

Causes of Dropout among Students with Disabilities at Primary Level in Punjab, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: This research aimed to identify the actual causes which hinder the access of children with special needs and cause dropout of children at the primary level in schools.

Methodology: This study followed a survey research design and two questionnaires were developed; one for parents and one for dropout students. For the purpose of validation of the instruments, expert opinions were sought from the field and pilot tested and their reliabilities were found as 0.80 and 0.81 respectively. Further, these questionnaires were field tested on 169 students and their parents. These students were selected through purposive sampling, 100 hearing-impaired students and 69 visually-impaired students, a total number of 169 (N=169) who had dropped out from school, and their respective parents were approached to collect data.

Findings: The study reported that the distance of the school from home, lack of accessibilities, school distance, poor pick and drop service, poor infrastructure of the school, no extracurricular activities, and less understanding of content are the major causes of dropout according to the dropout respondents. On the other hand, poor learning abilities, lack of interest in their child, poor understanding of curriculum/content, poor infrastructure, inappropriate sitting arrangements, and lack of resources/ affordability issues are the major causes according to the parents of dropout respondents.

Conclusion: On the basis of the finding it can be concluded that Accessibility is a major hindrance in the achievement of quality education.

Keywords: Distance from School, Dropout, Infrastructure, Curriculum, Affordability.

Introduction

Every individual has a right to learn and attain primary education which not only focuses on information but the knowledge which is implementable/ applicable to the complete self of a person. In the context of Pakistan, it was noticed that the student has a great number of dropouts in rural areas but the situation worsened in 2020 when the large number of dropouts was reported with an increase of 10% to 25%

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(Abbasi, 2021). Shuja (2022) discussed this alarming situation and reported that the number of dropout students is more than a million. Ehsaas Education Program was launched by the government of Pakistan to look into this matter and figure out the reason for dropouts at primary, secondary, and higher levels (Jamal, 2021). The Dakar Declaration emphasizes on the right to education for handicapped children as a fundamental part of their training framework. It states that such children require the right to special attention and specific organizations that serve the particular needs of the handicapped. But the fact is that in most of the progressing countries, 95% of disabled children are deprived of primary education (Richer, 2004). According to research based on more native areas, students with special needs are more likely to be ill-treated and are condemned by society. Their conservative mindsets force them to consider the handicapped as a burden on the community (Miles, 2004; Akhtar, 1994).

Correspondingly, the accessibility of educational institutions for children with disabilities fluctuates extraordinarily. Most educational institutions for those with handicaps are situated in urban areas and are principally special schools provided by private organizations/ sectors, NGOs, or public schools (JICA, 2002). In Punjab which is considered the richest province of Pakistan, the Special Education Department (Government of Punjab) has set up many Special Education Centers. These educational centers are efficiently working on developing instructional strategies and preparing training sessions for developing the required skills of teachers who may be effective enough to inculcate the cognitive abilities in underprivileged students, thus these comprehensive pieces of training represent and focus on the development of a special education that may serve as an asset for the communities and for around 65000 schools of Education Department.

Many free-of-cost Services are provided in the Public Sector of Special Education Centers including textbooks, Braille books in Urdu and English, uniforms, Food for Children admitted to lodgings of all Special instruction Institutions, Pick and drop facility, Hearing aids, and Wheelchairs. Although, many facilities are provided, but Pakistan still falls short of achieving the goals of EFA 2015. In Pakistan, the general dropout rate for both adult boys and adult girls is 50 %. As reported by Jatoti & Hussain, (2010) the dropout rate for adult girls is 56 % and it is 44 % for adult boys. With the passage of time, the number of dropouts is getting bigger as compared to the number of enrollments. As a recent report shows that 21.7 million children of school-going age are out of school (Jamal, 2021).

