

Issues of Girls' Education in Sindh

A study conducted on the initiative
of the Provincial Ombudsman Sindh
- December 2020



International Ombudsman Institute
Institut International de l'Ombudsman
Instituto Internacional del Ombudsman



Sindh Education Foundation
Government of Sindh



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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEPAM	Academy of Educational Planning and Management
AKU-IED	Aga Khan University - Institute for Educational Development
ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
BISP	Benazir Income Support Programme
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DEO	District Education Officer
DFID	Department for International Development
EDO	Executive District Officer
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GoP	Government of Pakistan
GoS	Government of Sindh
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IOI	International Ombudsman Institute
KII	Key Informant Interview
KPK	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
NEMIS	National Education Management Information System
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OOSC	Out Of School Children
PBS	Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

PES	Pakistan Education Statistics
PES	Pakistan Economic Survey
PITE	Provincial Institute of Teacher Education
PO	Provincial Ombudsman
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PSLM	Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey
RSU	Reform Support Unit
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEF	Sindh Education Foundation
SE&LD	School Education and Literacy Department
SEMIS	Sindh Education Management Information System
SESP&R	School Education Sector Plan and Roadmap for Sindh
SPPRA	Sindh Public Procurement Regulatory Authority
SMC	School Management Committee
STEDA	Sindh Teachers Education Development Authority
STEP	Strengthening Teacher Education in Pakistan
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Program

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Executive Summary

To investigate the issues relating to girls' education particularly in Sindh, the Provincial Ombudsman awarded consultancy to Sindh Education Foundation (SEF), Government of Sindh to carry out a research study on said subject. The study is funded by International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) under Regional Subsidy Programme 2018/2019. The key objectives of the study are to identify the dynamics of socio-cultural, economic, political, religious and supply side factors, hampering the gains of girls' education in Sindh. The scope of the research was mainly desk research consisting of secondary data from local and global literature. However, primary data from in-depth semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in Sindh has also been gathered and analysed. The report discusses key findings on the status of girls' education in country in general and in Sindh in particular. Towards the end, based on the key findings, policy recommendations have been given to improve girls' access to education in Sindh.

Findings from desk research

- It appears that the *Socio-Cultural, Political and Religious norms* of the society, have a negative impact on women' position and their identity in the society. The structure of the society is patriarchal. A narrow minded approach, rigid norms and traditional practices coupled with patriarchal hegemony have significantly contributed to depriving girls from acquiring education.
- The overall number of *Out of School Children (OOSC)* was reduced in 2018-2019. However, major population of the school going children is still not able to have access to schools and majority of these children are girls.
- *Dropout of school children* in general and the girls in particular, is a chronic issue in Sindh; particularly in the rural areas. When children transit from primary to secondary schools, the rate of drop out gets higher.
- One of the key factors for low levels of girls in education is *dearth of Middle, Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools* in Sindh. Generally, parents are reluctant to send their daughters to long distances schools.
- *Missing school facilities* including boundary walls, shelters, functioning washrooms, drinking water, minor repairs and other necessary items also lead to dropout of girls from schools.
- *Female teachers* in girl schools are essential as cultural norms are against the mixed gendered/single sex schools (boy schools). This becomes more challenging when girls reach puberty or pre-pubescent age which further limits their mobility.
- *Poverty* restricts poor and low income families to invest in their children's education. Therefore, it keeps many girls away from school.
- *Child labour* becomes a crucial source of income for poor families in Sindh and parents send their girls to work as paid or unpaid workers or help families in agriculture activities to improve their family income.

Findings from Primary data:

- The first and foremost issue in girls' education is limited *accessibility to schools*. Girls in government schools drop out drastically after completing primary education as the middle or high schools are not available in vicinity. Drop out starts from grade 4 and onwards, when girls grow up. Especially, when there is no female teacher in the school.
- *A gradual shift has been observed in narrow minded attitude, old traditions, and culture towards girls' education in Sindh, yet gender gap persists in education system.*
- Gender imbalance is a reflection of the social fabric of a society. Difference in roles and responsibilities between boy and girl, *start from their families, schools and cultural background.*
- *Low income* families do not afford cost of education.
- The *poor quality of education* in Sindh widens the gap between girls' enrolment and retention rate in primary and secondary schools.
- In High/ Secondary schools (where girls of adolescent age studying), *lack of functional, private and secure washrooms and the boundary wall* are major reasons which hinder girls from attending schools.
- Absence of a *valid and reliable SEMIS system* is causing a discrepancy within SE&LD and national data system.
- It was also found that implementation of *Policies and Plans* is a tough and demanding task. The five years policy document 'SESP&R 2019-2024' developed by SE&LD, which seems over ambitious policy document pertaining to girls' education.

Recommendations included:

- Review of existing policies from a gender perspective and strengthening monitoring mechanism. It requires collaborative efforts of all key stakeholders including SE&LD, SEF, Provincial Ombudsman and local administrative offices.
- Community awareness/ campaigns, workshops should be held at local level on regular basis.
- Activation of School Management Committee (SMCs). Female leaders may lead the SMCs.
- Cross cutting themes on gender should be part of every professional development of teachers.
- Gender Units should be established both at SE&LD and SEF.
- Priority should be given to up-gradation and consolidation of primary schools into elementary/secondary schools and provision of adequate facilities and competent female teachers.
- For increasing girls' enrolment at Post Primary level, it is recommended that Government Boys High Schools (GBHS) and Government Boys Higher Secondary Schools may be renamed as Government High Schools (GHS) and Government Higher Secondary Schools (GHHS) respectively.
- The graduates (140 mentors) under STEP project trained by AKU-IED should be identified and utilized as trained and skilled human resource in their respective districts.

- Interventions like CCT-BISP or Girls Stipend Program should be targeting girls most at risk of falling behind.
- Impact analysis and evaluation studies should be initiated by SE&LD.
- Labour Department-Government of Sindh and Children Complain Office of Provincial Ombudsman should play strong role in enforcing and monitoring the Child Labour Law.
- SE&LD should make gender responsive budget as a mandatory part of the policy. Non formal stream of education should prioritize girls' education.

1 Introduction

In Pakistan, gender disparity is prevalent as per all social development indicators including education (i.e. girls' enrolment and dropout rates in schools), health (i.e. low status of health facilities for women), and in social protection mechanisms (i.e. negligible prevention and protection measure for women). Above mentioned indicators inform that the gender disparity becomes a fundamental factor that impedes women from participating in economic activities and political and social discourses (Rai et al., 2007). Gouleta (2014) states that Pakistan is among few South Asian Countries like Afghanistan, Bhutan, India and Nepal, who are still facing gender disparity.

The disparity exists in public as well as private spheres of life of a woman in Pakistani society. In many regions of Pakistan, particularly urban slums, peri-urban, and rural areas, the birth of a girl is greeted with the guilt on the part of the family. Parents' attitude towards girls' upbringing is minimal and they are treated as inferior since birth (Mehmood et al., 2018). When a girl grows up, her socially-prescribed role limits her to raise a family and the space is created for her to do most of the domestic work (Nussbaum, 2001). Similarly, Ashraf & Farah (2007) states that in a male dominated society, women generally do not take part in decision making processes, because male members consider women's role, restricted to looking after children and manage household chores. With respect to education, boys outnumber girls in education that has resulted a major disparity at all levels of the education (ADB [Asian Development Bank], 2019). Gouleta (2014:3) explains the social dilemma complications on a wider canvas, states that 'girls are the most disadvantaged group in getting equal opportunities to enroll in and complete school education and fall in the intersection between gender and marginalization; being girl, being poor, being disable belonging to linguistic, religious, or cultural minority and living in a rural area'.

