explored the key issues contributing to the dropout of girls from schools in Afghanistan. The study employed a qualitative approach. The study found that major factors such as cultural, economic, school, and social factors led to the dropout of girls in Afghanistan.

Although these studies (Hongmei et al., 2015; Noori, 2017; Paul et al., 2021; Sateesh & Sekher, 2014; Shi et al., 2015) informed the current study that financial constraints, math and computer achievement, and parental education, migration status correlate, teaching and learning material related factors, child-related factors, low academic performance, high opportunity cost, cultural, economic, school, social factors, and poor mental health with influence school dropout, their studies did not explain how these factors influence school dropout among the pupils. Also, these studies did not look at the kind of support do they receive from their learning institution. My current study achieved this by asking the primary school dropouts during interviews. This was also one of the issues this study tried to establish hence contributing to the knowledge gap.

These studies (Hongmei et al., 2015; Noori, 2017; Paul et al., 2021; Sateesh & Sekher, 2014; Shi et al., 2015) did not employ a qualitative approach unlike the current study. I employed a qualitative approach in order to gather in-depth opinions, views, ideas, and experiences regarding the perspectives of children on their dropping out from primary schools in Kasur, Pakistan. The researcher achieved this by interviewing primary school dropouts. Thus, there was a need for another study to specifically look at the perspectives of dropped-out children

and their individual stories about withdrawing from school. These are some of the issues the current study tried to achieve.

Local perspective

Jafar et al. (2021) conducted a study on factors causing dropout from public sector schools at the primary level in Vehari, Pakistan. Questionnaires were collected from 20 teachers, with reliable and validated questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS to draw conclusions and formulate recommendations. The study found that the majority of the respondents agreed that students drop out due to parental carelessness. The study also found that a great part of teachers accepted that poverty is the main reason forcing a drop out of school. Besides, the study established that many participants agreed that uncaring and professionally less committed teacher is the primary factor of students' dropout.

To find out the reasons for primary school student's dropouts in Punjab, Farooq (2016), documented the views of primary school teachers employed in eight districts of Punjab. Teachers were considered one of the main stakeholders that contribute to student dropout, and Punjab being the largest and the most populated province of the country provided a good understanding of the phenomenon. 781 teachers; 379 males and 402 females; were surveyed by using a questionnaire based on five-point Likert-type scale. The collected data were tabulated and analyzed using differential and inferential statistics (t-test, cross-tabulation, Green's successive categories scaling method). The results of the data analysis identified school and individual factors as the most significant factors contributing to a high student dropout rate in the province, followed by several family factors. Child labor, class repetition, difficulty in learning, friendship with out-of-school children, and family crises and were reported to be major causes. Other factors included student's lack of interest, high student-teacher ratio, and poor infrastructural facilities in schools. To improve student retention in schools, the author emphasized on making the school environment friendly and conducive to learning. Students' physical and psychological well-being should be the focus of all activities. A stronger link between the school and community, with the support of a professionally trained staff, was further advised to improve retention.

Shah et al. (2018) researched on the causes of the dropout rate at primary level in Pakistan. A descriptive research method was adopted by using both quantitative and qualitative techniques for data collection. The study sought to get the opinions of education managers, teachers,

parents and community members on various factors causing high dropout at the primary level. Data was collected from 208 education managers and 291 primary school teachers. Twelve districts and 96 schools across the country were included in the sample. Moreover, focus group discussion was held with community members and parents in each sample school and district to solicit their opinion about causes of dropout. The study found that factors causing dropout are socio-economic factors, physical factors, geographical factors, teacher-related factors, family-related factors, teaching-learning material-related factors, administrative related factors, child-related factors, and facilities in schools related factors.

In Pakistan again, (Kalhor et al., 2017) conducted a study in four towns of District Larkana to address the issues of young students' dropouts of primary schools. The study utilized a qualitative research design with parents, teachers, and students who had either dropped out of school or were at risk of doing so were used by the study's qualitative research design to gather data. According to the study's findings, the main causes of school dropout in the district include poverty, a lack of parental participation, poor educational quality, inadequate facilities, low teacher motivation, and cultural beliefs. In order to address the issue of school dropout in government primary schools in Larkana district and surrounding areas, policymakers and educators must collaborate in order to raise parental involvement, enhance educational quality, and address the socioeconomic factors that cause school dropout.

Another study conducted by Khan et al., (2011) explores reasons for girl's dropout specifically from the perspective of parents, teachers and students. Data was collected from four provinces; Azad Jammu and Kashmir and the federal capitals. All groups of respondents gave the low socio-economic status of families as the main reason behind girl's dropout. Other reasons included lack of interest of parents and students, involvement in household chores, marriage and preference of boys' education over girls.

Hussain et al (2011) found out that in Pakistan some of the curriculum related factors that contribute towards high dropout rates are that the curriculum at primary school level is not in harmony with the needs and abilities of children. Students feel bored and not satisfied with the prescribed curriculum which forces them to leave school. Furthermore, the prescribed curriculum at primary level does not fulfil the needs and expectations of the community.

Another study conducted by Khan et al., (2011) explores reasons of girl's dropout specifically from the perspective of parents, teachers and students. All three groups of respondents gave the low socio-economic status of families as the main reason behind girl's dropout. Other reasons included lack of interest of parents and students, involvement in household chores, marriage and preference of boys' education over girls.

Research studies in Pakistan by Hussain et al., (2011) have shown that lack of physical facilities is also one of the major reasons of students dropping out in Pakistan with respondents stating that inadequate provision of physical facilities in schools and poor standards of health and nutrition is one of the main causes of high dropout rate in Pakistan. Schools in rural areas of the country, especially remote rural areas, lack basic facilities of life such as good roads, education and health facilities, which causes students' dropout. The study also revealed that poor condition of school buildings was also a main reason for students leaving school, a finding consistent with that of Din et al. (2011).

More recently, Shuja et al., (2022) researched on perspectives on the factors affecting students' dropout rate during COVID-19: A case study from Pakistan. This study primarily aimed at studying the factors affecting the school dropout rate during the pandemic. Qualitative approach was employed and the data for the study was collected from 20 public and private schools of two divisions, including seven districts of the province of Kasur, Pakistan, using interviews of policymakers, parents of dropouts, teachers, and students. The study revealed financial conditions, lockdown effects, mode of learning, government policies, fear of death, the psyche of the parents, socio-cultural effects, the role of teachers and administrators, most affected level, and some contributory factors amongst the major factors.

These studies (Hussain et al., 2011; Jafar et al., 2021; Farooq, 2016; Shah et al., 2018) are vital to the current study in terms of slight similarities in research purpose which was to investigate factors causing dropout from public sector schools at primary level. Also, these studies (Hussain et al., 2011; Jafar et al., 2021; Kalhoro et al., 2017; Shah et al., 2018) and the current study have similarities in some variable like dropout as a topic and both studies have titles that are topic specific which is primary schools. Although these studies (Hussain et al., 2011; Jafar et al., 2021; Kalhoro et al., 2017 ; Shah et al., 2018) looked at factors causing dropout from public sector schools at primary level, these studies did not clearly explain how parental carelessness, how professional negligence and poor systems of checks and balances, poverty, financial

conditions, lockdown effects, mode of learning, government policies, fear of death, the psyche of the parents, socio-cultural effects, the role of teachers and administrators, lack basic facilities of life such as good roads, education and health facilities, which causes students' dropout, and uncaring and professionally less committed teacher influence pupils dropping out of school. My current study achieved this by asking the primary school dropouts during interviews. This was one of the issues this study tried to establish.

Also, these studies (Hussain et al., 2011; Jafar et al., 2021; Kalhorro et al., 2017; Shah et al., 2018) targeted primary school teachers, headmasters, parents, and policy makers whilst the current study targeted primary school dropouts in Kasur district, Pakistan. Additionally, these studies (Hussain et al., 2011; Jafar et al., 2021; Kalhorro et al., 2017; Shah et al., 2018) did not look at the kind of support do they receive from their learning institutes. By conducting this study, I bridged this knowledge gap and also present a more thorough grasp of the issue of school dropout by researching on personal narratives of the children who have dropped out by conducting qualitative research.

Chapter summary

The chapter presented some literature available on school dropouts especially globally, regional and Pakistan. The main focus was to look at the perspectives of children on their dropping out from primary schools, Kasur, Pakistan. The available literature has confirmed that primary school dropout worldwide is still a challenge. The factors leading to the primary school dropout differ from one country to another depending on their cultural beliefs. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework which informed the study.

CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This chapter provides detailed information on the theory which informed my study.

Theoretical Framework

My study is informed by Poor Family Socialization Theory which is a stem from Family Socialization Theory. The family socialization theory is an overarching theory that aims to explain how family dynamics, interactions, and institutions affect socialization and personal development. It implies that, especially during their early years, families play a crucial influence in influencing people's ideas, attitudes, values, actions, and general development. Family socialization theory has its roots in the early sociological theories of Émile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons, who understood the importance of families in educating people and passing down social norms and values. However, over time, the contributions of numerous academics have helped to shape the current understanding of family socialization theory.

Poor Family Socialization theory just as Family Socialization Theory is a sociological theory that focuses on family practices and expectations. This theory explored the relationship between family socialization theory and the impacts of poverty on family socialization. This entails taking into account how family dynamics, parenting styles, and child development can be impacted by poverty and its related issues within the context of current family socialization theories. This theory states that family support and bonding have a significant impact on persons' general deviance and on psychological distress. The family forms a foundation not just for the academic achievement of the children and how well they do in school, but also make a basis for their future. According to Rumberger (1983), family background has an important effect on children's school attendance and their tendency to drop out of school.

