



RESEARCH PAPER

**Factors of Dropout in Government Primary Schools of Sindh: A
Qualitative Study of District Larkana, Sindh, Pakistan**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of study was to analyze factors leading to students' dropout, and to identify administrative measures in addressing those factors. The study has covered four towns of District Larkana. The qualitative approach was used and within it case study research design was employed. The sample of the study was the 4 taluka education officers (male/female), 2 district officer (male/ female), 4 students, parents and community of district Larkana. Moreover, purposive sampling technique was used for the selection of participants. The data was analysed through thematic analysis. The findings of the study revealed that poverty, illiteracy, political interventions, tribal conflicts, child labour, lack of facilities, informal institutional arrangements, impractical administration are the main factors leading to student dropout, and there is no any mechanism at district administrative level to address factors leading to student dropout. Current study recommends that collaborative action plan and mechanism at district administrative level may be developed which may focus on School coordination with all stakeholders concerned to introduce poverty alleviation program, and, above all, mechanism to diffuse threat of undue political intervention so as to address the factors, and ensure the sustainable transparent system at primary schools in Larkana, Sindh.

Introduction

Dropout is a serious problem at government primary schools of Sindh in Pakistan (Nayyar, Talpur, & Jariko, 2019). It leaves an adverse influence on the socio-

economic progress of society. If Government of Sindh does not develop any immediate collaborative action plan to control the problem of dropout at the primary level, this problem can adversely affect the process of secondary education in Sindh (Zarif, Haider, Ahmed, & Bano, 2014). The reason is nothing but the primary stage of life whereby students are taught basic values, and life skills for the smooth, and successful forthcoming life. Here in Pakistan, the main purpose of primary education is to develop the basic academic skills and ethics but, unfortunately, Pakistan has not yet gone successful to the achievement of aforementioned targets for problem of dropout trend in primary schools (Farooq, 2016).

Unfortunately, educational scenario in Pakistan does not go in chime with educational system of developed countries. Pakistan in education system is lagging behind all other developed counties for unsatisfactory performance (Bengali, 1999). Since 1947, Pakistan government has mapped out many five year plans, and policies followed by several reform initiative programs, educational conferences, and workshops to improve the literacy rate of Pakistan but all their efforts could not bring any fruitful result. Education policy of 1951 is one of the examples whereby first five years were fixed for the planning phase, teachers' hiring, enhancement of literacy rate, and, above all, rising of enrolment of primary education but all their efforts geared to the achievement of aforementioned objectives went in vain due to gap between theory and practice (Bengali, 1999).

The Dimension of Dropout Trend

The economic prosperity of a state usually matches up with the standard of education (Ssewanyana, Okidi, Angemi, & Barungi, 2004). Education is a common parameter of judgment for the advancement of a nation. Immense poverty in Pakistan warrants the public and private sectors to quickly take some appropriate actions for developing the standard of education.

Each and every venture in this direction will prove unsuccessful and fruitless if the existing steps for prevention of dropout practices are not renovated. Our examination system has caused frustration for learners due to deterioration in quality of education. Therefore, the national education system needs a change in the pattern of examination system on modern basis.

School Dropouts: An International Picture

There appeared a report about education that had riveted the attention of world educationists and other stakeholders due to less optimal conditions of primary schools whereby 31.2 million students dropped out in the year 2010 due to multiple reasons (Reid & Pruijsen, 2015).

The dropout rate in USA remained high particularly in Mississippi where dropout rate amounting to 38% had been detailed in 2011 (Cameron, 2005). Dropout of girls in Africa had been a serious problem. The dropouts were reported to have

increased rapidly in million from 1992 to 2002 (Unicef, 2003). Moreover, according to the report, high concentration of female students' dropouts in the world about 83% was from Asia, Pacific and Sub-Saharan Africa (Alika & Egbochuko, 2009).