The 18th Amendment in the Constitution of Pakistan, Article 25-A guarantees equal access to quality education and equal opportunities from 5-16 years of age for both girls and boys. Through this constitutional amendment, the K-12 (kindergarten to 12th grade) education portfolio has been devolved to the provinces. In this realm, Government of Sindh (GoS) stepped forward and undertook specific legislation under "The Sindh Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2013" on 13th February, 2013 (Act 2013/Rules, 2017). The Act ensures that every child, between the age of 5 to 16 years, regardless of sex, race and geography, shall have a fundamental right to free and compulsory education in a school. In this regard, School Education & Literacy Department (SE&LD) continues to pursue the Goal-4 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (SESP&R [School Education Sector Plan & Roadmap] (2019- 2024).

However, the ground realities illustrate a different picture. Despite the constitutional and legitimate guarantee of the right to education, Sindh exhibits considerable inequality in gender and regions and these differences continue in education sector in Sindh. The latest

SE&LD's report (SESP&R 2019-2024) depicts that literacy rate in Sindh is 55%. Whereas, PSLM [Pakistan Social & Living Standards Measurement survey] (2018- 2019) claims that the overall literacy rate of Sindh is 57%. The percentage of girls (44%) aged 10 years and above who ever attended school is much lower than boys i.e. 68%. Further breakup of literacy rate in urban vs rural informed that, literacy rate is just 72% in urban region, which is higher than literacy rate of rural region i.e. 36%. Disparity in gender is also visible in rural and urban context, where just 19% rural women are literate as compared to 64% of literate women in urban areas of Sindh. The Gross Enrolment Rates (GER) from primary to secondary level is another element to be pondered upon. GER data about girls at primary level in Sindh is just 79%. This further decreases with the huge dropout and reaches at 55% at elementary school level, and falls further to 51% at secondary school level. With respect to primary Net Enrolment Rates (NER) for girls in rural areas of Sindh, we found that the overall NER is 61%, and only 41% in girls, which drops to 14% at elementary school, and 6% at secondary school level. The trend goes on and illustrates very low participation rate among girls in higher education institutions in rural areas of Sindh. It further validates from ADB (2019) finding, when it says, Sindh and Baluchistan have the lowest NER as compared to other provinces.

The Provincial Ombudsman Sindh took notice of the existing inequalities in Sindh's education system which is a grave violation of Article 25-A and Sindh Act 2013. In this background, the Provincial Ombudsman, Sindh tasked three months consultancy to Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) through formal agreement which was signed on October 1st, 2020. It is apparent that issue of low literacy among girls in Sindh is too complex and cannot be understood in isolation. Thus, it was decided to investigate the issues through desk based review and qualitative method of data collection i.e. in depth interviews. Therefore, conscious efforts were made to design a research study that delves deeper on the factors which directly or indirectly impede girls' education, so that a workable solution could be found out. It also aimed to propose recommendations based on the findings, to Provincial Ombudsman for SE&LD and other relevant stakeholders like SEF while planning and implementing the educational projects particularly for girls in Sindh.

2 Literature Review

2.1. Dynamics of Socio- Cultural, Political and Religious Norms of Pakistan

Pakistan consists of diverse regions which includes four provinces (Baluchistan, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Sindh) and Federal Administrated Territories. The culture, norms, values and customs vary in each region. It is found that each region has a set-up that divides the roles of men and women and restricts from interfering with each other. Generally, woman is portrayed as being subordinate and confined to the home (Shahab & Sherani, 2015; Ashraf & Farah, 2007). Latif (2009) further argues that, at home, most of the part of her life is fulfilling the responsibilities in managing the home, cook food, and take care of needs of children. Specifically, if we look at women in rural context, they generally live in an unrecognized peasantry and mostly are invisible and discriminated. Ashraf & Farah (2007) articulate that in her agrarian role, she ploughs the field, breaks the clods with a clod-crusher, plants the seeds, organizes the irrigation, harvests the crops etc. However, selling and purchasing of crops in market are done by male members of the family. The division of work shows that women are excluded from economic market place. Furthermore, women's recognition in politics is as low as in the economy of the country. Jaffery (2018) claimed that in many parts of the country women usually cast their vote according to what their families suggest to them, so it is a violation of women's right to vote. Overall, rural women are less empowered therefore, less acknowledged by the society.

Keeping women restricted from participating in public domain is through the traditions of veiling-pardah (Ambreen & Mohyuddin, 2014). Due to this restriction, women and girls are not able to avail multiple choices in every sphere of life, including that of education. Apart from this, UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization], (2011), found that in some part of the country, religious practices and norms still are causing great hindrances for women's empowerment and development in the society (UNESCO, 2011). However, there is another opinion regarding the impact of religious practices on education. Mustafa et al. (2016), clarifies that parents manipulate and make excuses that girls are not allowed in Islam specially co-education, where males and females get education together. Hence, parents misguidedly use religion in the realm of social and cultural norms. Bradley & Saigol (2012) confirmed that in Islam, there is no distinction between men and women; they both must be educated in both worldly and religious knowledge.

The above section elaborates that structure of our society is usually categorized as patriarchal and is a largely conservative view about women's participation in social, cultural, academic, political discourses prevail (Gouleta, 2014; Ashraf & Farah, 2007). Moreover, narrow-mindedness, norms, and traditional practices are significant factors playing an important role in depriving girls to acquire education (UNESCO, 2011). Similarly, people in the society use name of religion for prohibiting girls to obtain education.

The acknowledgement of position and identity of women in society, provision of equal rights and dignity can be achieved through provision of equal educational opportunities to each girl and woman in Sindh. If educational facilities reach every girl, it will enhance the access to and control over matters related to education, academics, knowledge,

contribution, participation or power within the family, in the community and in the society at large.

2.2. Significance of Girls' Education

Literature review on gender equity confirms that education is a means which is essential to women's capacity to question, to reflect upon, and to act on the conditions of their lives (Noureen, 2015) and is considered one of the important factors to break the vicious circle of women's exploitation in society. Likewise, Shahab & Sherani (2015) inform that girls' education is a social indicator and an engine for economic development. It is believed that investing in education can/ may possibly yield a higher rate of return than any other investment available in the developing world. Research works and reports (Mehmood et al., 2018; Carol Bellamy, 2004; Mughal, 2018; Sahin, 2013; World Bank, 2002) also proved that returns from investing in girls' education are multi-layered ranging from improving self-esteem, wellbeing, confidence, caring health of individuals, prevention from the diseases, and improving the level of satisfaction and prosperity of overall family and people around her. Moreover, an educated girl has a tendency to marry at an appropriate age, eventually decreasing the number of child marriages which is an acute problem in rural communities in Sindh. McCleary-Sills et al. (2015) see the benefits of literate women in different perspective. They opine that, literate women build the society by educating and nurturing their children on the basis of their own capability and position.

It is concluded from the literature review that, education empowers women in certain ways and enable them to contribute in societal development through participating in social and political discourse (Ashraf & Farah 2007). Therefore, if we want a girl who is able to participate equally not only for her own self and family's betterment, but contribute in country's development, the government has to ensure access, relevant knowledge and skills through quality education.