On the other hand, this theory holds that parents' level of education has a significant effect on students' performance. Rumberger (1983) argued that factors of Poor Family Socialization Theory that influence children dropping out of school include parent divorce, poverty, family

stress, household conditions, family size, lack of academic performance, absenteeism, and parental behavioural control.

Factors of Poor Family Socialization Theory

Poverty

According to Poor Family Socialization Theory, poverty is often cited as an important reason why pupils drop out of school. This theory explains that the costs of school fees, cost of examination fees, lack of uniforms, lack of transport and stationery such as textbooks, exercise books, pens, pencils, and erasers, the loss of child labour, and strain limited household resources can push children out of school. According to the theory, the financial strain caused by poverty can lead to parental stress and conflict, which can negatively affect parenting practices (Conger et al., 1994). Poverty is the underlying factor that contributes to poor family socialization practices and academic achievement. Children from poor families are more likely to face multiple socio-economic challenges that affect their academic performance and increase the risk of dropout.

Family Size

According to Poor Family Socialization Theory, family size, and domestic problems create an environment that negatively affects the value of education. The type of family structure that a person lives in does affect the likelihood of that person's chances of dropping out of school. Family structures include two-parent, single-parent, and also stepparent families (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

Lack of support from parents

Poor Family Socialization Theory holds that lack of parental involvement in their children's education can lead to school dropout. The theory argues that children with unsupportive parents always have lower grades, lower test scores, poor school attendance, low motivation, poor and low self-esteem, higher rates of suspension, and more instances of violent behaviour, which are all the major factors of dropping out from school (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

Absenteeism

Poor Family Socialization enlightens that absenteeism is also a main cause for children who come from low-income families. According to the theory, children from low-income families fall behind in their schoolwork, get discouraged, and end up quitting school. Rumberger (1983)

explains that excessive absences of both educators and learners create gaps in the learners' education. This, therefore, implies that continued loss of instruction or poor academic achievement among learners with high absenteeism are typical characteristics of learners who later drop out of school.

Poor Academic Performance

According to Poor Family Socialization Theory, poor performance can push children out of school. Poor family socialization practices can hurt academic achievement, increasing the risk of poor performance and drop out of school (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

Parents' level of education

According to the Poor Family Socialization Theory, uneducated parents do not feel committed making make follow pupils' progress. This theory holds that the level of education for most parents from low-income families is very low to such an extent that they are termed illiterate and do not know the value of education hence do not see the need of sending their children to school. Besides, this theory stipulates that children are also at great risk of dropping out of school due to a lack of awareness among their parents about the importance of education (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

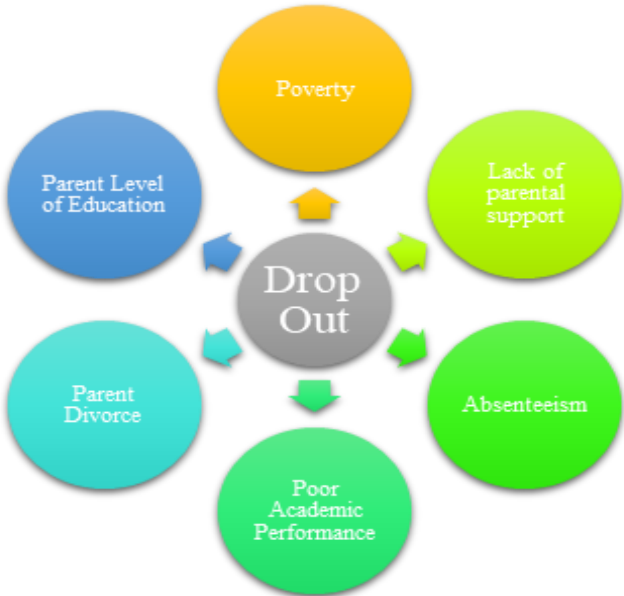
Parents' Divorce

According to Poor Family Socialization Theory, dropouts are most likely to come from broken homes and families whose parents are not interested in caring. The theory further holds that when children remain with their mother after divorce, especially a mother with low income it becomes difficult for her to send children to schools. In many cases, those children will be involved in searching for income as a result it becomes difficult to proceed with studies as disclosed by one respondent who dropped out of studies. The separation of a parent's marriage is a change in family structure that is detrimental to a child and can increase the child's chances of dropping out of school. As a result of the separation of a parent's marriage, the income of a child's parents changes. This change in income greatly affects the child. When a couple divorces, the incomes of both parents once again become separate, and this will, in turn, affect the child due to the loss of a parent's income (Pong & Ju, 2000).

Studies that used Poor Family Socialization Theory in relation to school dropout

Few studies have employed Poor Family Socialization Theory in relation to school dropouts across the globe. For instance, Alam and Hoque (2023) in their study on the causes of female high school student dropout in Bangladesh: An exploration of the Pabna District in familial, economic and institutional contexts employed Poor Family Socialization Theory. Also, Kalinga (2013) in his study on the causes of drop-out in secondary schools in Tanzania: the case study of Mbeya, Dar es Salaam and Kilimanjaro regions employed Poor Family Socialization Theory. Besides, Danovska (2018) in his study on reasons behind children dropping out of primary schools with unequal socio-economic preconditions in Tanzania was informed by Poor Family Socialization Theory. Additionally, Battin-Pearson et al., (2000) in their study on predictors of early high school dropout: A test of five theories informed by Poor Family Socialization Theory.

Figure 2 Poor Family Socialization Theory



How Poor Family Socialization Theory informed my study

Based on the factors of Poor Family Socialization and studies presented, I used Poor Family Socialization Theory in the following ways. In my study of exploring perspectives of children

on their dropping out from primary schools in Kasur, Pakistan, I found Poor Family Socialization Theory to be the most appropriate to the current study. The theory succinctly spells out that poverty, lack of parental education, family background, parent divorce, family stress, household conditions, family size, geographic location, marriage and childbirth, parental behavioural control, parents' level of education, and poor academic performance influence forces children to leave school.

In light of this, factors of Poor Family Socialization Theory such as poverty, lack of parental education, family background, parent divorce, family stress, household conditions, family size, geographic location, marriage and childbirth, parental behavioural control, parents' level of education, and poor academic performance influence forces helped me to understand how they influence primary school dropouts at the primary level in Kasur, Pakistan in a natural setting. This was adhered to by interviewing the primary school dropouts using audio recordings for the qualitative phase.

Besides, given my research questions, the relevant literature reviewed, and that I wanted to find out what factors influenced primary school dropout and the kind of support primary school dropouts receive from school after dropping out, this theory provided the framework under which my discussions of the study findings were grounded on and helped me not to depend on my personal experiences and assumptions. Given this, the discussion of the findings of the current study was informed by Poor Family Socialization Theory. This, however, in the context of my study helped me to use Poor Family Socialization Theory as a lens to effectively illuminate my study.

I found the notion of family socialization practices which is about values, beliefs, and behaviours that parents and other family members transmit to children through socialization processes more appropriate in this study. This helped me to establish in the context of poor families if these practices are inadequate or not and how they can influence pupils dropping out of school. It is for these reasons that Poor Family Socialization Theory guided my study by exploring the perspectives of children on their dropping out of primary schools in Kasur, Pakistan.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

Research Design

According to Wiersma and Jurs (2005), the research design is a plan or strategy of inquiry for conducting a research study. It is all about the process of selecting the population to be involved in the study, as well as how the researcher can collect data or obtain relevant information for the study. This study was designed with qualitative research design and semi-structured interviews as a major data collection channel in mind.

Qualitative research methods are frequently used in research to investigate complex social phenomena, comprehend individuals' experiences and perceptions, and gain a better understanding of a particular context or situation (Creswell, 2014). As this study focused on exploring the factors of dropout from primary schools in Kasur District in Pakistan by documenting the voices and views of students who dropped out and never joined the school again, the study chose to be qualitative in nature. When the research questions involve exploring "why" and "how" questions, as opposed to "what" questions, which are better addressed using quantitative methods, qualitative methods are especially useful (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, the qualitative research approach was adopted by the researcher in the current study to document the voices of dropouts regarding their decision of leaving school. For example, in a quantitative survey, the true voices of respondents could hardly be heard due to the limitations imposed by the questionnaire structure based on a prior theory of teachers' perceptions. So, the researcher decided to adopt the qualitative inquiry as it also provides detailed and in-depth information.

Choice of data collection

As the nature of the study is qualitative, the most commonly used tool to get comprehensive information from students would be Interviews. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), interviews are used in qualitative research to enable direct interaction between researchers and participants. Through interviews, the researcher can get insight into the participant's environment and obtain a more complete picture.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), in qualitative studies, interviews are generally unstructured or consist of a few open-ended questions which are also called semi-structured that are asked to extract or bring out detailed opinions and descriptions of the phenomenon from participants. An interview protocol is made in advance by the researchers so that it can be used smoothly and consistently during all interviews. The interview protocol should include background information, an introduction, and probing questions on the interview's subject matter (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Asking questions, recording responses, and taking notes during an interview are all steps in the process (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Semi-structured interviews give the researcher the freedom to elicit additional information from the participants to further study the phenomenon. (Gibson & Brown 2009). An interview protocol (see Appendix 1) was made before conducting the interviews, which guided the researcher. Interviews were conducted with the students who have left their schools and did not join back the primary schools. It was not easy to approach the students who were no longer attending the two selected schools in Kasur. At first, the principals were approached and they were asked about the dropout information. An introductory letter along with consent forms (see Appendix 2) was first given to the principals of both schools. The researcher required students' home addresses or their father's telephone numbers from the principal's help through the school's data so that the dropouts can be easily approached by getting in touch with their parents first. The researcher conducted three interviews at the respondents' own houses, where they were comfortable in their rooms in a quiet place. For two respondents, the interview was held at the place where they were working, a tailor shop and a mechanic shop. One of the respondents came to the school and sat in the principal's office and gave the interview. For all the interviews, the researcher followed Bryman's (2016) guidelines which are as follows: changing or altering research questions so that there is a clear flow in the answers, ease of language so that the respondent understands correctly what was being asked. The researcher used two languages here, Urdu and Punjabi, which are most commonly spoken by everyone in Kasur. The interview had general questions in the beginning to develop a rapport with the participants. The participants were given full liberty to decide where they wanted to be interviewed.