A dropout phenomenon is defined as a situation when a person or a student leaves, primary school, high school, college, or university before completion of the enrolled program. The dropout rate is a proportion of the group who are not in school. These students fail in achieving minimal credentials (Christenson, Sinclair, Lehr, & Hurley, 2000). A number of studies (Blackorby, Edgar, Kortering, 1991) show that the dropout rate is higher in students, who are slightly handicapped. Children having learning disability, emotional disturbance, and mild mental retardation are considered to be included in this category. Blackorby, Edgar, and Kortering (1991) stated that 66% of disabled children did not complete their schooling and left school without graduating. According to the National Longitudinal Transition Study, about 55% of disabled students completed school. Particularly, the share of emotionally disturbed and learning-disabled students was 49.5% and 32.2% respectively in dropped out of school disabled students (Finn, 1993). Levin, Zigmond and Birch (1985) conducted a follow-up study of 52 LD adolescents in a metropolitan public high school. They found that quite 50% of the contacted sample had dropped out of school after four years. Zigmond and Thorton (1985) reported that 54% out of 105 learning-disabled students were dropped out of school as compared with their non-learning disabled of the same age, who were 118 and their dropout rate was 33%. Caroline, D, Chambers, and Rabren (2004) identified that 58% of the students with learning disabilities and only 37% of the students with mental retardation were expected to drop out of high school. The dropout rate for disabled students was roughly twice that of non-disabled students (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). Barrat, Berliner, Voight, Tran, Huang, Yu & Chen-Gaddini, (2014), reported that 37.8% of students with hearing impairment exited school at least once. Danek and Busby (1999) identified that there is a lack of role models for deaf students in their schools which can be a factor of dropout from school and deaf students also lack finding deaf passed out students

leading personally fulfilled life. Szymanski, Lutz, Shahan, and Gala (2013) identified low expectations of parents and teachers lead hearing-impaired students to dropout.

Directorate General of Special Education Islamabad is endeavoring to give by 2025 a situation, at the gross root level that would permit full acknowledgment of the capability of persons with disabilities through their better instruction and giving them full backing of the administration, private part, and common society. Be that as it may, in spite of every one of these endeavors, the group of students with special needs. The drop-out proportion at the elementary school level is regularly expanding. The regular expansion in dropout rate requires consideration of researchers to find out the reasons behind this phenomenon. This study aimed to investigate the factors affecting the dropout of students with hearing impairment and visual impairment.

Significance of the Study

A study revealing a large number of issues faced by children with special needs and their parents finally leading towards a dropout is helpful for policymakers. The findings are pointing the real problems faced by the children and their parents making it difficult for them to carry on their studies. From a greater perspective, it can be helpful for teachers, decision-makers, policymakers, and parents of children with special needs. It also serves as creating awareness in society.

Study Objective

The objective of the study was to explore the reasons laying behind the high and continuously increasing dropout rate of students with special needs at the Primary Level.

Methodology

Research Design

This study is descriptive in nature. Further, survey research was used to investigate perceptions about the causes of dropouts from schools. For this purpose, a sample survey was conducted by using a representative sample from the population in order to enter results for the entire population. On the basis of a comprehensive literature review, two instruments were developed to collect data. The questionnaire for the perception of parents was a two-part survey. Part I comprised demographic information and part II was consisting of 30 questions which were grouped into four factors: *Child Related Issues, Role of School Administration, Responsibilities of School, and Socioeconomic Status*

The second instrument was for students who dropped out of school. This survey was also divided into two parts. Part I gathered information about gender, age, type of disability, and dropout class. Part II comprised 42 questions grouped into five factors: *School Environment, Peer Interactions, Teacher Student Relationship, Curriculum and Teaching Methodology, and Access*

Both instruments were presented to five experts from the field for validation with respect to clarity of meanings and statements are mutually exclusive. Suggestions from experts were incorporated. Both instruments were pilot tested on 30 dropped-out students with visual and hearing loss and their parents. The reliability was calculated and found as 0.80 for the questionnaire on dropout causes perceived by parents and 0.81 for the instrument for students.

Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the study is the dropped-out students with visual and hearing impairment and their parents. The whole gathering an analyst is intrigued and to which the researcher ideally generalizes the results of the study is termed as the target population (Gay, 2011). The students with hearing and visual impairment who have dropped out from primary special schools and their parents in Punjab are the target population of this research. The accessible population in this study is dropped-out students with hearing and visual impairment and their parents and students in Lahore Division.

The research sample comprised of 100 students each with hearing impairment who have dropped out from the primary level of government special education centres and their parents. 100 students each with visual impairment who have dropped out from the primary level from government special education centres and their parents. However, while collecting the data, it was found that the proposed number of dropped-out students with visual impairment was not available as the enrolment ratio of students with visual impairment is far low than the enrolment of students with hearing impairment in government special education centers. Therefore, a sample of 69 dropped-out students with visual impairment and their parents could be available. Thus, the final sample comprised 169 students and their parents.