2.3. Education Status of Pakistan

Pakistan is a signatory country of the United Nations' World Conference on Education for All 1990, the Dakar World Education Forum 2000, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989 and Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

Pakistan's education system mainly comprises of three sectors: public, private and the Madrasahs (religious schools). However, the greater share of provision of education goes to the government sector than the private sector. The public and private schools are gender segregated from grades 6–12, but some private schools are co-educational. As Latif (2009) stated that students in public or private schools follow the government's policies and take standardized exams in grades 5 to 8 and 9 to 12.

The share of sectors is presented in table 1 with the details. The distribution of institutions inform that the percentage of public institutions (62%) is greater than the privately managed institutions (38%). Likewise, the total enrolment

Table 1. Sector Wise Disaggregation					
Institutions		Enrolment		Teachers	
Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private
62 %	38%	57%	43%	49%	51%
Source: Adapted, Pakistan Education Statistic 2016-2017.					

in public schools (57%) is also higher than private schools (49%).

Whereas, slightly higher percentage of teachers serve in the private institutions as compared to the public institution. This indicated that public schools are facing shortage of staff in Sindh.

In order to understand the literacy rate among regions, the PSLM survey (2018-2019) was analysed (Table 2). According to three years comparative data, it was found that percentage of literacy

rate in male is stagnant in 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 respectively; but raised one percent in 2018-2019. Whereas, female literacy rate slightly improved in 2014-2015 and 2018- 2019. Overall, 49% female literacy rate is lower than the male literacy rate of 70% as per

figures given in 2018-2019. The unequal literacy rate amongst male and female, clearly indicates low priority of female education in the country.

Table 2. Percentage of Literacy Rate by Gender and Region					
	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	Pakistan
2013-14	70	47	74	49	58
2014-15	70	49	76	51	60
2018-19	71	49	74	51	60
Source: Adapted from Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Surveys 2018-19					

Same table illustrated literacy ratio among urban and rural regions of the country. It was found that there is a significant variation in literacy rate among urban and rural regions in the reported years. The slight improvement has been observed in the overall literacy rate in both regions in recent years, yet lagging behind the meeting of SDG Goal- 04 as still 40 percent of the population is illiterate in the country, despite the raise of overall literacy rate.

2.4. Sindh's Priorities in Recent Years

Above sections give overview of literacy rate and gender disparity in education across the country. This section, highlights the plans and actions of provincial government of Sindh and tries to find out what reforms have been introduced to improve the literacy rate in the province. SE&LD has expressed its commitment to promote gender equality in education and increase literacy in the province by developing 'School Education Sector Plan and Roadmap 2019- 2024' through extensive consultative process by engaging the national academic institutions, SE&LD's key actors like Secretary Education and Literacy Department, Chief Program Officer (CPM) RSU, international stakeholders including UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank and civil society organizations. The vision exhibits clear targets and way forward to achieve the Goal 4.0 of SDGs by the SE&LD. It is analysed that targets are further divided into eight programmes and defined implementation strategies. It seems that a viable, yet challenging plan of action is proposed to achieve the outcomes. Each program is designed to aim at significant participation of disadvantaged children, girls, and children with minor learning and intellectual disabilities.

In order to achieve these targets, it is suggested that SE&LD shall operate its operations with commitment, dedication and with proper resources mobilization. Moreover, it requires political will and engagement of all key players, academic personnel and parents/

communities for effective implementation of these endeavours. Further, it is concluded that there are several milestones to be achieved by the education department through the plan. For instance, provision of additional schools in underserved areas, particularly where safety concerns associated with distance to school are significant. In order to reduce dropout after primary grade, up-gradation of schools as well as improving the infrastructure conditions of existing schools are needed. Review of plans informs that SE&LD is continuously struggling for bringing Out of School Children (OOSC) to school, reducing dropout rate and retention of those who are already enrolled in school. It is equally important that SE&LD realizes the importance of quality education. To ensure this, interventions like hiring of teachers on merit, their continuous professional development which enable them with better teaching instructional strategies, availability of resourceful classrooms, innovation and use of technology are key elements to be ensured. These reforms will attract children in learning process, improving achievement level and retaining them in school. The department already has been working in Public Private Partnership (PPP) model; hence, reputable institutions and experts in education field are invited to contribute in provision of quality education in Sindh.

3 Research Methodology

The context of the study is set under the premise of Sindh. The main driving force for the study was triggered after analysing the overall literacy rate and especially a gender-based disparity in education in Sindh. As mentioned above, there is a significant variance in overall literacy rate amongst the gender and regions, hence, in order to identify the significant factors, which minimize the opportunities for girls' education in Sindh, this study was designed. The methodology chosen was mostly to review secondary data which is a technique that uses existing and publicly available sources i.e. research studies, government and other reports, policies, plans etc. It is also known as "desk research" and includes material that is published or exist as 'grey literature'.

In this regard, four databases namely ResearchGate, JSTOR, ERIC [Education Resources Information Center], Taylor & Francis were searched for accessing material published at national and global levels through web searching process. The websites of multilateral agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF [United Nations Children's Fund], WB [World Bank], ADB [Asian Development Bank], UNDP [United Nations Development Programme], and DFID [Department for International Development] were also used to identify grey literature and evaluation reports. Similarly, the relevant resources and websites of SE&LD, RSU [Reform Support Unit], ASER [Annual Status of Education Report], PSLM and the AKU [Aga Khan University] were also reviewed extensively. Moreover, the research team sought help from some institutions for an access to their digital libraries.

3.1. Objectives

- To identify the dynamics of socio-cultural, religious, economic, political and provision of supply side by SE&LD which are hampering the progress of girls' education in Sindh.
- To critically review existing literature to identify issues and reasons that prevents girls from gaining education.
- Identify key policy level issues causing deterioration of girls' education in Sindh
- To give key recommendations for improving access to education for girls in Sindh.

In order to respond to the objective, the main research question was designed to be answered.

3.2. Research Question

What is the nature of issues, barriers and bottlenecks that hamper girls' education in Sindh?

3.3. Process of Initiating the Research

A thorough review of literature on Issues of girls' education Sindh was initiated by the Research & Publication Unit (RPU), Sindh Education Foundation. The review team set out to undertake a systematic search through existing database and book collections to identify literature on this topic; starting with latest existing literature first (that is more related to context) and going backwards on timeline.

Material has been identified, focusing on key words, research questions/ themes, methodological premises, focused geographies etc. Team applied systematic approach for reviewing the literature i.e. identifying the key themes and filtering the data that was more relevant to the context, thereby identified some effective and feasible literature which guided the team to draw key findings and the recommendations.

As the scope and context of research covers province of Sindh only, therefore extensive review was undertaken in this domain within the scope of research.

3.3.1. In-depth Interviews

Out of eight, five Key Informant Interviews (KII) were contacted to share their expert opinion on issues of girls' education in Sindh. These KII were selected on the basis of their profile and association with education department/ sector in the province. Hence, sample comprised of a university professor, a gender expert/teacher educator, two department officials and a CEO of an NGO working in education in Sindh province. Including this, five parents and teachers were identified from north and south regions of Sindh, working in government and SEF schools. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and remotely through online means in the month of November, 2020. For each category, a separate semi-structured interview guide was developed. The questions in the interview tool were aligned with the research objective and main research question. The information obtained through interviews provided contextual realities, practices and notions pertaining to girls' education.

The researchers met with respondents in their offices, whereas the interviews with teachers and parents were conducted in the school premises. The researchers explained the respondents about purpose of the study, and ensured them of confidentiality. As the scope of the study was to investigate the factors that create barriers in girls' education in Sindh through a desk review and interviews; therefore, researchers did not observe the classrooms or check the engagement of girls in classroom instruction or environment.