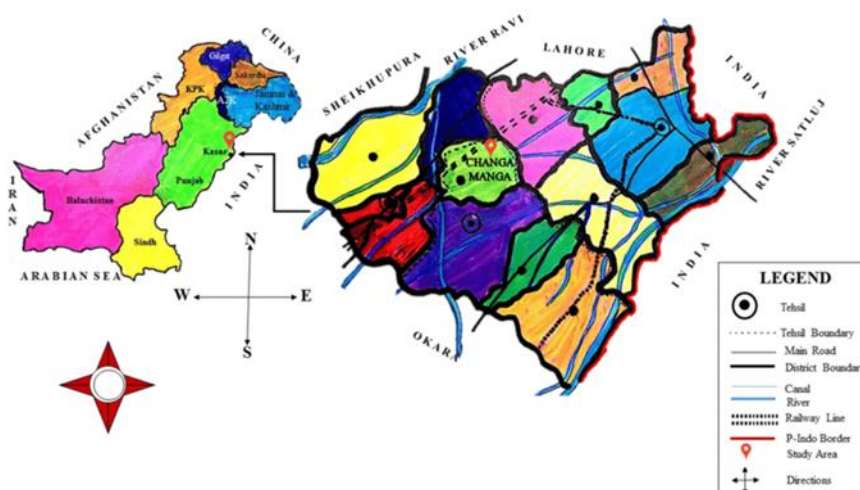
Further, interviews were conducted face to face and voices were recorded in the voice memo of two phones. Each interview took 40 to 60 minutes depending on the length of the answers/responses. Later on, these voice recordings were sent to my email address and were

saved on USB. I tried to make a friendly connection with the participants. Before the start of the interview, I made every child watch a video clip about what an interview is, how an interview takes place, and why are they being interviewed along with my complete introduction and the purpose of the interview. I made sure to verbally ask every question as the participants were not that good with reading. The first few questions were asked to develop a rapport with the participants. Then, when once I got the hint that they were ready and comfortable, the interview questions started. Breaks were considered during an interview to avoid any kind of stress or anxious feeling, but at the same time, the whole of the interview was recorded along with breaks or pauses. Consent letters were sent to all the parents of participants and they were provided help in reading out the consent forms as almost all the parents were uneducated. All the participants were interviewed about the reasons for leaving schools/education, which was the focus of the study.

Area of Study

The study was conducted at two primary schools in Kasur District, Pakistan. Kasur district is located in the centre of the Punjab province of Pakistan. Its surroundings include the districts of Lahore to the north, India to the east, Okara to the south, and Nankana Sahib to the west as depicted on Pakistan's map below in figure 3. In Kasur district, there are a total of 2,907 primary schools with a total enrolment of 501,898 students, as reported by the Punjab Education Statistics Report (2019).

Figure 3 Map of the study area (District Kasur).



Students from a variety of socioeconomic situations can receive an education at these schools, which are dispersed throughout the district. According to the Pakistan Department of Statistics (2019), the land area of Kasur district is 4,796 square kilometres. Kasur district, is one of the most populous districts in Punjab, with 3,044,607 people living there as per the national census (2017). The region's main industry is agriculture, and it is renowned for producing rice, wheat, and citrus fruits. A significant hub for Pakistan's leather industry, Kasur produces and exports a large number of leather goods.

According to UNICEF Pakistan Factsheet (2022), the out-of-school rate at primary schools in Kasur is 10%, while the headcount of children in school children at the primary level is 48,000. The reason for selecting the two schools in the study was their high drop-out rates, as 21% with 81 students who dropped out and 14% with 21 students who dropped out at the primary level.

Sample size and its characteristics

The total sample size for this study were 6 children who were dropped out of the two selected schools of Kasur. As the participants of this study were children aged between 8 to 12 years old, so they were approached by their parents. They were purposefully chosen. First, the Principals of the two selected schools were given Introductory letters and were asked about the dropped-out students in the last years from 2021 to 2022. Then, the parents were approached and presented the consent forms so that they could allow the researcher to have a one-to-one interview with their children. I received 10 dropped-out students’ details from the school initially through the help of the principals. Only 6 parents agreed to sign the consent forms, resulting in 6 participants altogether. In qualitative research, participants and settings are carefully chosen so that the researcher can fully grasp the issue and research question (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Table 1 Participant Profile

Participant	Age at dropout	Current work	Interview Location
1	10	Works at a workshop	Workshop and school
2	9	workshop	School and home
3	10	plumber	school

4	11	Helping Father in the fields	At home
5	9	Learning to be a tailor	At the tailor shop and home.
6	10	Stays at home	At home

The table above shows that the ages of the participants were between 9 to 11 years, which means that they left school at different ages but no one amongst them completed primary education. Regarding their current work, 5 out of 6 were working with their fathers at the places where their fathers work. As far as Interview places were concerned, it was taken at different places including their workplaces, school that they left, and also their own homes.

It was very difficult to approach the students who have left school and never returned back. As most of the parents were not educated and could not read and write I made them watch a small video explaining to them the purpose of the study. Eventually, the researcher was able to have a semi-structured interview which was recorded as well. The participants involved 4 students from one school and 2 students from the other school. In total, 6 male students participated.

Ethical Consideration

There is no other goal for conducting this study than academic research in order to complete a master's degree program, and I state that no financial, political, or organizational involvement or influence occurred during the course of the investigation. The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards and literature outlined in Ethical Research Involving Children, ERIC (UNICEF & World Health Organization, 2013). In order to give ethical advice for research involving children, UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) created the Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC) set of recommendations. ERIC offers a framework to assist researchers in making sure that their study is carried out in an ethical manner that gives priority to the safety and well-being of children. The research also got assistance from extensive research conducted by Danby et al. (2010) on interviewing young children, and their work provides valuable insights for novice researchers. Some of the key principles of the above-mentioned literatures adopted in this study are:

- 1) Respect for the child's autonomy
- 2) Protection of the child's welfare
- 3) Informed consent
- 4) Privacy and confidentiality
- 5) Establishing rapport
- 6) Using child-friendly language
- 7) Allowing for non-verbal communication
- 8) Using open-ended questions
- 9) Considering the child's perspective

The first step to approach the participants was to send an Introductory letter and consent forms to the principals of the schools, with details of research. After getting the information of the participants, consent letters were approved by the parents of the participants. As mentioned by UNICEF & World Health Organization (2013), a child's parents or legal guardians must give their informed consent, and if at all possible, the child should also give their assent. So, in this regard parents' consent were important here. Then, the research process and why this research was being held was explained to the participants. Each and every participant watched a short clip in Urdu which was to make them aware of the research purpose. They were then explained the consent forms and I got their signatures in form of their names because it was important to get their consent for this research.

In addition to that, all the participant's confidentiality and privacy were respected during the research. Confidentiality is ensured for privacy. To keep the participants anonymous, each participant was assigned a number from 1-6 They were also informed that all the data collected will be kept confidential and that their names, identity, or their family's name will not be disclosed. In addition to this, the researcher also took care that there should be no discrimination on the basis of colour, religion, or any other characteristics (UNICEF & WHO, 2013).

The interview questions were carefully formulated by keeping the children's backgrounds in consideration and that they don't harm children to any possible risk. As stated by Danby et al., (2010), Planning is essential: it is important to prepare for the interview by creating a list of inquiries that are both age- and experience-appropriate. When formulating questions, child's language and cultural upbringing was kept into account. So, I tried to build rapport with the

participants to bring out the best interests of the child, which should be the primary factor when it comes to research with children.

As young children may have trouble vocally expressing themselves, it is critical to take into account non-verbal cues like gestures, body language, and facial expressions when interpreting the child's answers (Danby et al., 2010). Hence, I adopted the strategy of non-verbal communication while conducting the interview. Face-to-face interviews, along with a semi-structured approach were convenient and helpful as the research's purpose was to investigate the factors of dropout only from children's perspectives, and it is the most suitable when the research involves children.

Analysis and Interpretation

I used the thematic analysis approach for the analysis of collected data. As the nature of the study is qualitative and data was gathered through interviews, hence thematic analysis was ideal to use in this study. The method of encoding qualitative data through thematic analysis enables researchers, academics, and analysts to systematically employ different types of data obtained to accurately describe and analyse the people, events, and circumstances (Boyatzis, 1998).