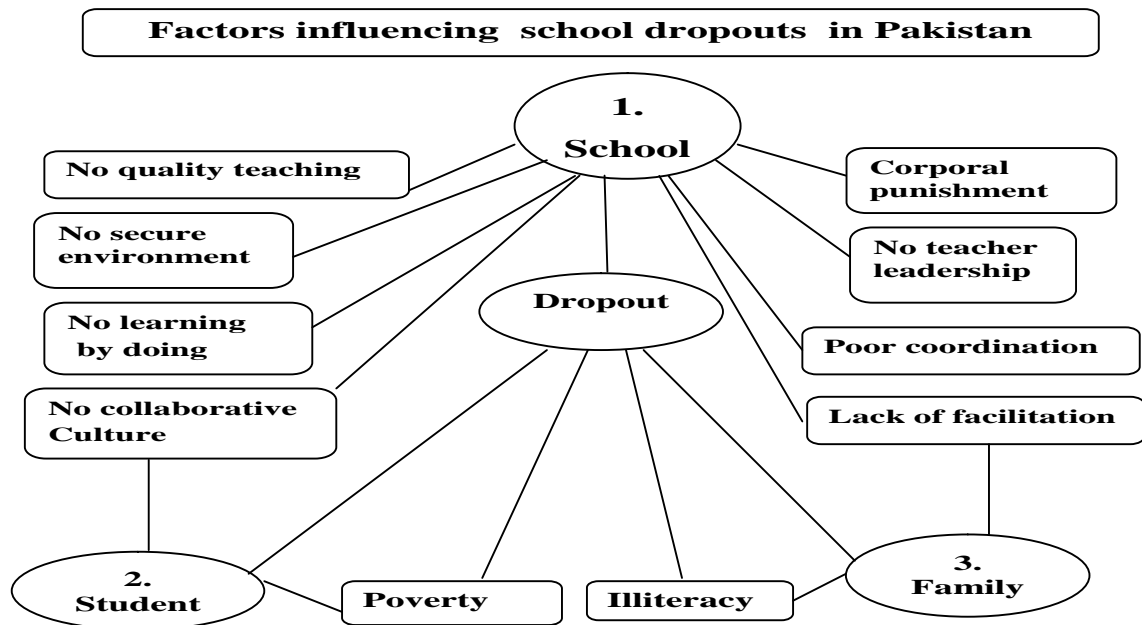
In the context of Pakistan, 83% children were registered in the school and 48% completed education from schools. It is alarming situation that around 35% dropout trends was noticed in Pakistan (Lloyd, Mete, & Grant, 2009). Comparatively, the dropout rate in USA stood around 25% (Cameron, 2005). In Canada, it decreased approximately 16%. In some provinces of Canada, it is alarming like in third world countries.

Dropout in Primary Schools of Pakistan

Pakistan, since 1947, has been trying her hard to uplift the literacy rate but all the efforts geared to implement the efforts have bore no fruit (Bengali, 1999). The target about literacy rate to achieve is still a far dream to be transformed into reality. One of the main causes has been the poverty about this dropout rate in primary schools of Pakistan. The scenario of dropout rate of students from 2001-02 to 2007-08 had been quite alarming. It stood 43% in 2001-02 which fell down to the level of 31% in 2005-06, and again dramatically moved up to 41% in 2007-08 (Rehman, Jingdong & Hussain, 2015).

Factors Influencing School Dropouts in Pakistan

There are various reasons for dropout trend in Pakistan which are clearly and explicitly described in given (figure 3). These all the factors basically cause students dropout from schools and consequently result in a great loss of human potential in terms of social, economic, political and cultural development of society. Moreover, student dropout from schools exercise adverse impact on the human development.



Dropout in Primary Schools of Sindh

According to UNESCO (2010), there is the worst condition of education at primary schools in Sindh whereby 46% (2.8 million) students who are 5 to 9 years old desperately experience dropout in primary schools, and, on the other hand, 38% of children leave school without completion of education at primary school level.