Interviews were transcribed into English from Sindhi and Urdu languages. The Principal Investigator (PI) selected random audio recordings to look into the quality of translation and ensure the data validity.

3.3.2. Data Analysis

The research team undertook data analysis of material that was drawn from literature review and interviews. The team clustered the material according to themes and formulated a framework of analysis. A coding frame was developed which reflected key aspects of different contributing factors. During the level of coding, distinct concepts and categories were identified that found additional perception in existing literature. Lastly, the researchers completed the final level of coding and then framed the themes and sub-themes of the data. In order to ensure data validity and transparency, the research team verified the process time to time. All these steps were used in order to obtain information and analyse the findings of this study in order to limit biases.

4 Findings and Discussions

As it is established now that the study has targeted different factors/ barriers that affect the low literacy rate among girls and widen the gender gap in education system in Sindh. Therefore, in order to present the research findings, data is divided into themes linked with the factors and issues addressing the research question. Hence, this section presents analysis of findings on factors separately based on desk research and later, discuss the holistic understanding of factors that emanate from the primary data.

4.1. Critical Analysis of the Issues through Desk Based Review

The emerging findings are organized under following themes.

Gender inequality in Education

Dropped out and Out of School Children

Dearth of Secondary Schools for Girls

Distance to School

Lack of Female Teachers

4.1.1. Gender Inequality in Education

Examining the gender inequality in education is the key to address the major educational problems. Yet identifying the causes of gender inequality in education is extremely difficult to understand because it has strong roots with social, political, economic, cultural and religious settings in which girls live and receive education. It has been found that gender inequality in education exists in almost all poor countries, where female participation has been much lower than their male counterparts and among the poor and marginalized individuals (Yazan, 2010). With respect to Sindh, inequality between gender and regions is prevalent and well defined in the beginning of the report. Literature informs that stereotype mind-set through which women undermined are inculcated in the textbooks. Authors like (Mehmood, et al. 2018; Mughal, 2018) found that men are portrayed more often as leading characters and showing the authority, whereas, a woman is depicted as a house wife or working in medicine or teaching profession.

Improving the gender balance in society, as UNESCO (2013) states that it is pivotal to ensure equity and equality in education system. It can be further reinforced through the discussion, equal treatment and distribution of roles among children in the activities and in execution of teaching and learning process. The teachers' own understanding about gender issues, equity issues, and language use in the class, material requires in the classroom and how these issues address in the classroom are suggested in the literature. Whereas Dean & Solangi (2007) emphasized that it is imperative to create opportunities to develop full potential of boys and girls and prepare them to fulfil life's various responsibilities and prepare them to perform equitable roles in future.

4.1.2. Out of School Children (OOSC) and Dropped Out Challenges

SESP&R 2019-2024 set targets to bring 1.8 million children in education sector by 2024; whereas, among 6 million children aged 5 and 16 years are still not in schools. The PSLM

(2018-2019) indicates that in past few years gains have also made toward enrolling children in schools; reducing the percentage of overall OOSC. However, still major population of the school going children are not enrolled and majority of these are girls. PSLM 2018-2019 also shows concern about the situation which is not promising as the momentum to reduce the ratio of OOSC, so far, has remained very slow.

With respect to drop out of school children in general and girls leaving school in middle of their education in particular, literature informed that it is a chronic issue for the whole province; but rural areas are most affected. It generally happen, when children transit from primary to secondary schools (SESP&R 2019-2024). In this connection, high dropout rate is observed among girls when they finish primary school. PSLM (2018-2019) estimated that almost 22.60% girls dropped out than their counterpart which is 13.10%. It is further clear and give visible picture, when one makes the contrast between number of primary vs. elementary schools, GER and retention rate.

This research also tried to explore the reasons of OOSC and dropout and found that in Sindh, a wide range of problems have plagued the education system which can broadly be attributed to unjust systems that perpetuate multidimensional inequalities. These inequalities are discussed in detail in upcoming section.

4.1.3. Dearth of Secondary Schools for Girls

According to ADB (2019), one of the key inequalities that enhance barriers in participation of girls in schools is shortage of middle, secondary and higher secondary schools in Sindh. The shortage of post primary education has also been highlighted in SESP&R (2019-2024) document. The data presents in SESP&R (2019-2024) giving percentage and number of institutions of functional schools. Analysis of 'Sindh Education Profile in 2016-2017', informed that, number of primary schools is higher i.e. 90% as compared to middle/ elementary schools 5.3%, Secondary 4.1% and high secondary schools are only 0.7%. This shows that very few numbers of schools provide high grade education to children once they passed out primary schools. As per table 3, the gender wise distribution shows again high number of primary schools but with great variation among girls and boys (13% and 20% respectively), whereas, both gender are facing shortage of higher secondary education.

Table 3. Number of Schools: Level and Gender wise (Number and Percentages)								
	Number (#)				Percentage (%)			
School Level	Boys	Girls	Mixed	Total	Boys	Girls	Mixed	Total
Primary	5, 309	4, 303	28, 520	38, 132	12.5%	10.2%	67.3%	90%
Middle/Elem	319	545	1,377	2,241	0.8%	1.36%	3.2%	5.3%
Secondary	367	462	881	1,719	0.9%	1.1%	2.1%	4.1%
Higher Sec.	66	75	150	291	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.7%
Total	6,070	5,385	30,928	42,383	40.3%	12.7%	73.0%	100%
Source: Adapted from SEMIS Census (Sindh Education Profile, 2016-2017)								

The Parliamentary Act 2013/Rules 2017 and Constitutional Article 25A giving the right to education to each child and government is responsible to provide free education in public schools. Whereas, private sector schools are required to provide free education to 10% of their total intake of students (SESP&R 2019-2024). However, the present status of education system in Sindh informs that these substitute initiatives could not overcome the low literacy rate and particularly reducing gender gap in schools.

Moreover, keeping in view the limited access to secondary and higher secondary schools in the province for girls, since last decade, the SE&LD has introduced innovative Public Private Partnership (PPP) models over the last decade. In this context, GoS invested in scaling up the successful PPP model through Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) to reach out-of-school children at all levels and to increase middle and secondary school participation rates. These programs cater more than 441,502 enrolments of overall students by creating priority space for girls in areas where no public or private school is available for girls (SEF, 2017; ADB, 2019; UNESCO, 2011). Recently, SEF introduced Middle and High School Project and upgraded the primary schools particularly in marginalized communities in Sindh. In total SEF runs 544 elementary and secondary schools and non-formal centers serving 17,689 students and among them 41% are girls (SEF, 2019-2020-unpublished data).

4.1.4. Distance to School

Another major restriction for girls in continuing their education is distance between home and school. The average distance of school is almost 15 minutes walking distance for the children (SEMIS, 2015-2016; ADB, 2019). The distance of school generates many issues like Saeed et al. (2012) stated that commuting to school, which is several miles away, raise the safety and security issues for girls both in rural and urban areas. It becomes more challenge for parents particularly in rural areas, where parents do not afford private transport and generally public transport is not available or safe for girls.