According to Braun & Clarke (2019), thematic analysis is a strategy for detecting, interpreting, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Similarly, in Braun & Clarke earlier work in (2006), defined thematic analysis as a strategy for detecting, evaluating, and interpreting patterns of meaning ('themes') within qualitative data. This method meticulously arranges and defines the data collection, and its unique feature is flexibility. It is a valuable research tool that displays a rich and complete account of data rather than being a theoretically constrained or rigid method to qualitative data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It starts when an analyst starts identifying significant patterns in the data being collected, and it ends with a description of all the data sets being collected. The thematic analysis allows for dense descriptions of acquired data and is adaptable and rather simple to learn as a method. It also gives summarized the main aspects retrieved from vast data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It can be used to highlight similarities and differences among data sets, as well as to produce unexpected insights and an analysis that is suitable for guiding policy decisions (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodically defined deductive thematic analysis approach when I examined the interview data that had been gathered. This theme analysis is carried out using the following 6-phase methodology;

Familiarization with the data: Because I conducted the interviews and used interactive methods to gather the data, I already knew some of the information I was going to analyze. At this point, I listened to each recording session in full to gain a sense of the actual expressions and tones of the statements made by the respondents. I then manually typed the necessary responses into my computer from the audio-video recordings. Reading and rereading the data is necessary to become familiar with its content and to develop a comprehensive knowledge of it, so I highlighted the key elements in during this phase.

Generating initial codes: This stage sees the creation of first codes from the data and the beginning of the data organizing into meaningful groupings. When a researcher begins defining what the data is about, the process is known as coding (Charmaz, 2006). Coding in this level depends on your method of data analysis, whether it is "theory-driven" or "data-driven." By this time, I labelled small chunks of information as codes. This was done manually by me, by highlighting the codes emitting from data sets.

Searching for themes: As it starts with initial data that has been coded and compiled, this phase involves a broader analysis of themes rather than codes. It refocuses on looking into potential themes by compiling all of the data from various codes to overlap or similar themes. I used mind maps and tables and recording the names of each code was also used for this. At this point, I have examined the coded data and gathered all the codes into a grouping of potential themes, sub-themes, and relationships between codes and themes. The aforementioned topics thus provided as an analytical framework for capturing the students' entire experience and point of view during the master's program. The following topics have been established to examine the data set using a deductive approach: poverty, financial help for parents, lack of interest in studies, poor academic performance, financial help, parental interest, covid-19'

Reviewing themes: One more reading of the data set is required in this phase to confirm that the themes adequately represent the whole set of information and to add any pertinent topics that may have been overlooked in the previous reading. As my themes were pre-defined from the literature and related to my research questions, I set the coded data in the themes and searched

for any new potential themes to include in my theoretical approach. In other words, this phase entails re-examining the data to make sure the themes are well-supported and appropriately reflect the data as well as to assess their validity and coherence.

Identifying and naming themes: This entails defining the themes that have been identified and giving them names that are evocative and significant and that convey the core of the topics. This is the time I looked into sub-themes that mostly comes out of complex ones.

Producing the report: Making the report entails presenting the findings in a concise and organized manner, as well as connecting them to the study question or goals.

ISSUES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

The researcher ensures the participants' confidentiality when gathering and reporting the data acquired during this research, therefore their identities and other private information are kept private in this study. The research subjects have been notified in advance that their participation in the study is optional, and they have signed a consent form to that effect. The consent form made clear the rationale and goals of the study as well as the participant interviews.

Credibility

Credibility can be used to solve the issue of reliability in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2013). In qualitative research, credibility refers to the degree to which the findings fairly represent the opinions of the research participants. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), establishing credibility is crucial for qualitative research. Researchers increase credibility by engaging participants for an extended period of time and keeping a close eye on them. Credibility in this study is well taken care of so that research findings are trustworthy and believable. In order to enhance credibility, I establish rapport with my participants, in the beginning, to ensure the data collection and analysis methods are transparent and rigorous. The semi-structured interview had some initial questions that were asked just to make the participants comfortable. The participants were carefully observed and interviewed for 50 to 60 minutes each. There were two participants who were interviewed for two consecutive days at different locations. This was done to make the findings as true as possible.

In addition to this, as the sampling was purposive sampling, it was also favorable to enhance the credibility of the study. Purposeful sampling can help to increase the credibility of a study by ensuring that the sample contains people with pertinent experiences and viewpoints that can contribute to the research issue, (Patton, 2015).

Transferability

The concept of transferability, commonly referred to as external validity or generalizability, is crucial in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It describes the extent to which research findings can be applied or transferred to populations or contexts outside of the particular location in which the study was conducted. I employed various strategies to enhance transferability in the study. The first and foremost strategy was a detailed and rich description of the research context and the participants, including the geographical location and the socio-economic characteristics of the participants. The description of the setting, the participant's characteristics, and the methods used to collect and analyze the data were clearly mentioned. It always gives a better understanding and helps in the ways that the findings may be applicable to similar educational settings with similar populations of students.

Another strategy I used to enhance transferability in the study is to use Purposive sampling. This way the sample comprises such participants who are likely to have experiences and viewpoints that are comparable to those of other people who have faced similar circumstances hence enhancing transferability in the study.

PROJECT'S RELATIONSHIP TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SDG stands for "Sustainable Development Goals", a group of 17 global objectives that were adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015 as a component of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015).

This thesis is motivated by **SDG4**, or "Sustainable Development Goal 4," which is one of the 17 global objectives. The education-related SDG4 seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." (UN, 2015). My project 'Perspectives of dropped-out children on quitting public primary schools in Kaur, Pakistan' is directly related to one of the targets of SDG 4 which is: Assuring that all children have access to high-quality education and finish primary and secondary school. However, a significant proportion of children in Pakistan, as in many other developing nations, leave school before

completing their primary education. So, this study, focuses on investigating the reasons of dropout by considering the viewpoints of students who have left primary schools without completing the primary education.

The study offers insights that can assist policymakers and educators in developing practical ways to ensure that all children have access to high-quality education by identifying the causes of the high dropout rate among youngsters. Hence, the study have the potential to help promote inclusive and equitable quality education by addressing the obstacles that hinder children from accessing education and by offering solutions that can help to ensure that all children have the opportunity to learn and to grow to their full potential. Overall, this research makes a significant contribution to reaching Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 of the UN (UN, 2015).

In addition to SDG4, my study is also relevant to **SDG1**, Sustainable Development Goal 1, "No Poverty," SDG1 acknowledges that poverty encompasses not only lack of resources or income but it also includes a lack of access to opportunities, opportunities for education, healthcare, and social protection. The objective highlights the importance of addressing the structural factors that contribute to poverty, such as inequality, prejudice, and poor social policies.

In order to address a problem that may result in poverty and economic vulnerability, the study examines the causes of school dropout among children in Kasur, Pakistan. Poor financial status of families and poverty in developing countries can make it difficult for parents to send their children to school, thus resulting in high dropouts from schools. On the other hand, illiteracy and a lack of education can make it difficult for people to find steady job and build a solid financial future, which feeds the cycle of poverty. Hence, the study supports SDG1's goal to eradicate poverty and foster economic growth and prosperity for all by tackling the problem of school dropout.

CHAPTER FIVE

Presentation of Findings

Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the methodology which was adopted for this study. This chapter presents the findings of the study that were obtained through semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews were administered to 6 primary school dropouts from Kasur district in Pakistan. The aim was to investigate the reasons for drop out by having in-depth interviews with 6 students who could not complete primary education and left schools before the completion of primary education. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews in Urdu language, but analysed, discussed and presented in English Language. Codes have been used for the identification of the participants, to adhere the ethical principles of conducting research.

The findings chapter of the thesis employs thematic analysis, a qualitative research method, to extract key themes from the data. Thematic analysis involves identifying and analysing recurring patterns, trends, and meanings within the data, leading to the emergence of overarching themes that encapsulate the essence of the research findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes serve as the building blocks that structure and organize the presentation of the results, providing a comprehensive and meaningful representation of the data. By employing thematic analysis, this chapter delves deep into the rich and nuanced data, unearthing the underlying themes that shed light on the research question and contribute to the broader understanding of the research topic.

Data Analysis and Presentation of findings

The research questions and thematic analysis served as the direction for the data analysis in this finding chapter. The analysis was guided by the research questions, which acted as a compass to focus on particular features of the data that were pertinent to the study's goals. A strong qualitative research technique called thematic analysis made it easier to identify, code, and interpret patterns and themes in the data. This method allowed for a thorough examination of the data, revealing patterns that emerged from the research that were significant and interrelated. The two research questions that guided the data analysis procedure are as follows:

1. What factors in the opinion of primary school dropouts forced them to leave school before finishing their primary education?
2. What kind of support do they receive from their learning institutes?

What factors in the opinion of primary school dropouts forced them to leave school before finishing their primary education

This section presents factors in the opinion of primary school dropouts that forced them to leave school before finishing their primary education. This question was answered by primary school dropouts through interviews.

Financial constraint due to poverty

Results from interviews show that (6 out of 6) of the participants said financial constraints due to poverty forced them leave school before finishing their primary education as evidenced by the following quotes for Participant 2 and Participant 3 below:

“..... Financial constraints after the death of my father forced me leave school because there was no one in my family to buy the school requirements for me and also failed to pay for examination school fees. But if I can find someone to assist me, am ready to go back to school.”
(Participant 2, 2023).

“I wanted to study. I was a good student but my father couldn’t send me back to school because of our financial issues. My parents could even fail to buy me school uniform, exercise books, ball pens, pencils and erasers to use at school. But he often says that as soon as our situation gets better, I will start school again together with my siblings”. **(Participant 3, 2023).**

Similarly, Participant 1 also narrated that:

“I left school because my grandfather who used to sponsor me died. So, after his death, father and mother wanted me to help them in their work so that I can bring money at home. Even my siblings stopped too because my parents

could not afford to us school uniforms, books, exercise books, and pay for examinations fees for everyone.”