Sampling Technique

The sampling technique used in this research is purposive. Purposive sampling is also termed as judgmental and sometimes also referred to as selective or subjective sampling. This is a type of non-probability sampling technique. In this technique decisions for inclusion of participants in the sample group are taken by the researcher. This decision could be based on specific criteria following specialist knowledge of the field (Oliver, 2006). For the current study, researcher used purposive sampling for the reason of availability and consent of the participants of the study. The sample of the study was taken from the following districts (Table I):

Table I: *Frequency distribution of students*

Sr No.	Districts (4)	HI	VI	TOTAL
1.	Lahore	40	37	77
2.	Kasur	20	16	36
3.	Nankana sahib	20	5	25
4.	Sheikhupura	20	11	31
	Total	100	69	169

Results

The average mean value of each cause of dropout was calculated and on the basis of this average means value, the causes were rank ordered to know the most contributing cause of special students' dropouts.

Table II. *Descriptive Analysis Parent's opinion about the causes of drop-out their children from special education schools*

Sr. No.	Statement	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max
	Child Related Issus				
	Abilities				
1	Your child is able to attend the school physically	3.43	.661	2.0	4.0
2	Your child is educable mentally	3.19	.663	2.0	4.0
3	Your child was good his/her school	2.61	.579	1.0	4.0
4	The special school was a good place for the development of your child's abilities	2.79	.576	1.0	4.0
	Average Mean	3.00			
	Feelings/Interest				
5	Your child felt at ease in school	2.88	.754	1.0	4.0
6	Your child was keen in going to school	2.89	.676	1.0	4.0
7	The school environment provoked the interest in your child	2.54	.707	1.0	4.0
	Average Mean	2.77			
	Learning Outcomes				
8	You were satisfied with educational achievements of your child	2.25	.772	1.0	4.0

9	The special school your child attended was a good place for learning	2.80	.573	1.0	4.0
Role of school administration					
Facilities					
11	You know the facilities which school administration provides to special children	2.13	.910	1.0	4.0
12	All basic facilities such as pick and drop, uniform, text books etc were provided to your child at his school	2.72	.619	1.0	4.0
13	The school administration provided health facilities to children at school	1.58	.603	1.0	3.0
Average Mean		2.14			
14	You were satisfied with policies of school administration as per needs of your child	2.23	.715	1.0	3.0
15	The development of special children is the priority of school administration policies	2.08	.658	1.0	4.0
16	The school administration had clear cut policies for the social and life adjustment of special children	2.02	.650	1.0	3.0
Average Mean		2.11			
Assistance					
17	The school administration provided you all types of assistance as per need of your child (hearing aid, white cane, braille) etc.	1.15	.432	1.0	3.0
18	The school administration supports the children with special needs for their sustainability in school	1.60	.734	1.0	3.0
19	The school administration assists your special child financially	2.01	.820	1.0	4.0
Average Mean		1.59			
Responsibilities of school					
Infrastructure					
20	The sitting arrangement in classroom was comfortable for your child	2.93	.686	1.0	4.0
21	The school premises facilitated the mobility of your child according to his/her need	2.71	.581	1.0	4.0
22	There were adequate separate sanitary facilities for boys and girls in the school your child left	2.56	.680	1.0	4.0
Average Mean		2.73			
Support/Cooperation					
23	The administration (teachers and staff) were supportive for your child	2.75	.543	1.0	4.0
24	There were enough support for your child's socialization	2.18	.696	1.0	3.0
25	There was support and cooperation for the rehabilitation of your special child	1.45	.587	1.0	3.0
Average Mean		2.13			
Educational Resources					
26	The child had adequate facilities as per his/her need at school before dropout	1.90	.814	1.0	3.0
27	The teaching staff was well qualified and trained to teach special children	2.96	.576	1.0	4.0

28	Your child was getting a good learning environment at his / her school	2.60	.581	1.0	4.0
	Average Mean	2.49			
	Socioeconomic status				
	Affordability				
29	You could afford the educational expenses of your special child	1.92	.948	1.0	4.0
30	You could provide the pick-and-drop facility to your child	1.51	.853	1.0	4.0
	Average Mean	1.71			

Table II includes an analysis indicating that abilities (Mean =3.00) was the most contributing cause of their dropout from special education school, Second, factor was feelings/interest (Mean =2.77). After that third cause was the Responsibilities of school Infrastructure (Mean =2.73), fourthly, the lack of educational resources (Mean = 2.49), after that poor learning outcomes (Mean =2.48), the Role of school administration facilities (Mean=2.14) were not up to the mark, poor Support/Cooperation (Mean =2.13) was also a contributing factor in dropout, Next factor was lack of implementations of policies (Mean =2.11), then poor socioeconomic status factor Affordability (Mean = 1.71) were most contributing factors of dropout and assistance (Mean =1.59) was the most deficient cause of the child related issues in dropout children from special education schools.