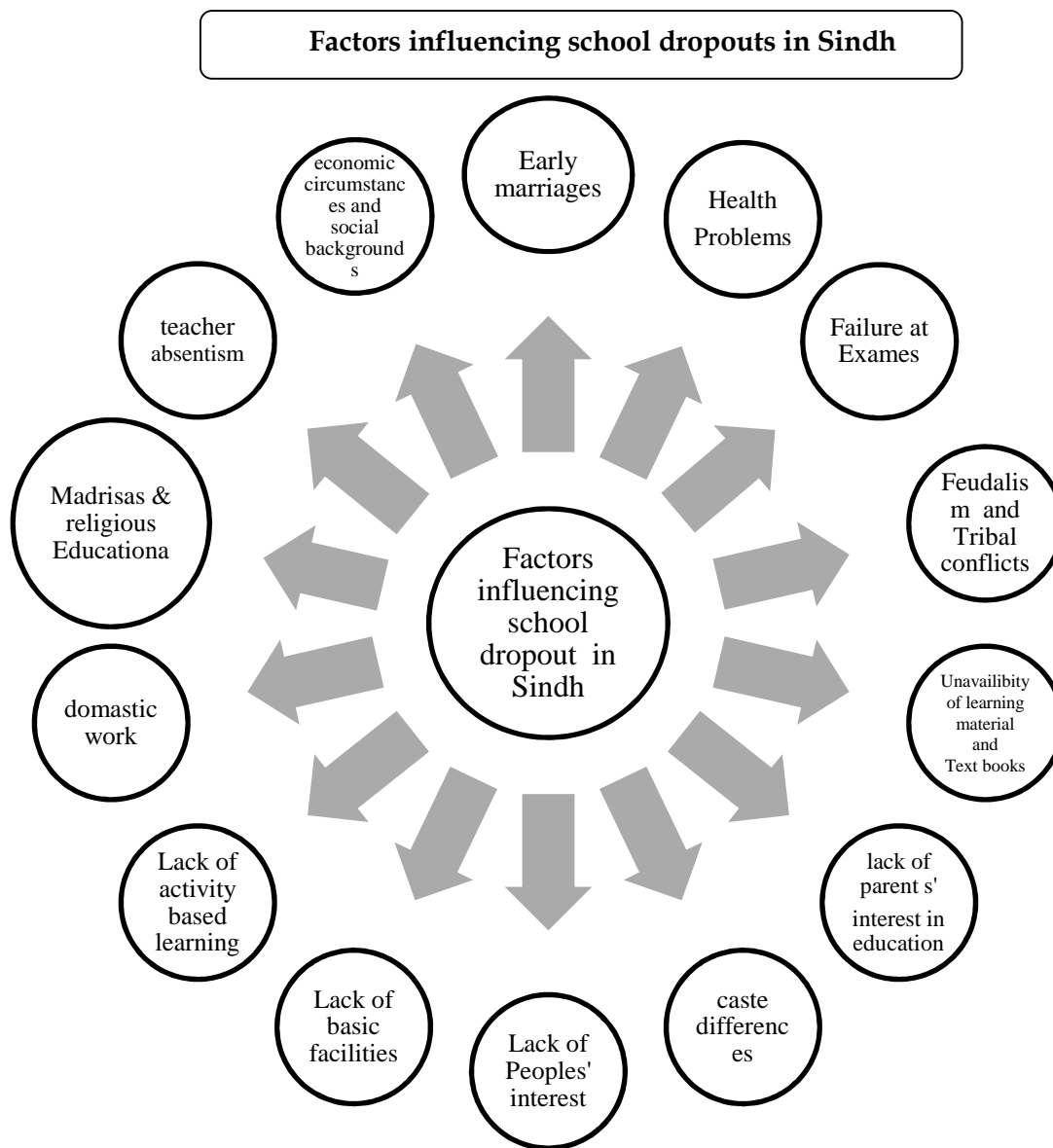
Top to this, according to the Wilson report (Naviwala, 2016), many students are still moving out of schools in Pakistan specifically in Sindh and Baluchistan. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has come up with 7% improvement in decreasing the dropout rate in contrast with Sindh which has rather shown poor performance with 1% dropout increase at government primary school level. Moreover, there is hardly any concept of teacher leadership in schools (Haider, 2016). After the 18th constitutional amendment, education became the subject of provincial governments that encouraged the interprovincial competition in the country in the field of education. But unfortunately Sindh has remained back than the other provinces of Pakistan. Most of the schools in the province lack facilities like adequate science labs, libraries, playgrounds, washrooms and facility of water (ASER, 2018).

Illiteracy impacts Dropout in Sindh schools

Dropout is a serious problem prevailing in Sindh that affects education level in general and primary education in particular. Dropout of students is one of the major causes of illiteracy in the province of Sindh. Dropout of students at the primary education level seriously affects literacy rate because students are enrolled in schools but they leave schools due to many reasons without completing their education.

Factors Influencing School Dropouts in Sindh

There are many reasons of dropout that cause dropout of students at primary level. These factors have been identified in many recent research studies that indicate an alarming situation for the stakeholders to take some effective steps. Some of reasons of dropout at primary level in Sindh are described here:



Material and Methods

The research methodology employed was qualitative approach. Within it the case study research design was adopted. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion was conducted from the participants which allowed researcher to closely observe the problem and to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon (Gray, 2019). The population of the study was the 4 taluka education officers (male/female), 2 district officer (male/ female), 4 students, parents and community of district Larkana. Data was collected from The participants of

the study through semi-structured interview and focused group discussion (FGD) was conducted from the participants. Moreover, purposive sampling technique was used for the selection of participants. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis.