It is evident in review that, both rural and urban parents have authority to allow children to access school, but as schools are at distance; they don't send their girls to schools, due to experiencing hardships (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Likewise, for the safety purpose, learners themselves feel insecure while commuting to schools located at long distance. As a result, majority of girls are likely to face the dropout problem. Shahab & Sherani (2015) concerned about low rate of enrolment of girls' education and when few girls, who are allowed access to education, they would be unable to continue their education, due to school distance; resulting in dropout. In order to address this challenge, SE&LD needs to bring some purposeful interventions and ensure the location of the educational institution near to vicinity of home.

4.1.5. Lack of amenities (Boundary wall, washroom, drinking water)

Literature informs that physical, human and financial resources invested in schools impact on enrolment and retention of children. It further contributes to reduce absenteeism, disciplinary incidents, violence and harassment etc. in school setting. Literature informs that public schools in Sindh, facing shortage of basic facilities for instance, Human Rights Watch (2014) point out that many of the schools are lacking basic school facilities, like boundary walls, shelters, functioning washrooms, drinking water, minor repairs and other necessary items that hinder girls' enrolment and retention rate. The data presented in the SESP&R (2019-2024), shows that 42% schools are lacking drinking water supply.

27% have no toilets, and 36% are without boundary.

Naz et al., (2016) emphasize that availability of proper physical facilities in school enhances the capacity of teaching and learning process and attract children to stay in school. Whereas, McCleary-Sills et al. (2015) focus on adequate and safely located washroom and sanitation facilities for girls. There are negative consequences of missing of these facilities in schools as Nielsen & Carnwath (2019) indicate that girls have to struggle to stay in schools if they do not have safe, single-sex and hygienic sanitation facilities. Authors unpack the reason to ensure the facilities in schools because these facilities are essential for menstrual hygiene management, when girls reach puberty age. This is evident in WaterAid (2018) where report indicate that girls are particularly at the risk of harassment if they have to use insecure and non-private WASH facilities in schools. The above section elaborates availability of basic amenities in schools and it is pivotal to understand that if SE&LD ensures all facilities in schools girls' dropout certainly will reduce.

4.1.6. Lack of Availability of Female Teachers

Another key reason for girls' low enrolment rates and high dropout is the unavailability of female teaching staff. It is already shared in literature review section, that overall number of teachers is very low in the country. If we analyse further and disaggregate the data gender wise, region wise and school level, it is found that out of total secondary teachers, there are only 40% female teaching staff are serving in public schools. Among these, only 37% teachers are available in rural areas of Sindh at secondary level (UNESCO, 2011). It adds to challenges for the girls to continue their education as UNESCO (2010) states, girls are often not permitted to attend school unless they have a female teacher. Besides this, it is projected that lacking in teachers own competency, attitude and training may add in dropout and retention rate among girls.

Okudi (2016) perceives that it becomes more necessary where cultural norms are against mixed gendered schools. The argument is appropriate in rural context of Sindh; even at primary schools as numbers of mixed schools and boys' schools are higher where mostly male teachers are appointed, therefore, parents generally avoid sending their girls to school.

The above discussion conclude that these shortcomings have negative effect on girls to continue their education and become more severe challenge when they transit from primary to secondary school.

4.1.7. Poverty

There were many initiatives taken by the government, which lowered the burden on parents' shoulders in terms of educational expenditures in Pakistan. For instance, up to March 2004, primary education in Pakistan was not free. Parents had to pay school fees and bear expenditure on the purchase of copies, textbooks etc. Later on, school fees were abolished, and the government started distributing free textbooks to all students and scholarship to girls in lower secondary school in public sector schools (Gouleta, 2014). However, parents still have to pay some amount as School Fund and bear expenditure on purchase of notebooks and other stationary items (UNESCO, 2010). Moreover, transport cost, food and other expenses are required to be paid by parents.

It is well defined in literature that poverty restricts poor and low income families from investing in their children's education. ASER (2015) report confirms that household income status impact on parents' decisions to prioritize expenditures on the education of their children. It is depicted in report that the richest quartile has the highest percentage of children enrolled, whereas the poorest quartile has the lowest enrolment rate in schools. Despite that, as SESP&R (2019-2024) reported that, proportion of people in multidimensional poverty has reduced in last decade in rural and urban areas of Sindh. However, income of parents has no impact on literacy rate of Sindh. There is another perspective highlighted in report besides the poverty, and that is, impact of illiteracy of parents on their children's education. It is evident in Economic Survey of Pakistan (2018-2019) that lack of education among masses trigger the deprivation. Hence, poverty trap could not be overcome. Mehmood et al. (2018) explains that tension between poverty and illiteracy has risen as illiterate parents don't bear the expenditure of education because they consider it a wastage of money. In this connection, the argument can be built that as parents are illiterate themselves, so their own understanding about the rate of return is minimal and they don't foresee prosperity in their future when their children especially girls will be educated.

It is found that child labour is a paramount issue for girls in gaining education in Sindh. It has been connected with poverty because poor families send their girls to work as paid or unpaid employees or help them in agriculture domain to improve their life and add to their limited income (Luqman et al.2015).

In order to break the cycle of poverty, as Ganguli et al. (2011) suggested that it is imperative to provide equal opportunities in education to poor communities and it definitely increases the productivity, and thus, the earnings of individuals. Otherwise, as Sabil, et al., (2017); UNESCO, (2010) warns that when children (including girls) do not become educated, have low achievement level and having low income of their families a vicious circle of poverty will be perpetuated.

4.2. Critical Analysis of the Issues through Primary Data

4.2.1. Recent Initiatives of School Education & Literacy Department's for Reducing Gender Disparity in Sindh

It is confirmed that rhetoric about gender equality and equity has turned into effective strategies at certain levels. Deliberations on initiatives taken by SE&LD were made with KII. Majority of the participants' applause SE&LD's vision and plans which are underway, however, they had some reservations on the performance of SE&LD. The interview script shows that:

"...I really applaud government of Sindh because much has happened now for new education policy which is not in other provinces. In terms of policy and plans we are doing very well; I think Sindh has achieved at certain level. First time whole chapter on gender equity was incorporated in Education Sector Plan 2014; but impact of that is still not visible".

Some key points are extracted from the discussions, in order to understand the interventions of SE&LD in Sindh for reducing the gender disparity in the province.

- Gender Unit was established with the aim to open more opportunities for girls' students in post primary schools and identify the gender biases in textbooks and remove them accordingly.
- The Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) program has been introduced; particularly for girl schools. First time 10 WASH indicators have been included in SEMIS data.
- In Education Sector Plan, 2014; first time, a whole chapter on the Gender Equity issue was incorporated. The gender material is integrated in teachers training manual and textbooks.
- Up-gradation of primary schools into secondary schools has been started.
- First time Life Based Skills education initiated in Sindh.
- The book has been developed on Girls Puberty and notified by department to empower the girls.
- Stipend to the girl child under scholarship program worth of PKR 3,500 has been provided to each girl from grade 6 to ensure greater transition and retention of girl students post primary education.

The above points are vibrant and attractive, addressing well gender disparity in education sector in Sindh. However, if there is no effective implementation and lacks follow up, these interventions will not benefit in education sector and reducing the gender disparity in the province.

4.2.2. Subtle Changes in Cultural-Socio Norms and Practices in favouring Girls Education

Though literature confirmed that social and cultural norms, practices and beliefs, restrain girls for gaining the education. However, interviews discussion shows some positive change on girls' education as most of the respondents opined that culture is not static and

it changes with time because value and norms also have changed. Hence, recent trends of culture are not impediment in access to girls' education. According to a CEO of an NGO,

"Now the situation is quite good as compared to 20 years back when we had started projects in rural area. In current time, cultural restrictions are not applied on young children. Even the conservative people send their children to school. So I don't think it affects a lot".