Further, Participant 4 also narrated that:

“.....I stopped school because my parents could not afford the money required at school. Yes, primary school is free but in actual sense it is not totally free, there are a lot of financial requirements at primary school these days. There are 6 of us in my family so my parents could not afford to pay for all of us. Due to the situation at home, my academic performance was affected because I used to learn on an empty stomach”.

Supporting the notion expressed by Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, and Participant 4, Participant 6 narrated that:

“..... I dropped out of school because my parents didn't have enough money to pay for my stationery like pens, books, pencils and erasers. I was also scared of my headmaster because when I was at school, he said that no one would enter class without these basic stationery items”.

Lack of parental involvement

In terms of lack of parental involvement, 4 out of 6 of the respondents during interviews expressed that lack of involvement by their parents forced them to leave school as supported by the following verbatim for Participant 3:

“..... My parents never told me that I have to go back to school. I knew somehow that my parents will not say anything to me even if I quit. Once my father was saying to someone at the workshop that he never studied, not his brother so his sons will learn the workshop skills eventually. When I left school, they told me to help them with work”.

Supporting the notion expressed by Participant 3, Participant 4 also narrated that:

“..... It was not my decision. I remember one day I was told by my mother that you will not go to school for 1 week because father needed my help and he gets tired of working all day long. So that's how I dropped out of school”.

The above assertions by Participant 3 and Participant 4 were supported by Participant 5 as supported by the following:

“I think they both knew that I will leave my studies and they never bothered or cared that I will quit. They were not angry not happy. My mother was a bit sad when I left my studies not my father. This made me leave school because my father never cared. If he was involved in my studies, I feel I could have gone back to school” .

On the contrary, 2 out of 6 of the respondents cited that the parents were involved in their education and loved their children to go back to school as supported by the following from participant 1 and 6 who narrated that:

“.....Both my parents really cared for me to go back to school. Even after I stopped going to school, both my parents got involved. My mother also likes us studying and going to school. They say that if we study, we will get good jobs, not like my father who does labour work and gets very less money in return” .

“..... After dropping out of school, it was so difficult for me to go back to school. But being in the community for so long, my parents tried their level best and encouraged me to go back to school. In the first place, I resisted not to go because I lost interest but I had no option to start but at some point, I stopped school”.

Pupils own’s lack of interest in school

The results showed (4 out of 6) of the respondents said that due to lack interest in school forced them to leave school as evidenced by the following passage for Participant 4:

“.....I had no focus on my studies. I always liked playing more than studying. I can’t focus, I find studies very difficult. I cannot memorize my lesson well. I try my best. I also used to fail in school because I couldn’t focus. If I was focused, I couldn’t have left school”.

Similarly, Participant 6 explained that:

“I cannot lie about school factors that could have influenced me out of school or stop going to school. The thing is I never had interest in my studies when I was at school, so, I had to quit. My parents didn’t try their best nor encourage me to go back to school”.

COVID-19

Results of the study indicate that about 4 out of 6 of the respondents said that were interviewed cited that due to COVID-19, they dropped out of school as supported by the following for Participant 1:

“..... Covid didn’t let me complete school and because of it I couldn’t continue with my studies. I was also sure that I will not be able to study much, other than the reason of Covid-19, since in our household everyone does the same. Study for a year or not at all and then start working to earn money”.

Supporting the notion expressed by Participant 1, Participant 3 also explained that:

“..... I used to go school normally although at time I could miss lessons. But when the issue of COVID-19 came, I stopped going to school completely. After COVID-19 cases reduced in my area, my friends continued going to school but I couldn’t go because I lost interest and all what my father wanted was to be helping him at his workshop. So, sometimes I feel it wasn’t for COVID-19, I shouldn’t have dropped out of school”.

Absenteeism

Results from interviews showed that about 5 out of 6 of respondents cited that many learners’ dropout of school after being absent from school for some couple of weeks as evidenced by the following passage for Participant 1:

“I remember one day the headteacher called my father at school and asked him about my absentees. You know in a week I only used to go for 2 days maximum to the school, and the rest I used to help my father at his work place. So, my studies were also affecting because of me being irregular from school. So, finally my father told my headmaster to remove me from the

school and that I should not continue with my studies. My school was good. I liked my teachers but they did not like the fact that I was not regular to school.” (Participant 1, 2023).

Similarly, Participant 3 had this to say:

“..... Most of the times I was not in class. Sometimes, in a week, I will only go to school once or twice depending on the situation at home and the mood. Sometime when I was in a good mood, I could not miss class but I couldn't just enjoy school. This made me bored with school hence dropped out”

Additionally, Participant 5 narrated that:

“Since my parents never cared about education, I could stay a week or two weeks without going to school. When I realized that I'm always absent which made me feel more bored at home and it was becoming habitual, as a result I stopped going to school.”

Poor academic performance

The majority of the children interviewed (5 out of 6) cited poor academic performance as a factor that contributed to their dropping out from school. The interview with the respondents revealed that many of them had trouble passing at school. For instance, the following excerpts by Participant 2 and Participant 3 act as typical examples:

“.....I never liked school but for the fact that each time I wrote examinations, I could fail and this made me embarrassed and sometimes I could fail simple exercises the teacher would give in class. This made me dropout of school and my father never cared that I was not going to school. All he cared about was helping him at his workplace”. (Participant 2, 2023).

“..... Dropping out of school is never a good decision because life is hard and I don't see any bright future ahead. But the fact that

if I go back to school my performance will never change is still holding me home". (Participant 3, 2023)

In addition, Participant 5 had this to say:

"School is good because that's the future. Without school we will continue being slaves. I wish I could go further with school but my performance in school was not good hence I decided to drop out."

Additionally, Participant 6 explained that:

"..... They had an idea that I might won't be able to continue because I was failing and not concentrating in studies. My parents weren't angry or sad. I simply told them that I don't like to study. Though my mother seemed sad".

What kind of support do they receive from their learning institutes?

The previous section provided findings on the opinions of primary school dropouts which forced them to leave school before finishing their primary education. Research question two sought to find out the kind of support do they receive from their learning institutes through interviews.

Calling the parents

The majority (5 out of 6) of the respondents during interviews expressed that institutions through their subject teachers call our parents to find out why we dropped out of school as evidenced by the following excerpts for Participant 3 and Participant 6 as typical examples

"The school has been calling my parents to send me back to school and I can have the stationery arranged by my parents or head master. Although the school has been calling my parents for me to go back to school, who will help my father even if all these things will be arranged". (Participant 3, 2023).

"..... At one point the school called my parents to take me back to school. At least the school has been concerned about my education but the challenge has been my parents have never paid attention to my education needs.

As a result, have been at home helping out my parents with chores”.
(Participant 6, 2023).

Correspondingly, Participant 5 explained that:

“..... Once they called my father at school and asked him about my absentees. When they called my father, I thought my father will facilitate the process of me going back to school but he couldn't. When I asked him about it, he told me who will be helping me when I start school again. Otherwise, the situation I am in is not good. So, am just home helping him”

Furthermore, Participant 2 had also this say:

“My principal and headmistress called my parents and requested them to let me study..... My father told them that they will think about it but then no one from school contacted my parents again. I feel the school could have persisted calling my parents so that I start going to school because I'm worried about my future”.

Helping the dropouts financially

Most (5 out of 6) of the respondents during the interviews expressed the school should help the dropouts financially so that they go back to school as evidenced by the following excerpts for Participant 1 and Participant 3 as typical examples:

“..... The school has been helping those who have dropout financially. This has been a very good strategy because it I have seen some of my friends who have go back to school. So, my former school should ask the government of Pakistan to help people like us because my father says they are the responsible people not my headmasters and school”. **(Parent 1, 2023).**

“..... All I know is that the school has been those who dropped out of school due to financial constraint. Though I haven't received help yet, the initiative by the school is very good and I hope one day I will be helped

the same schools are helping those who are in my situation”. (Participant 3, 2023).

Visitation

As regards to visitation, results show that 5 out of 6 of the respondents cited that guidance and counselling teachers’ pay us a visit as evidenced by the following passages for Participant 4 and 6:

“..... At one point, we received the guidance and counselling teacher at home after the school noticed that I was not reporting for school. We received this visit because my headmaster wanted me to study further. I told him that I don’t feel like studying and I don’t do it happily. But he didn’t get angry at all”. (Participant 4, 2023).

“The guidance and counselling teacher from time to time has been paying me a visit to find out why I haven’t been reporting for class. Las time when I was visited, I was talked to about the importance of education and I should go back to school”. (Participant 6, 2023).

Correspondingly, Participant 1 explained that:

“..... From the time I stopped going to school, I have been visited by the guidance and counselling teacher sent by the school to find out why I haven’t been going to school. Even I could go to school once in a week, my grade teacher could call my parents because I haven’t going to school”.

Furthermore, Participant 5 had also this to say:

“My school has been sending my grade teacher sent by the school to find out why I dropped. It’s now 2 months since he visited me at home but he doesn’t come anymore. Those days, my parents were not concerned about his visits, maybe that could be the reason why he stopped coming”.