Results and Findings of the Study

This section describes the qualitative findings of the study from group discussion and semi-structured interviews conducted to explore the reasons of school dropout in Primary Schools of District Larkana, Sindh, Pakistan.

Findings from Focus Group Discussion

The data was collected through qualitative research approach. Thematic analysis was used to generate codes, categories and *then* the themes from the data. Group of people of same interest was called to discuss dropout trend in our primary schools of district Larkana. Researcher performed role of channel to get results. Two FGDs were organized to make this document valuable with cooperation of male and female members. All members participated enthusiastically in the discussion. The analysis of the qualitative data is presented below:

Impractical Administrative Approach

When the participants were asked to share the role of district education administration in terms of reducing dropout in schools, majority of the participants said that district education management does not take measures in reducing social, political, economic, and cultural causes of dropout rate from District Larkana (FGD2: February 22, 2018). One of the participants responded, *"Pathetic condition of schools, no facility of washroom, broken boundary walls, lack of basic facilities are also the factors especially in rural areas of Larkana. In Wakro village near Moen Jo daro Primary school building is not functional due to weak and old condition. Children sit in nearby place in the shade of tree so mostly teaching learning process is so so."* (FGD1: February 12, 2018)

It can be summed up that the administrative role of education department in district Larkana was not showing any responsibility towards eradicating dropout because the schools were lacking basic facilities. In such situation, the parent could not send their children into schools.

Political Interference in Schools

Majority of participants responded that in Sindh, public educational institutions are mostly run under political and bureaucratic influences. Teachers' selection is not made on merit basis due to undue political interference. Moreover, there is no any teacher leadership exercised in schools. One of the Participants shared, *"Undue political interference in posting of their teachers at the station of their choice. Resultantly, no any teacher is ready to work in the schools located at far flung areas of rural side of Larkana in Sindh."* (FGD2: February 22, 2018). In the light of response researcher came to know that undue

political interference is also one of the main reason of student dropout in government primary schools of Larkana, Sindh.

Poor Economic Circumstances

When participants were asked, majority of participants shared that poor economic circumstance was cause of student dropout especially in rural areas of Larkana because parents, being economically poor, sent their children to shop or fields so as to support them in earning purpose. One of the participants shared, *“Economic circumstances are also one of the main causes of student dropout. If any family is not economically sound, child is not sent to school. Parents rather send a child to any shop for the source of earning to support the family. They even take their children to field for agriculture purpose.”* (FGD1: February 12, 2018). The data revealed that an economic circumstance was also considered cause of dropout.

Lack of Facilities

When participants were asked, majority of the participants shared that low level of teachers’ motivation leads to student dropout in primary schools of Larkana. One of the participants responded, *“Teachers’ motivational level plays important role in the development of learning environment of school. If teacher is not motivated, he does not own school, and students. Resultantly, there is no learning environment, and students discontinue the education.”* In the light of response, researcher came to know that low motivational level of teachers’ is one of the causes of student dropout at primary schools of Larkana. (FGD2: February 22, 2018)

Illiteracy

On being asked, majority of the participants shared that dropout is a serious matter of concern, and illiteracy is one of the main causes of student dropout. One of the participants responded, *“All those parents who are uneducated, they mostly do not play active role in developing the coordination with teachers, and school for the successful run of their children education have no knowledge about importance of education. They give less importance to their education. Consequently, they fail in educating their children.”*

In the response of participants, researcher came to know that illiteracy was one of the main causes of student dropout in primary schools o Larkana, Sindh. (FGD1, February 12, 2018)

Findings from Semi-Structured Interviews

Individual interviews were conducted to collect information on selected topic. The interviews helped in the development of questionnaire. Most of the interviews were held at the meeting halls, staff rooms of schools, and offices of the headmasters. Interviews were conducted using Sindhi, and English-Sindhi mix language. Researcher also recorded interviews and noted down points of interview. After interview, the collected interview data was analyzed and same is given below.