Table III. *Descriptive Analysis of Students' Opinion about the Causes of Drop-Out from special education schools.*

Sr. No.	Statements	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.
	School Environment				
	Infrastructure				
1.	The sitting arrangement in the classroom was comfortable for you	3.02	.794	1	4
2.	Your movement on school premises was facilitated according to your needs	2.66	.706	1	4
3.	There were Adequate separate sanitary facilities for you in school	2.47	.756	1	4
	Average Mean	2.72			
	Learning environment				
4.	The school you attended was a good place for learning.	2.70	.613	1	4
5.	Your school acknowledged individual needs and provided opportunities for all respondents to learn.	1.64	.798	1	4
6.	Your school Promoted academic skills by encouraging and rewarding participation in educational activities from all students	1.60	.766	1	4
	Average Mean	1.98			
	Peer Interactions				
	Relationship				
7.	You had friends in your school.	3.04	.480	1	4
8.	You had positive relationship with most of your class fellows in the school	2.92	.528	1	4
9.	You could easily reveal/share your thoughts and feelings to your friends in your school	2.87	.562	1	4
	Average Mean	2.94			
	Behavior				

10. Your peers did make fun of your disability in the school	1.30	.642	1	4
11. The behavior and the attitude of your fellows were very polite and friendly with you in school	3.01	.744	1	4
12. Bullying from your peers was a reason for leaving school	1.27	.632	1	4
Average Mean	1.86			
Cooperation				
13. Your peers co-operative inside and outside the classroom activities	2.79	.452	1	3
14. Your peers at school often provided social, emotional and academic support to you.	2.56	.533	1	3
15. The peers in your school motivate each other for playing and working in groups	2.47	.618	1	4
Average Mean	2.60			
Teacher Student Relationship				
Affection				
16. Your teacher expressed a lot of love, care and affection for you	2.81	.488	1	4
17. You had a personal interaction with your teachers	2.25	.595	1	3
18. You used to talk frankly and receive more guidance from your teachers	2.25	.653	1	4
19. You teacher was a source of comfort and happiness in times of your worries and sadness	2.77	.500	1	4
Average Mean	2.52			
Attitude and Behavior				
20. The attitude and the behavior of your teacher were strict and ignorant with you	1.57	.792	1	4
21. Your teachers always treated you in a well-mannered and respectful way in the class	2.79	.465	1	4
Average Mean	2.18			
Reinforcement				
22. Your teachers gave you positive reinforcement during class work	2.67	.531	1	4
23. Your teacher encouraged you a lot to be participative in classroom activities	1.82	.797	1	4
24. Your teacher always praised you on your correct responses	1.82	.759	1	4
Average Mean	2.10			
Punishment				
25. You did face corporal punishment from teachers during school days	1.22	.550	1	3
26. Your teacher ever punished you in front of the whole class	1.40	.758	1	3
27. The punishment methods used by your teacher were harmful for you	1.20	.528	1	3
Average Mean	1.27			
Curriculum and Teaching Methodology				
Syllabus/Content				
28. You liked your books content	2.75	.543	1	4
29. Your teachers adapted the contents of curriculum according to your individual needs.	1.77	.779	1	3
30. All the contents taught in the classroom were understandable to you	2.35	.709	1	4

Average Mean	2.29			
Abilities of Students				
31. Your course contents were according to your ability level	2.32	.719	1	4
32. The content or the course you studied in the class enhanced your abilities and skills	2.54	.715	1	4
33. There were several practical activities included in your study material to create abilities in you	1.78	.785	1	3
Average Mean	2.21			
Teaching Methodology				
34. Your teacher adapted the teaching strategies according your needs	2.07	.813	1	3
35. Your teacher used simple and interesting teaching methods to teach you any lesson	1.65	.758	1	4
36. You were satisfied with the method of teaching by which you were being taught in the classroom	2.22	.805	1	4
Average Mean	1.98			
Access				
School distance				
37. Your school was far away from your home.	3.42	.776	1	4
38. You usually found comfortable source for travel to school	2.52	.802	1	4
39. Your home to school travel did make you exhausted	2.91	.938	1	4
Average Mean	2.95			
Pick & Drop				
40. You used personal conveyance to reach your school	1.37	.745	1	4
41. You were provided with free pick and drop facility by school	2.80	.729	1	4
42. The distance of your pick and drop point was far away from your home	3.46	.873	1	4
Average Mean	2.54			

Table III indicates that School distance was the most contributing cause regarding dropout (Mean =2.95), the Second major cause was Relationship (Mean =2.94), the Third cause was poor Infrastructure (Mean =2.72), the Fourth cause was Cooperation (Mean =2.60), then the problem in Pick & Drop (Mean =2.54) was the important cause, Issues in Affection (Mean =2.52) was also a cause in dropout, Next, the cause was poor understanding with Syllabus / Content (Mean =2.29), Next cause was abilities of respondents (Mean = 2.21), After that attitude and behavior (Mean =2.18), Reinforcement (Mean=2.10), Learning environment and teaching methodology (Mean =1.98), behavior (Mean = 1.86) were the most contributing causes of dropout. On the other hand Punishment (Mean =1.27) was the most deficient cause of child-related issues in dropout children from special education schools.