Counselling

The results showed that many (4 out of 6) of the respondents stated that they receive guidance and counselling as support from their school so that they go back to school as evidenced by the following passage for Participant 2 and 5 below:

“.....I remember at one point my school called me to come for counselling. This was one way of supporting me so that I go back to school. I appreciated the school’s effort”. **(Participant 2, 2023)**

Similarly, Participant 5 narrated that:

“I was called by the school to come for counselling about the importance of education. I appreciated their gesture. It was a great move by the school. Though after being counselled about the importance of school, I never went back because of lack of financial support due to poverty”

Summary of the chapter:

No.	Research question	Findings
		Themes Developed
1.	What factors in the opinion of primary school dropouts forced them to leave school before finishing their primary education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Financial constraint due to poverty ii. Lack of parental involvement iii. Pupils own’s lack of interest in school iv. COVID-19 v. Absenteeism vi. Poor academic performance
2.	What kind of support do they receive from their learning institutes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Calling the parents ii. Helping the dropouts financially iii. Visitation iv. Counselling

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion of the Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion of the findings. The study's major aim was to investigate perspectives of children on their dropping out from primary schools in Pakistan. The following study objectives guided the discussion; establishing factors in the opinion of primary school dropouts which forced them to leave school before finishing their primary education, and establishing the kind of support primary school dropouts receive from their learning institutes after dropping out.

Factors which influenced primary school dropouts leave school before finishing their primary education

Financial constraint due to poverty

The study has revealed that financial constraints due to poverty forced primary school dropouts to leave school. The respondents during interviews cited that due to financial constraints, their parents are unable to send them back to school, buy school requirements such as textbooks, exercise books, ball pens, pencils and erasers to use at school for the students and also to pay for examination fees and school fees. The above findings suggests that poverty is one of the main factors which contributes to pupils' dropouts in Kasur, Pakistan because parents from low-income families cannot afford to buy stationary and pay for user fees for their children. As a result, children are forced to leave primary school. This finding aligns with Poor Family Socialization Theory which postulates that children who comes from poor family are likely to drop out of school. Besides, Poor Family Socialization Theory explains that poverty can limit parents' ability to provide a stable and nurturing home environment, which can lead to negative outcomes for their children, such as poor academic performance, behavioural problems, low self-esteem, and pupils dropping out of school.

The above findings are in line with the studies (Mohlouoa 2014; Jafar et al., 2021) who found poverty as the main reason of a dropout from school. It is, therefore, unsurprising that to date children in Kasur, Pakistan are dropping out from school because of lack of school uniform and

failing to pay school fees or user fees and examination fees. In view of this, it is therefore important for the government of Pakistan to have strategies on how to help pupils from poor families meet their education cost at all levels of our education system. In line with my assertion, Kadzamira and Rose (2003) said that when the cost of schooling is too high for households, pupils from poorest households rarely attend classes. Hunt (2008) stipulates that schooling cost may be linked with gendered patterns of access, with households in some cases less willing to provide finance support for girls' education.

The study established that most of the primary school dropouts were from larger and lower income families hence their parents could not afford to provide financial support to all of the children in the family. Primary schools charging examination fees and user fees is a clear indication that the government of Pakistan is not providing all the necessary requirements in school for instance supporting the dropouts financially, hence the schools are putting the direct cost on the poor parents. This situation influences pupil's dropout of school. It is therefore important for the government of Pakistan to have strategies on how to help pupils from poor families meet their direct education cost rather than simply provision of tuition free education.

This study reflects findings from earlier studies from the global south. While free primary education appears to be "free" in most African countries, the reality is that it is not free because parents are still responsible for all non-tuition school expenses, including uniforms, exercise books, pens, textbooks and any other school supplies, which many families find difficult (Morara & Chemwei, 2013). Therefore, this study recommends that parents should develop an attitude of saving money in fixed account from the early stage when their children are born so as to allow them start withdrawing those money when their children start primary school.

Poor academic performance

The study established that primary school dropouts left school because of poor academic performance. Most of the primary school dropouts expressed that they had trouble passing at school and they never liked school. This finding is in agreement with the study by Tsegay and Kahsay (2021) which resulted that a strong predictor of school dropout, according to the study, was poor academic performance. The findings of this study imply that most primary school dropouts came to school with negative attitudes towards their academic performance which influenced them to leave school. Also, the findings of this study are supported by Poor Family Socialization Theory which states that students' performance in school is directly affected by

family history, negative attitude towards school, divorce, stress, poor academic performance, parents' level of education, and parental behaviour. According to Poor Family Socialization theory, poor academic achievement is one of the strongest predictors of high school dropout. This also infers that good academic performance is an indicator of pupil retention in school. My assertion is supported by Mzuza et al., (2013) who stated that there is a strongly relationship between poor performance and dropout rates confirming that pupils who fail examinations eventually lose interest to continue with school and opt to quit.

Lack of parental involvement

The study has shown that lack of involvement by the parents influences the primary school dropouts to leave primary school. During the interviews with the primary school dropouts, it was revealed that their parents never bothered about their drop out from school because all they cared about was helping them work at home. Primary school dropouts' expressions are supported by Lekhesa (2007) who found that lack of parental support influence pupils' dropout from school.

In light of the above findings, I can postulate that primary school dropouts in Kasur, Pakistan are seen as source of income and source of labour power and this attitude by their parents affects pupils' opportunities to access and complete education. My assertion is supported by (Khan et al., 2011 & Farooq 1948), whose studies claims that some of the parents use their children as a source of earning income. He further contended that child labour and children involvement in household chores leads to dropouts from schools. I can therefore recommend that parents should be advised to involve themselves in their children's education at home, after class hours, during weekend and holidays.

Consequently, Lekhesa (2007) stated that it is the responsibility of the parents to care for their children and guide them in their school-work. If not, children are likely to lose the love for school. Arguing in line with Lekhesa (2007) assertions, it can be contended that parents have significant impacts on learners' learning and development processes. The quality of parent-educator interaction has predicted improvement in learners' behaviour and achievement. I can further argue that learners with unsupportive parents often have lower grades, lower test scores, poor school attendance, low motivation, poor and low self-esteem, higher rates of suspension and have more instances of violent behaviour, which can lead to dropping out from school.

Moreover, it can be argued that the relationship between parents and children has been found to be very influential in whether or not a student decides to stay in school. According to Parveen and Sharjeel (2020), if there is a strong relationship between parents and children, children are likely to stay in school. However, if a pupil does not have a good relationship with his/her parents, the pupil is more likely to drop out even if he has good grades and good behaviour. The findings of this study are supported by Poor Family Socialization Theory which states that parent's involvement and their education influences children's academic performance. The theory further argues that if the relation between parents and children is weak, their children are likely to have poor grades. This finding is supported by Sateesh and Sekher (2014) who found that the education level of the student's parents has influence on pupils dropping out from school. This demonstrates that parental support is crucial, as pupils with good grades and behaviour are typically more likely to stay in school. However, parental involvement on their children's education is not there which has contributed to high primary school dropouts in Kasur, Pakistan.

Absenteeism

It has been established that absenteeism influenced primary school dropouts leaving school. The respondents expressed during interviews that they dropped out from school after being absent from school for some weeks first. In light of this, I can argue that being absent from school for couple of weeks creates gaps in learners' education. Not only does excessive learner absenteeism create gaps in their education, it also weakens the school's ability to function. Moreover, I can also assert that due to frequent absences, learners forget the previous lessons which results in academic insecurity and the pupils stop putting in the effort to achieve high grades, and hence drop out of school. This finding is supported by Mohlouoa (2014), who expressed that chronic absenteeism often results in the learners getting expelled because these learners are less likely to be aware of the attendance policy. Arguing in line with Mohlouoa (2014), it can be inferred that continued loss of learning among learners with high absenteeism is among the primary characteristics of learners who dropout of primary school. Similarly, the findings of this study are in tandem with Poor Family Socialization Theory which argues that pupils from poor families are more likely to miss school because their parents consider them to be sources of labour and sources of income and this contributes to absenteeism among the children.

Similarly, this observation was in agreement with the study done by Dagnev (2017) who found that absenteeism is associated with pupil drop out. Therefore, it can be contended that there is need for the government of Pakistan to take reasonability and make education attractive to learners by creating a learning environment, in which they recognise the intrinsic worth of all learners in the classroom through a child-centred and inclusive curriculum because children need to feel safe, secure and cared for. This will reduce the problem of learner absenteeism.

Pupils own's lack of interest in school

The study has shown that lack interest in school by the primary school dropouts compelled them to leave school. During interviews, most of the participants cited a lack of interest in school as one of the factors which forced them to leave school. Primary school dropouts' assertions are supported by Arko (2013) who claimed that students who are not very interested in the learning process in school tend to find school very boring and unattractive and can easily drop out of school. Similarly, the findings of this study are in support with Poor Family Socialization Theory which postulates that when socialization between children and parents and between children and teachers is not there, children are more likely to lose interest in school which can influence them leave school. Poor Family Socialization Theory further argues that parents may not have the resources, skills, or time to provide their children with the necessary support and guidance for academic success which can lead to negative attitudes among the pupils towards their education.

A study by Segumba (2015) also stressed that potential dropouts might have behavioural problems as a result of lack of interest in school arising from poor academic performance thereby increasing their risk of dropping out. Based on observations, pupils' lack of interest in school is partly due to non-existence of supporting structures like guidance and counselling, that can be responsible in helping pupils establish future clear goals early in life and connect what they learn to their lives. Making school matter in the life of pupils is vital to ensure their continued stay in school. Most pupils drop out because they do not see the significance of school in their lives which result in lack of interest in school (Munsaka, 2009). Alexander (1992) stipulates that establishing a connection between school and life is important to pupils continued stay in school.