Similarly, an anecdote from an interview of another participant shows positive change in the cultural norms; as it said that:

"... good thing is that these norms are changing now. Fortunately, cultural or religious hurdles pertaining to girls' education have disappeared to a great extent. It is because of awareness, so parents are investing in girl child education but the problem now lies on the supply side."

However, some parents' data revealed that few communities still follow the old traditions and culture especially in rural areas. According to one of the fathers:

"... Yes, this has impacted on girls' education because in our community, many people don't give importance to girls' education so they don't send their girls to schools".

In addition, Sindh also faces a culture of feudalism and patriarchy which creates structures of power and control that deprive citizens of their rights, including right of education. One of the Key Informants stated that feudal lords, landlords and local rulers keep away girls from a proper education.

As discussed in above section that education creates positive circumstances to facilitate women to enhance their understanding level and to move from a state of hopelessness to empowerment. How this could be achieved, it is suggested during the interview discussion that if women want to have their identity, this could be done through negotiation process. This becomes more important in certain cases when woman wishes to enroll herself in a college or university, does not get any or support from her family. In these moments, according to research participant:

"...when my students bring their issues, I generally suggest them carry out negotiations with their families, during this process, you don't need to act as rebellious, you are at footprint; gradually make negotiation for your space and for your empowerment. I did negotiation to achieve my destination and I did it gradually. So you have to see how you can influence on others".

The CEO of an NGO shared her own strategy to bring more girls in school. She stated that:

"So we developed a policy if the boy is getting admission in this school, he should bring his sister or cousin so admission of a girl is mandatory. Then we put a condition that if they drop the girl from the school the admission of a boys also dismissed. So this strategy worked a lot. We observed the community was comfortable because brother and sister both were in the same school, they thought the environment is safe for girls".

The above discussion informs that there is a slight shift in narrow mindedness, old traditions, and cultures towards girls' education in Sindh, yet gender gap persists in education system. Other than education context, treating gender as a separate and inaccessible sphere of social life is still preserved in Sindh.

4.2.3. Perspectives on Gender Disparity

While talking about root causes of gender disparity in our society, it was established that gender imbalance, male dominance over a woman is a reflection of the social fabric of a society. Likewise in school setting, difference in roles and responsibilities among boys and girls stem from their families and cultural background. Beginning from the birth of their children, parents respond differently to boys than to girls. One of the respondents opined that this perception is further built based on our expectations when they grow up and perform their role as an individual. In addition, children learn a great deal about sex roles by observing their parents' performance of household tasks (Chandio & Ali, 2019). The families, i.e. Parents, grandparents, siblings are a significant agent to shape the personality of their children. This is visible in interview data:

"... We follow the stereotypes as personifications which is widely accepted and shared with our family and are handed down from generation to generation. Like on the dining table, I ask my daughter to bring something from the kitchen not my son. This is because my mother did the same with me".

According to Chandio & Ali, (2019), family positively or negatively affects the life, personality, and orientation of children by exposing them to certain experiences, values, and roles. The patriarchy is a system which systematically advantages men, i.e. more wealth and power for men. The division of power and patterns of behaviour of the society is framed in which one is born. According to one interview:

"...since the childhood; we strongly advocate boys about their entitlement. We tell them that better education is your entitlement; respect is your entitlement, better food is your entitlement; preferences are your entitlement. And we ask the girls that don't ask for things that boys have."

According to interview of educationist, when children observe similar beliefs and practices in home and in schools setting, they certainly act in their real life setting. It is evident in literature and endorsed by the participant, that education system play a significant part in emphasizing, reinforcing and equality among children during their whole process of education. The data concluded that, equal treatment of boys and girls in the family and school have great influence on shaping children's belief system, towards gender equality.

4.2.4. Lack of Affordability of Parents Due to Poverty

Parents' affordability is resisting the procedure of an overall education in Sindh especially in low income families. According to Evaluation Report of Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), "Through Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT), the "Waseela-e- Taleem Programme" provides some incentives to access to education for eligible children aged between 5 and 12 who are currently attending the schools. The impact of CCT is stronger on girls as compared to boys because chances of boys going into child labour after age of 10 is higher (BISP, 2020: 82). The inverse impact of low income of families on girls' education are

discussed in the literature review section and supported by the key informant interviews. The KII interview opined that:

"...rural poverty exercises a powerful influence on girls' education. This is perhaps, poverty widen the gender inequalities in the province, poor families are less likely to send girls to school rather they engage them in child labour or domestic work".

The finding of one of the parents' interview showed a contradiction in the above statement. As he viewed that poverty does not effect on girls' education, parents allow their girls to school, they do not let their children go to labour work, books are provided free, and teachers come regularly. This is a case, where a particular father is a government servant and he can afford the other expenditures of education.

On the other hand, majority of respondents viewed that if someone is poor and doesn't have resources to survive, how can s/he think of their children's education. S/he would prefer to send children to work as they earn some money and be a helping hand to him.

One parent described that:

"...yes poverty impact on girls' education in rural areas. We can see in surrounding where, girl contributes in agricultural activities, she harvests, she plays and take care of cattle. Her work as a family breadwinner, if her parents are weak, then she becomes a source of income."

Findings from both source of data endorsed that girls' engagement in household chores and limited contribution in the economy is common in our society. For these children as suggested by educationists, the flexible timings of schooling would be best model. The targeted communities shall be provided afternoon schools instead of morning schools.

In-depth data analysis shows that, there is a link between illiterate parents and poverty. The CEO of an NGO justified this by saying that:

"...uneducated parents have limited exposure and unaware about the change, resulting in girls' life, family and society through girls' education. Perhaps, they don't encounter any role model in their life experience; do not observe bright face of any successful woman so their thinking is narrow."

The interview data suggested that the poor in the rural areas have low income, low education, high fertility and low investment in education. According to a teacher, "in this situation, continuation of education of boys is also at risk. They prefer to work in shop or do a low paid job and discontinue their studies". The literature section also proves that poverty remains the major deterrent to education.

4.2.5. Issues in Supply Side

In-depth analysis of the interviews guided that access and quality of learning are major concerns in the education setup in Sindh. This is further described in the section below.

4.2.5.1 Poor Quality of Education

With respect to enhancing quality, it needs combination of number of different approaches, these includes healthy, safe, protective, gender-sensitive environment, adequate and quality learning resources, well equipped facilities, well-managed classrooms, trained and

qualified teaching faculty. Under this notion, respondents informed that if such types of schools would have been available in Sindh, parents surely, would send their children in schools which would ultimately narrow the gap in girls' enrolment and improve retention rate in primary and secondary schools. One of the respondents justifying absence of quality by saying:

"...I must say there are gigantic issues related to quality. The issue that is facing by a girl is as problematic as for a boy. Our teacher is not trained; traditional learning is followed, schools lack basic facilities and many other issues raise the question on quality of education in Sindh".

Literature review identified multiple issues, hamper girls' education in Sindh as visible in above statement. But it is surprising fact that despite many professional development institutions for teachers in Sindh, quality of teacher is a major question which again create a problem for the girls in continuation of education. Shahab and Sherani (2015) held the government responsible and their reasoning is that it is due to lack of governance, administration, and accountability mechanism.

With respect to quality education, one of the respondents referred to Joseph J. Schwab's work where he sheds light on this problem through his theory of four commonplaces, where he states that there are four things an educator must take into account when teaching: the student, the teacher, the milieu, or the environment in which the child learns and grows, and the curriculum.