Poverty

Majority of the participants responded that poverty direct influence on increasing number of dropouts in Larkana at primary level. One of the participants responded, *"More than 52% of population of Pakistan is living below the poverty line. In such crucial diameters arranging bread and butter for daily life, it is a hard job to meet. This is why most of the students at primary level in Larkana cannot manage academic expenditures. Increasing rates is also troublesome matter. Such circumstances aggravate the dropout issue."* From the above data, it shows that financial issues responsible for increasing in the rate of dropouts

Local Tribal Conflicts

Majority of participants responded that feudalism was one of the major factors of Sindhi society which was countable for lack of development in educational sector. That is the reason that feudalists always try to push poor class back, and instigate tribes to be on conflict on petty issues of society. One of the participants shared:

"In our locality, local tribe clash is also factor. Since many years school is closed, and children are not sent to other school due to insecure environment". From the above data, it was concluded that the local tribal conflicts is one of the major causes of students' dropout from primary schools in rural district of Larkana, Sindh.

Political Intervention in Schools

Majority of participants responded that Education sector of Larkana Sindh is highly influenced by politicians who influence educational sector for their own interests. Favoritism can be counted very simple element of political intervention in education sector. Second owing to political corruption, there is the less share of budget to educational sector which leave school management with lack of facilities.

Moreover, one of the Taluka education officers of Primary schools shared: *"Teachers mostly get the posting of their own choice by dint of undue political influence. Nobody is willing to be posted at rural areas of Taluka Ratodero, district Larkana. According to her, being Taluka education officer she has no authority to stop the transfer of any teacher. Resultantly, schools in rural areas of Larkana district are closed due to unavailability of teachers."* From the above data, it showed that undue political intervention was counted as reason for student dropout in primary schools of Larkana.

Illiteracy

Majority of participants responded that family background has longstanding influence on the personality development of child. They give less importance to education. One of the Taluka Education Officers shared, *"Almost all those students who discontinue education, their parents are illiterate."* The above data shows that family backgrounds leave bad influence on students' education and illiteracy among parents is cause of student dropout.

Child Labor

Majority of participants responded that Child labor is one of the major causes of increasing number of dropouts in Larkana. Increasing Poverty and financial crisis do not allow students to carry academic activities. This is the reason that most of the students are being dropped out.

One of the participants responded, *“Children are engaged in local shops, and field activities to support the family due to poverty.”* From the above data, it shows that child labor is a major cause of student dropout.

Lack of Awareness

Majority of participants responded that most of the parents prefer Madarsa education to School education. Parents wish their children to learn religious education instead of general education. One of the teachers shared, *“on being asked, parent refused to send child to school. He said that Madarsa education was enough for his child.”* The above data shows that Madarsah education system affects the number of dropout

Informal Institutional Arrangement of Sindhi Society

Majority of participants responded that being a part of conservative society, girls' education is one of the major challenges in Sindh. Sindhi parents are less concerned about girls' education. There are also certain reasons which leave parents in doubts about girl's education such as child abuse, and harassment.

One of the participant shared, *“Parents mostly prefer girls to be within four walls of home. Girls are mostly engaged in household activities. Moreover, girls are married at early age especially in rural areas of Larkana, This is why parents avoid allowing girls for academic institutions.”* The above data shows that informal institutional arrangement of Sindhi society is also cause of girls' dropout in primary schools of Larkana (FGD1: February 12, 2018).

In the view of the findings, qualitative findings revealed that the undue political interference in education sector is cause of student dropout in primary schools of Larkana. The study also supports that undue political interference in schools has remained one of the main causes of student dropout. The undue political influence is exercised in the selection of teachers, and, even, posting of teachers at the stations of their choice which ultimately results in absence of teachers in schools (Ahmad, 2014).

Findings of the study discovered that Poverty has also been a cause which has kept millions of children out of schools at primary education level in Sindh. It ultimately compels parents to engage their children in the labor for earning purpose. Study also supports that poverty is one of the causes of students' dropouts in primary schools in other areas of Pakistan (Latif et al., 2015).

Illiteracy is also one of the causes behind students' dropout in primary schools of Sindh. Parents who are illiterate have no any idea about value, and importance of education. Consequently they avoid sending their children in primary schools of Sindh. Literature also suggest that illiteracy is also a hurdle in reducing the problem (Hussain, Salfi, & Mahmood, 2011).

Informal institutional arrangements of Sindhi society lead to the massive dropout of girls in Primary schools of Sindh. Parents do not like to send their girls for seeking education in School. Even if girls are sent to school, they leave the school after completion of three to four years schooling. The same situation is also observed in other rural areas of Pakistan whereby girls are mostly confined to the four walls of home (Khan, 2010) .