COVID-19

The study has established that COVID-19 influenced primary school dropouts leaving school. The respondents during interviews cited that due to COVID-19, they did not go back to school. The study also revealed that some respondents knew that even after COVID-19 they would not go back to school. Taken together, it should be unsurprising that primary school dropouts may have lost some of the academic skills they had previously acquired and missed out on gaining new ones. Evidence from previous crises backs this up. The findings of this study are in harmony with the study done by ASER Pakistan (2021) which found that 16 percent of students aged 6 to 16 had dropped out of school in 2021 due to COVID-19. Similarly, Shuja et al., (2022) found that financial conditions, lockdown effects, mode of learning, government policies, fear of death, the psyche of the parents, socio-cultural effects, the role of teachers and administrators were some factors contributing to dropouts among the pupils.

It can be argued that education is a fundamental human right and the basic enabling capacity that helps human beings be free from all kinds of discrimination and domination. However, due to COVID-19, pupils in Kasur, Pakistani were deprived of this opportunity. They were deprived of this opportunity because it is widely acknowledged that education contributes to the fullest development of human beings. Therefore, dropping out of school is characterized as a long-term process of disengagement from school and school life in general, which can be traced back even in the first grades of Primary school (UNICEF, 2016).

Kind of support primary school dropouts receive from school

Helping the dropouts financially

It has been established that the primary school dropouts are helped by the school financially. The respondents during interviews cited that their schools helped them by paying school fees, buying them textbooks, exercise books, pens, and pencils so that they could go back to school. Also, the respondents recommended this strategy and requested the government of Pakistan help people who cannot pay for school fees and examination fees because their parents and guardians cannot afford to do so. The participants' expressions are in agreement with Noori (2017) who found that institutions should help school dropouts with learning materials and pay their examination fees. According to Poor Family Socialization Theory, poverty can limit parents' ability to provide their children with the resources and support necessary for academic

success. Therefore, if poverty can limit parents' ability to provide their children with the resources and support necessary for academic success, the government of Pakistan should develop strategies to help pupils from poor families meet their education costs at all levels of the education system. It is, therefore unsurprising that to date children in Pakistan are dropping out from school because of lack of school uniform and failing to pay school fees or user fees. There is need to help primary school dropouts so that they can go back to school because education is the key to success and national development.

Counselling

The study has established that primary school dropouts receive counselling from the guidance and counselling teachers sent by the school. This involved informing the primary school dropouts about the importance of education and the benefits it carries upon successful completion, finding out why they dropped out of school, finding out when they are going back to school, finding out about financial challenges they are going through, and finding out how the school administration should help them. In addition, the study has established that primary school dropouts receive guidance and counselling as support from their school so that they can go back to school. Therefore, it is vital to have functioning pupil support structures such as guidance and counselling to guide and stimulate pupils towards their future goals and ensure that they continue to stay in school to completion, because lack of guidance and counselling programmes in schools can be one of the major school factors contributing to primary school dropouts. According to Poor Family Socialization Theory, through family socializations, parents can counsel their children about the importance of going back to school and finishing school.

In light of the above findings, it can be further opined that counselling is a very good strategy because it is in these counselling sessions through which subject teachers and guidance and counselling teachers try to find out from the parents why their child dropout out of school, why their child has been missing from school for couple of weeks, and encourage their children about the importance of education. My assertion conforms with Ananga (2010) who contended that a proactive approach by subject teachers and guidance and counselling teachers towards the problem of school dropouts can go a long way in bringing the desired change.

Arguing in line with findings of this study and Ananga's (2010) assertion, it can be contended that the schools at the centre of this study made good efforts by following up dropouts and

encouraging them to go back to school, re-enter school, and allowing them to repeat the grade at which they dropped out of school. The study further showed that this aspect was done by the school alone. Therefore, this study suggests that primary schools in Kasur, Pakistan should be working hand in hand with NGOs such as UNICEF, TCF, IF, AIWS, CARE Foundations, to bring back dropouts to school. Further, working with concerned NGO's which are committed to helping children develop improved attitude towards school, perseverance, optimism and increased motivation are vital in lowering dropout rates (Ananga, 2010).

Besides, the results also show that primary school dropouts retaliated that the schools have not helped them in any way since they dropped out of school. During the interviews with the respondents, they expressed that since they dropped out of school, school has done nothing about it. They only hear that the school makes some follow-ups on pupils who have dropped out but have not seen it happen to them. Lack of active engagement by teachers in dealing with the problem of school dropouts will only see the problem continue (Ananga, 2010; UNESCO, 2010).

Calling the parents

It has been established that schools through their headteachers, deputy teachers, subject teachers, and guidance and counselling teachers call parents to find out why their children dropped out of school. In view of this finding, it can be argued that headteachers, deputy teachers, subject teachers, and guidance and counselling teachers call parents of the dropouts so that their children can go back to school. Besides, the study has established that although headteachers, deputy teachers, subject teachers, and guidance and counselling teachers call parents of the dropouts so that they can go back to school, they were not concerned about the importance of education for their children. The study established that the parents were not concerned about their children's educations because they considered their children as sources of labour at home.

According to Poor Family Socialization Theory, family financial socialization approach can enrich our understanding of financial problems families have. The theory further argues that when we understand the financial challenges families have, chances are that well-wishers can come on board and render help. Further, the above findings of the study are in line with Mulenga (2021) who found that school administrators called parents to find out why their children dropped out of school. She further found that calling after school administrators called parents

of the dropouts, some pupils went back to school. Therefore, it can be argued that calling the parents of the dropouts is a good strategy employed by school administrations which can influence dropouts to go back to school. I can also argue that this should be the most common strategy schools should be employing to prevent pupils from dropping out of school.

However, the results further show that this strategy was mainly used when the pupil has already dropped out of school. Therefore, there is need for school administrations in Kasur, Pakistan to employ strategies that focus on the early identification of pupils at risk of dropping out and make early interventions such as counselling relating to career options and building a school culture that values intellectualism (Alexander, 2008; Little, 2008).

Visitation

The results of the study show that subject teachers and guidance and counselling teachers visits primary school dropouts at their homes to find out why they dropped out of school. Besides, it was revealed that when subject teachers and guidance and counselling teachers visit primary dropouts at their homes, they sensitize to them about the importance of school, encourage them to them to attend school classes, inform them that the school will provide them with learning materials and financial support i.e., pay for them school fees and examinations fees. These findings are in tandem with Mulenga (2021) who found that school administration employed the following to curb school dropouts; encouraging dropouts to go back to school, sensitizing dropouts on the importance of education, and encouraging dropouts to attend classes.

In light of the above findings, it can be argued that visiting the dropouts at their homes is a very good policy schools are using in Kasur, Pakistan. In fact, this policy has made primary schools in Kasur, Pakistan succeeds in bringing back some children to school. Consequently, Purkey and Novak (1996) suggest that school policies matter in influencing situations in schools especially when such policies are democratically arrived at involving pupils themselves. Similarly, Ananga (2010) argued that situation of school dropouts only improves when schools take a more proactive approach by identifying pupils at risk, dealing with factors that are contributing to their chances of dropping out and making early intervention programmes, which include teachers visiting children and their parents to encourage children to be committed to school activities.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter gives the conclusions to the major findings of the study. These conclusions are based on the research objectives. The chapter will also give recommendations based on the conclusions of the study.

Conclusion

The study explored the perspectives of children on their dropping out from primary schools in Kasur, Pakistan. The analysis of the empirical research findings made reference to Poor Family Socialization Theory espoused in chapter 3. Therefore, Poor Family Socialization Theory provided an important theoretical framework for understanding reasons for dropping out from school in this study.

The first objective of the study was to investigate factors which influenced primary school dropouts to leave school before finishing their primary education. This study has shown that there are several factors that contributed to pupils dropping out of primary school in Kasur, Pakistan. These factors include poor academic performance, financial constraints due to poverty, lack of parental involvement, pupils' own lack of interest in school, COVID-19, and absenteeism. Poor academic performance, financial constraints due to poverty, lack of parental involvement, and absenteeism are found in Poor Family Socialization Theory. The study also concludes that pupils' own's lack of interest in school and COVID-19 as factors are not in the theory, but they have a direct effect primary school dropouts in Kasur, Pakistan.

The study further concludes that financial constraints due to poverty is the number one factor contributing to the dropout problem in primary schools in Kasur, Pakistani. The phenomenon of learners dropping out of school affects the government, individuals, society, and the labour market at large. The effect of dropping out has not only financial implications but also social implications. Dropping out of school poses challenges on an individual regarding self-sufficiency, self-esteem and the ability to make educational choices. It is therefore essential that

these factors contributing to primary school dropouts are given adequate attention by the government of Pakistan.

The second objective of the study was to examine the kind of support primary school dropouts receive from school after dropping out. The study concludes that schools call parents of the dropouts, visits homes of the dropouts, help families of the dropouts financially, and guide and counsel dropouts. The study also concludes that calling parents of the dropouts and visiting homes of the dropouts are the most common supports primary school dropouts receive from school after dropping out in Kasur, Pakistani. It is there for essential that in order for Pakistan to attain education for all through universal primary education and efforts to fight drop out from primary school need to be doubled.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended:

- I. Primary schools, NGOs such as UNICEF, TCF, IF, AIWS, CARE Foundations, etc., and parents should collaborate in making early interventions aimed helping pupils who exhibit behaviors consistent with dropping out be prevented from dropping out.
- II. The Ministry of Education should sensitize headteachers on the various policies that the government has put in place to allow pupils to continue with school in the absence of certain school requirements like school fees, examination fees, uniforms and learning materials such as textbooks, exercise books, and pens.
- III. The government of Pakistan through the Ministry of Education should strengthen capacities of school career guidance and counselling units in primary schools by equipping them with videos depicting various careers which career guidance teachers can show pupils and follow-up with plenary sessions in order to help pupils link school attendance to a career which is necessary for their continued stay in school.