The above discussion established that if girls get a conducive learning environment and facilities which are essential for them to show their potential and make their education journey smooth.

4.2.6. Access to Schools in Sindh

The situation looks grimmer when one looks at statistics pertaining to number of schools especially post primary schools in the province as discussed during desk research section. One of the participants opined that:

"...if we see out of school children; among them many are girls. In Sindh; I understand that there is a particular number of primary schools; but we have a small number of secondary schools. Even parents want to send girls in school, but there is no way to do because there is no school".

She further added that literature also has a question and has a myth that parents don't want to send their girl child to school but if there is no school how they can? If there is no provision of quality education, why parents send their children to school? both girls and boys; that is for sure. Majority of the participants' have similar concerns on access of schools. Interview data informs that first and foremost issue is access. Girls in government schools are dropping out because schools are not available in their vicinity. This is a major issue with the supply side, so when school is not available; the girl leaves school.

4.2.7 Shortage of Amenities for girls in the school

The description of the interview reveals great emphasis on the provision of necessary facilities for girls in the schools such as safe drinking water, boundary wall, toilets, classroom and playground. Shortage of amenities are also under the observation of parents and one of the father shared that:

"...In most of the Sindh's schools the basic facilities are lacking and that is the reason why girls' education is being affected harmfully. There should be basic facilities for girls and boys separately like washrooms, classrooms, boundary wall etc."

It is also validated in literature section that shortage of basic facilities in schools is a great barrier for gaining education. Each of the participants was found to be sensitive about the lack of washroom and boundary wall in schools especially in secondary schools, according to them, "it is a crucial time for the girls for their safety and hygienic point of view". As one of the participants shared that If you look around, the girls are excelling in sports, they have full energy, they are talkative and confident, they fight and they have different attitude; until their menstrual cycle started. Already they have limited guidance from family, and when school lack these facilities, they become depressed and drop out easily.

4.2.8. Shortage of Female Teachers

There is a huge debate in the literature about impact of female teachers on girls' participation rate in schools. Including this, quality of teaching, teacher absenteeism, poor teaching and learning, teachers' attitude and harsh behavior towards children contribute in driving children away from the schools. This is endorsed by one of the interviewee that:

"...We have shortage of 40 to 50 thousands teachers in the province and that's why many schools are not functional and in some districts qualified teachers are not available"

The same interview data revealed that SE&LD planned to hire female teachers in 400 girl schools in Tharparkar, supported by UNESCO. The interviewee preferred to hire female teachers. However, he highlights the limitations of recruiting of qualified female teachers in rural areas. To address this issue, he suggested that government has to be flexible and it is not necessary to hire graduate or master holders. Considering the realities, especially for hard areas, flexible policy can work to address shortage of female teachers. The CEO of an NGO along with one of parent reminded that mobility of teachers from one district to village is a great challenge and creates disturbances in education process.

The effects of absence/ shortage of female teacher on girls' education was also discussed with research participants. Most of them view that problem starts from grade 4th onward when girls grown up. If there is no female teacher only male is teaching in schools, then parents do not allow them to attend the school. If they are enrolled in school but will not attend school then gradually they drop out from school. In this connection, a parent elaborated that:

"...female teaching and non-teaching staff is a great moral support for both girls and parents. It will develop a wave of confidence and girls will feel secure under the supervision of female teachers"

4.2.9. Weak Data Management System

The interview data revealed that the SE&LD has a weak SEMIS system and Education Monitoring systems. It is claimed that SEMIS data has been utilized for several purposes especially for subsequent policy reforms. However, two types of issues emerged out from the interview discussion. First, there is a huge variance at district level, department and aligned educational institution, hence it impact on total representation on number

of students enrolled in schools, OOSC and dropout children. Secondly, accurate number of all private, public and religious institutions is not available. The variation of data also highlighted during the literature review section. Majority of the research participants also showed their concern on lacking of data. In same manners, a description of interview exhibited that:

"....we don't know where is the child; we don't know is s/he studying or drop out. We assumed that child is dropped from our system after primary because there is no secondary school. But may be child is going to any private school, which is not registered. Its' not necessary every child is sitting at home. Even Madarssa, we don't have data. There is confusion in data sources so there is no presentable and reliable data. Moreover, within the department is also variation".

Another key informant interview's data depicts that:

"...when we planned any intervention like 'stipend for girls child in secondary schools' this is the first challenge for us because we don't know the background of the girl child and we don't know the economic background of the family and don't know the social indicators; I would be unable to decide, whether this girl is at high risk of dropout or not. So when government has no data; the possible option is nothing but to give stipend award to everyone so they attend the school. Once you have data, then you will easily target deserving child for your interventions".

It is concluded from above discussion that SE&LD has weak data system and unavailability and discrepancy of data creates further confusion when it comes time of consolidation. It is imperative to understand that if government wants to attain enrolment, resolve dropout issue and transition issue, a robust mechanism of monitoring and data management system is essential.

4.3. Identification of Complexities Involved in the Implementation of Policies/ Plans

Many authors concluded that educational policies are key factors in the overall development process of a country (Yates, 2007; Ali, 2006; Ahsan, 2003). Within the context of Sindh; different sectorial plans under the National Education Policy (2009) were developed to meet the declarations. For this research, discussion was generated with KII on recent initiatives, plan and endeavours taken by the SE&LD, Sindh. There is no denying fact that SESP&R 2019-2024 is one of the best and promising policy documents. It has clear targets and strategic direction to gain the outcomes. Targets can be achieved, if every concerned department and related alliances will work together with dedication and commitment because, implementation on plans is a tough and demanding discipline. Ahsan (2003) warned that in Pakistan, unrealistic targets have been set which then have changed to future policies and it continue to set new targets and goals have just been as unrealistic as the old. So most of the participants aspired that it's fate should not be same as that of Sector Plan (2014-2018).

The Act under "The Sindh Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2013" can be seen as example under this perspective. School Management Committees (SMC) were formed to support educational institutions by increasing and sustaining school environment and reduce the dropout with support of parents and communities. Under the

subsection-4 of Act, SMC are entitled to call parents and bound them for continuation of education of their children and if they do not follow the compliance, they would fine some amount. Nonetheless, implementation on Act has never been materialized. It is evident in one of the interviews description:

"...provision of education is a constitutional right of every child. Parents and government, both are responsible to ensure the quality and equity among boys and girls. Those parents who are not sending their children to school, government has to penalize them and take legal action that why they are not educating their children. It should be one of the significant policy options and as it stated in Act; government has to follow it".

Key Informant Interview added that Sindh brings innovative approaches but these are mainly donor driven. Influence of international donors has negative impact on planning and implementation on ground. For instance, one of the participant shared that previously we adopt the direction of donors which was very wrong because we understand our context more than them. It was shared that the STEP [Strengthening Teacher Education in Pakistan] project implemented by AKU-IED, was revolved around gender equity and gender issues. In which about 140 male and female mentors went through rigorous training programme. These mentors were supposed to work as a change agent. Sadly, according to her, since project ended we don't know where these mentors are working. It is matter of concern that we don't utilize our trained human resource effectively. Perhaps, one of the reason of failure of policies is inconsistency in interventions.