Another cause of student dropout was found to be tribal conflicts that have also played havoc with education of children at Primary schools in rural areas of Sindh. Owing to tribal clashes, most of the schools remain closed for years, and students of those regions fail to seek education at primary school level. Study also supports that local tribal clash in different areas of Pakistan is also one of the causes of students dropout in Primary schools. In such areas, literacy rate is quite low, and their children are out of schools (Jones, 2005).

Findings discovered that Child labour was also one of the causes of school dropout in District Larkana, Sindh, Pakistan. It was also revealed that Most parents involve their children in their work or children work at another place to earn living for their families in villages (Farooq, 2013).

Impractical administration was another main cause found in qualitative findings for student dropout in primary schools of Larkana. Findings showed district education management was not at all serious enough to take measures in reducing the student dropout in primary schools of Larkana. Study also supports that literacy rate of Pakistan was 54.9% in 2013, dropout rate in primary schools is 34.8% and number of females who attends school is less than the boys but government is not paying attention to these problems and its seriousness can be acknowledged by its expenditure on education that is 2.4% of its total GDP (Suleman & Gul, 2015).

Findings showed that lack of facilities of electricity, poor infrastructure and lack of separate toilet facilities for girls were also the causes that dishearten people for sending children to schools. Literature also supports that there are 45% schools that have the facility of electricity while 55% schools are without electricity, 63% schools have facility of washrooms and 61% schools have boundary walls (Annual School Census, 2016-17).

Conclusion

In the light of findings, it was concluded that dropout is a serious problem at government primary schools of Larkana, Sindh. Poverty, illiteracy, undue political

interference, local tribal conflicts, informal institutional arrangements of Sindhi society, lack of facilities (electricity, poor infrastructure and toilet), impractical administration, school environment, and child labor were the main factors leading to dropout in primary schools of Larkana, Sindh. Moreover, there was no any administrative support mechanism which facilitates district education management in reducing dropout in primary schools in Larkana, Sindh.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the current study recommends that due to undue political intervention in school administration is cause of dropout. So for this, law-abiding agencies should pay heed to handle the situation, and run departments as per law. Moreover, the government should ensure to use society forum to gain the political will of that local region for the coordination in reducing the undue political interference in education system. Moreover, poverty is also a major cause of poor literacy rate in Larkana, Sindh. So, in order to eradicate poverty, government should launch technical education, cottage industries or poverty alleviation program likewise Bolsa program initiated in Brazil to reduce poverty. Dropout ratio in primary schools is quite worse and it is also because of enormous illiteracy. Government should focus on the literacy rate especially in rural areas of the Larkana, Sindh. Moreover, it is urged to NGOs and other agencies working in education sector that improvement of literacy rate should be priority Otherwise it will destroy generations. Furthermore, it has been observed that impractical administration is also cause of student dropout at government primary school of Larkana, Sindh. Government should develop support administrative mechanism for accountability at district level to minimize the threat of political interference, and ensure the sustainable development of transparent system. Moreover, government should modernize administration system, and develop active mechanism for ongoing evaluation of the policy, and support for the retention of student dropout at government primary school level in Sindh.. Besides this, child labor is also a vibrant reason for which most of the students run off schools to support parents. Indeed the government has passed many laws for the child protection and child labor but these are ineffective and passive. Therefore, Government should not activate law abiding agencies but also launch awareness programs about importance of education among parents for the elimination of child labor from our society in Larkana, Sindh. Also, Informal institutional arrangements of Sindhi society also lead to the massive dropout of girls. Government on war footing grounds should coordinate with all stakeholders, and media to launch social, and cultural awareness programs about the importance of female education throughout Larkana. However, there are some other reasons of dropout like lack of facilities of electricity, poor infrastructure, and dearth of separate toilets for girls in mixed schools that dishearten people for sending children to schools. So for this, school leadership should channelize the school community forum to secure and motivate political will of community leaders to help in timely releasing the funds for the sustainability of change process because proposed change will not take place overnight but it is a slow and persistent process. Moreover, local community leaders, stakeholders, and parents should be sought to collect the

funding from community, and local government for the continuity of collaborative action plan to develop the proper infrastructure, and facilities so as to control the student dropout at primary Schools. Additionally, tribal conflicts should be discouraged, and settled through law enforcement agencies. Government should develop comprehensive collaborative action plan in coordination with local political will of community to defuse the tribal conflicts so as to ensure secure and safe environment for smooth run of education at Primary Schools of Sindh.

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