- IV. The socioeconomic status of a family directly affects the continuity of schooling of children. Low economic development of country in general, and low socioeconomic status of families in particular, adversely affects pupils' retention in school at primary level. In order to redress the situation of the poor people who live below poverty line, the government should evolve multipronged strategies as income support and cash transfer programs. The poverty reduction programs should be made conditional for poor households to send their children to schools and retain them in schools.
- V. The government of Pakistan through the Ministry of Education should incentivize primary education for the poor by providing, stationery, uniform, shoes, stipend and mid school meal.
- VI. Primary teachers should take an active role in dealing with the problem of school dropouts and learn to be inviting with themselves as well as with others both personally and professionally.
- VII. Primary school head teachers need to initiate reforms at the local school level at changing how they operate and creation of a positive school climate since the demographics of school dropouts affect different schools differently.
- VIII. The Ministry of Education should ensure that primary schools organize general parent meetings to enable the parents to meet teachers and discuss problems affecting their children's education. These parents should be advised on the need to motivate their children to remain in school.

Limitations of the study

A qualitative research design was used to explore the perspectives of children on their dropping out of primary schools in Kasur, Pakistan. The design was also used to investigate factors that influenced primary school dropouts to leave school before finishing their primary education, and to examine the establishing the kind of support primary school dropouts receive from school after dropping out.

The major limitation of this study is the use of a small sample size hence making it only able to generalize the results back to the research population, not the whole, country or other Asian nations. Initially, it was planned to interview at least 10 participants, but I faced some unexpected delays from the participants. With two participants, 1 hour of the interview took two days to avoid the stress on them and make them comfortable. Also, one participant denied that his voice will not be recorded during the interview, so I made the choice to record the information at the conclusion of the discussion.

In addition to this, the participants were approached with the help of their parents but they were doing labor jobs and seen working at places like workshops, tailor shops, etc so it was difficult to conduct the face-to-face interviews at their workplaces because of time constraints and less resources. However, I managed to collect 6 interviews and proceeded with the process.

The study could not get any female participants because of the socio-cultural norms prevailing in Kasur. Girls are vulnerable and are more likely to drop out of school than boys (Ali et al., 2020), but considering the views of boys only, limited my study to explore challenges leading to boys dropping out. This limits the generalizability of the study and could also result in biased conclusions.

Areas for further research

Firstly, the study findings are based on a small sample so it is suggested that there is need for a similar study with a large sample size to be conducted in other regions in the country and most probably with marked differences in social cultural and economic base. On the other hand, there is a need for a study to look at the impact of strategies used by primary schools to reduce dropout at primary level and also investigate school-based factors that influence pupils' dropout at primary level is needed.

A comparison of how teachers and pupils perceive the reasons for dropping out of school at primary level is also needed. Eventually, I can also recommend that studying the connection between poverty and school dropout in Kasur, Pakistan may provide insight on how to support communities and families facing economic hardships while promoting equal access to education for all children.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Protocol

Semi-Structured Interview:

Introductory Questions:

- Can you tell a little about yourself? (The student might come up with age, Last grade completed at school, but if not these can be asked to build a rapport).
- What are your Hobbies and interests?

Family Background:

- How many family members do you have? (Immediate family members (living in your house)?
- Do have any knowledge of how much did your father and mother study? Did they ever tell you OR Did they ever talked about it at home with you or other siblings?
- What does your father do?
- Does your mother work outside the home too?
- How do your parents view your education? (It could be any story or actions of your parents you have observed regarding your education/ any typical statements made by your parents about your school and education)
- Did you ever discuss with your parents that you want to quit school? Did they get angry, or sad or they knew it already? How did they support you (if there was any)?

Factors of dropout:

- What are the factors that influence your decision of dropping out of school? / I am interested in hearing about why you left the school.
- So, who do you think is responsible for your dropout?
- What type of challenges do students like you often face in their schools? /What experiences at school stand out as memorable? (Positive & Negative both)

Educational Institutes Support:

- How did your school support you after getting to know that you will not be able to continue your education?
- What would be your ideas or recommendations for the students who are at risk of dropping out of school? How would you help them according to your own experience?
- How do you want your school to contribute/help those students who are at risk of leaving school?
- Would you recommend that your siblings stay in school or dropout?

Goals and Plan:

- What are you doing now after you left school?
- Do you like it or not? (This question will be asked)
- Do you wish to go back to school sometime in the future?

Appendix 2: Consent form

Introductory Letter (Principal)

My name is Somia Bashir and I am a master's student in the Department of Education and Special Education at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. I am a second-year student in the International Master in Educational Research program and am in the process of writing my master's thesis on the student dropout phenomenon in primary schools. My research project will identify factors of the primary school dropping-out phenomenon by documenting the opinions of the dropped-out students that force them to take the decision of leaving school.

In Pakistani context, there was almost no available study that directly investigated dropouts qualitatively. It was highly needed to investigate dropouts qualitatively and document their voices about their decision to drop out of primary school without completing their primary school education. This study is unique in the sense that dropouts will be interviewed in person and their perspectives on the factors that led to their leaving will be documented. Also, it is difficult to gain access to dropouts in any community because they typically integrate into the community and are not accumulated anywhere. In this regard, your cooperation will be needed by participating in my research to accomplish the project.

I kindly request you to allow me to get information on students who dropped out in 2022 from your school and never returned back. The required information includes their home addresses or the contact details of their parents. The records from the school's data will be kept confidential. I further guarantee that the research project will be conducted under research ethics and confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants will be ensured in line with EU GDPR (general data protection regulations).

The study's findings will be presented in my master's thesis, and as a reward, I will send you a digital copy of my final thesis. I hope the results will be of interest to you and in the status of alarming drop at Primary level.

If you have any further questions about the research study, please contact my supervisor, (Victoria Rolfe) via e-mail: victoria.rolfe@gu.se. You can also contact the course coordinator, Ernst Thoutenhoofd via e-mail: ernst.thoutenhoofd@gu.se with any research-related concerns.

First name Last name

Date Signature

Introductory letter & Consent Form: (Parents)

My name is Somia Bashir and I am a master's student in the Department of Education and Special Education at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. I am a second-year student in the International Master in Educational Research program and am in the process of writing my master's thesis on the student dropout phenomenon in primary schools. For this reason, I am interested in interviewing your child, who left the school before completing primary education. The aim of my research project is to identify factors of the primary school dropping-out phenomenon by documenting the opinions of the dropped-out students that lead them to take the decision of leaving school. Participation of your child will be very beneficial for the researcher in this extremely important and unique study.

The study will involve a semi-structured interview which will last about 30 to 45 minutes. Questions about gender, grade, and age will be asked to identify participants. The voice will be recorded. All tapes, transcripts, and summaries will be given codes and stored separately from any names or other direct identification of the participant. Research information will be kept in locked files. Only research personnel will have access to the files. The study is not associated with any risk and the identity of the participant will be kept confidential. If at any point you think that your child is not comfortable sharing his/her views, then he/she has the right to withdraw from the study during the process. All the information gathered in the interview will be used for research purposes only and would be protected under EU GDPR (general data protection regulations). If you consent your child to participate in this study, please fill in the details below and kindly return them.

Researcher: Somia Bashir :0322 8482444; gussomiba@student.gu.se

Supervisor: Victoria Rolfe: victoria.rolfe@gu.se

CONSENT:

My child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and I allow to have him/her participate in this study, and he/she may withdraw from study any time he or she want.

I DO consent my child's participation

Name of the child _____

Your name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Introductory letter and a Consent Form (Students):

(Since the participants are unable to read so a video clip and an audio recording will be provided to them regarding the introductory letter and Consent form. The purpose is also to make them comfortable, to avoid any kind of pressure, and making sure that they understand the purpose behind their participation).

Dear Participant,

I hereby warmly invite you to participate in my research study, that explores the reasons of students’ dropout from primary school.

My study seeks to gather data from students who have left primary schools and discontinued their studies. This will be done by getting information through semi-structured interviews. Interviews will be audio-recorded and can take approximately 40 minutes. The information obtained from this study may help schools to design more effective strategies and policies to overcome the high rate of dropout from primary schools.

If you agree to be interviewed, then you are free to use either Urdu or Punjabi. Your identity and all personal data will be removed from the transcripts and the data in line with EU GDPR (general data protection regulations), after which audio recordings will be saved in the University library up to 4 years. All information obtained will be handled securely to avoid disclosing your identity.

You can furthermore choose to withdraw your participation in my study without any consequences or stating a reason, which means your consent is renegotiable. The participants will not be harmed or mistreated. If you have any questions or concerns about participating in my research, you may inform your parents or directly please contact me at +92 (0) 322-8482444.

If you agree to join my study, then please sign this consent form below.

Best Regards, Somia Bashir

CONSENT

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE BELOW INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY AFTER READING ALL OF THE INFORMATION ABOVE AND THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION IN THIS FORM, HAVE HAD ANY QUESTIONS ANSWERED, AND HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF THIS FORM FOR YOU TO KEEP.

First name Last name

Date Signature