Table IV: *Independent sample t-test comparing the overall perception of parents on the basis of a disability of dropout respondents with HI & VI*

Sr. No.	Test variable	Disability	N	Mean	S.D	t	Sig.
1.	Total	VI	69	70.9130	8.91750	.181	0.85
2.		HI	100	70.6500	9.53608		

The independent sample t-test shows (Table IV) that there was no significant difference between the perception of parents of HI & VI dropout respondents regarding causes of dropout (t = .181, df = 167,

Sig. = 0.85, Mean_{VI} = 70.9130, Mean_{HI} = 70.6500) HI respondents were more than as compare to VI students.

Table V: *Independent sample t-test comparing overall perception on the basis of disability*

Sr. No.	Test variable	Disability	N	Mean	S.D	T	Sig.
1.	Total	VI	69	95.8551	11.08560	-.953	0.34
2.		HI	100	97.500	10.42566		

The independent sample t-test (Table V) shows that there was no significant difference between the perception of HI&VI dropout respondents regarding causes of dropout ($t = -.953$, $df = .167$, Sig. = 0.34, Mean_{VI} = 95.86, Mean_{HI} = 97.50).

Discussion

The objectives of the research study were to identify the causes of dropout of HI & VI respondents at the primary level from special education schools and further find differences in opinions of parents and students with VI & HI. According to the findings of the study, greater home-to-school distance and pick-and-drop issues are the most contributing factor. This is supported by Gould et al (1993) and Manzoor, Hameed, & Nabeel (2016). According to Raju (1973), transport issues and longer distances are contributing factors to dropout from school. Omari (1994) also supports this finding. Poor peer interactions of children with visual impairments and hearing impairments are another factor in dropout. Omolo & Yambo (2017); Scidel & Vaughn (1991) support this finding as they concluded that alienation and negative behaviors of peers are a cause of dropout. This study concluded inappropriate infrastructure of schools is a factor in dropout. This finding is supported by Madman & Diouf (1994) and Shah, Haider & Taj (2019). This study found that poor abilities of students and loss of interest are also contributing to the dropout of students with disabilities from their schools. Literature also suggests these factors as sources of dropout (IIPS, 2007; NSSO, 1998; Finn, 1993; Farooq, 2013; Mujahid & Noman, 2015).

Conclusions

Study concluded that the accessibility of special education centers is a major factor causing primary school dropout from special education centers. Accessibility comprises the distance of the school from the residence of the students as well as problems faced in the pick and drop of students. Poor infrastructure of schools hindering the access of students within the schools also contributes towards dropout. Negative behavior of fellow students as well as that of teachers is also related to the dropout of special students from government special education centers. This indicates a lack of discipline in government special education centers. The poor learning ability of students perceived by teachers as well as poor methods of instruction as causes of dropout may conclude that teachers may not be fully trained and equipped with the necessary skills and attitudes. Poor learning abilities of students with VI and HI as perceived by their parents show that parents have a low profile about their children with disabilities regarding education. Parents also consider that their special children lack interest in education. Affordability and lack of support also contribute to the dropout of students with special needs indicating that poverty and low socioeconomic status are also related to special school dropout.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made on the basis of the conclusions of the Study which can be made to help the students to stay in the schools and to increase their accessibility to school to promote their inclusion:

1. Schools in the near vicinity of children with disabilities should be made accessible so that problems like home-to-school distance and pick & drop could be alleviated. This may be done by implementing inclusive education in the general education schools situated near the residence of students with disabilities

2. Positive peer interaction activities should be encouraged in teacher training programs so that they can play a role in developing positive peer interaction among students with disabilities.
3. Infrastructure of the school should be revised according to the needs of the disability.
4. Counseling sessions/workshops should be arranged in schools for parents to improve their perception of the learning abilities of their children. Further schools should put more focus on academic activities to improve their output.
5. Teachers should plan their activities for their class according to their interest so that they can be reinforced to attend the school.

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Conflict of Interest

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