With respect to implementation of Gender Unit, interview data gave some insights on processes and functions of the unit; which was jointly established by government. According to Reformer (Edition, IX) gender unit was supposed to be run by Deputy Secretary (Gender) Education department. It is observed that high standards were set to achieve the equality in gender through national laws and policies. It is unfortunate that Gender Unit is unable to achieve its aim to mainstream gender within the education system in the province. The most prominent reason of failure is transfers and change of high officials in Gender Unit. According to interview data, it is found that turnover of high management badly effect on performances and proper functioning of the unit. The new person do not understand the background and may not have deep conviction; therefore, when new person joined the unit, the moment and performance become slow. It was proposed that it is necessary to have a right and dedicated person in Gender Unit at least for three years. This is again showing that more attention is given on just initiating new interventions but implementation and sustainability of these interventions are weaker.

With respect to achieve SDG-4 under SESP&R 2019-2024, Sindh's capacity to implement policy, translate commitments into viable programmes, and engage the widest range of stakeholders in inclusive dialogue about these processes can be critical for the successful development and implementation of interventions for girls' education. Since the SESP&R started to work in Sindh; the SE&LD, implementers, program managers, teachers and local governments are required to contribute equally. The education policy and plans framed and disseminated, but if required resources, finance or target oriented activities will be missing; and education department does not control on corruption, poor governance and political interference, the gender equality and equity in Sindh' will be remain same.

5 Limitations of the Study

Very little is available on the theme of issues of girls' education in Pakistan in general and in the context of Sindh in particular. The area encompasses a variety of dimensions to be explored, which needs much more elaborated study than this. However, we believe that our work in this direction will trigger some very important questions on the basis of findings of this study.

The scope of the study is restricted. The methodology chosen was mostly to review secondary data collection of electronic database, websites, journals, newspapers. Due to limited access to resources which were required, the study relies on data, which was easily accessible on internet. Moreover, research also found discrepancy in education statistics between provincial and national reports, therefore, it was a challenge to choose reliable data.

On the other hand, as the study was primarily focused on desk review, therefore, dealing with primary data and giving equal weightage was quite a challenge for us. However, we feel very confident for getting quite fruitful and thought provoking research findings owing to this research, which will work as the foundation for further research and inquiry.

6 Recommendations

Following are the recommendations:

1. A review should be undertaken by both SE&LD and SEF of all the existing policies from a gender perspective and amend them accordingly. A timeframe may be agreed among, SE&LD, RSU (SE&LD) and SEF. Guidelines to be approved for future policy making to incorporate gender perspective and for taking affirmative action. A prerequisite for a good policy formulation is strengthening and utilization of SEMIS system and Education Monitoring systems by SE&LD and SEF.
2. A mechanism needs to be evolved to on a permanent basis, at all levels including Provincial, district and taluka level for prioritizing bringing girls into schools and improving retention rates. For this, the recently established Out of School Emergency Centre at RSU of SE&LD may be assigned this task by amending the TORs, if needed. Similarly, at district level, the office of Deputy Commissioner can be assigned this task through already notified Committees for bringing Out of School children back to school.

Following activities should be undertaken by these offices/committees referred above.

3. Community awareness/advocacy campaigns should be launched on a regular basis (with a monthly schedule) to sensitize all the stakeholders including parents, influential people of the area, community leaders, religious leaders etc. The focus of these campaigns should be primarily on:
 - a. Girls education and the benefits it brings to the family and society as a whole;
 - b. Importance of education particularly girls' education from a religious perspective
 - c. Awareness about existing legislation and the rights accruing thereof to women
4. Workshops on monthly basis should be held at district and taluka level to engage in sustained dialogue between all stake holders. Ombudsman Regional Office can play a prominent role in this by engaging with the civil society and recommending follow up actions to Education department.
5. Activation of School Management Committee (SMCs) with more participation of mothers. The Chairperson of SMC and members should be parents of children and resident of same village/town/district. The Chairperson of SMC should be cosignatory to the SMC account. Civil Society organizations may be engaged for effective mobilization of SMCs. Female leaders (preferably amongst parents) may be nominated to lead SMCs especially in Girls High/ Secondary Schools. This will also pave the way for women mainstreaming in decision-making roles. SE&LD may conduct a research why the SMCs have not been able to function effectively so far , so that corrective actions may be taken.
6. Cross cutting themes on gender should be part of every continuous professional

development (CPD) of teachers conduct by Sindh Teachers Education Development Authority (STEDA), Provincial Institute of Teacher Education (PITE), Teacher Training Institute, SEF's Training Unit. Degree/ Diploma/Certificate on Gender in Education, Gender, Education and Theory etc. are suggested. CPD/ Degree programs are suggested on regular/ annual basis. Teachers' attendance should be mandatory.

7. Gender Units should be established both at SE&LD (already there but not effective) and SEF. They should coordinate with the committees established for OOSC children for coordinating efforts. They should also coordinate for interventions like gender sensitive material, training of teachers, WASH program and cash transfers. They should also coordinate with Women Development department.
8. Priority shall be given to up-gradation and consolidation of primary schools into elementary/secondary schools, gender friendly adequate facilities (separate washrooms), and ensure availability of competent and skilled female teachers in schools. SE&LD and allied institutions like SEF shall ensure these interventions in their respective schools.
9. For increasing girls' enrolment at Post Primary level, it is recommended that Government Boys High Schools (GBHS) and Government Boys Higher Secondary Schools may be renamed as Government High Schools (GHS) and Government Higher Secondary Schools (GHHS) respectively. This should be followed by posting of at least 30 percent female teaching and non-teaching staff in these schools. A separate section should be created for post primary classes depending on the girls' enrolment in the area. The separate budget is required to be allocated in these schools.
10. The graduates (140 mentors) under STEP project trained by AKU-IED should be identified and utilized as trained and skilled human resource in their respective districts. The SE&LD should initiate process of the identification of mentors and may engage them for organizing workshops, campaigns and awareness sessions through proper mechanism (SPPRA Rules). This may be materialized by engaging of EDOs and DEOs.
11. Teachers in hard areas shall be provided transport facilities to ensure availability of female teachers.
12. Effectiveness of interventions for instance CCT-BISP or Girls Stipend Program of SE&LD depend on careful targeting of educationally under-resourced families and thoughtful design of program to focus on girls most at risk. Both interventions require collaboration and are linked to identification of low-income families. Current programs needs to be revisited to target poorest of the poor.
13. SE&LD should undertake regular impact analysis studies of the interventions undertaken for increasing girl's enrolment to gauge their effectiveness and taking remedial action, if any.
14. An incentive based system may be introduced for better performing schools on gender parity e.g more funds to SMCs.

15. Research should also be undertaken to identify gaps between the existing legislation and required laws. Once identified, SE&LD should initiate process of getting the legislation approved.
16. Maximum effort should be made to give a second chance to those girls who have missed it in the first place through Non-formal stream of education. This may be done through Adult and Adolescent Program (AALTP) of SEF and Directorate of Non- Formal Education (NFE). Flexible timings may be observed in these centres so that maximum girls can benefit from the NFE programs.
17. Labour Department-Government of Sindh should strictly enforce child labour laws in letter and spirit. The Children Complain Office of Provincial Ombudsman should monitor the status of Child Labour Law.
18. SE&LD should make gender responsive budget as a mandatory part of the policy. Gender responsive budget would ensure gender-equitable distribution of resources and by contributing to equal opportunities for all. Gender responsive budgeting in schools is essential both for gender justice and for fiscal justice.

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Annexures I

"سندھ میں لڑکیوں کی تعلیم کے مسائل" پر تحقیق

اساتذہ کے لئے انسٹرویو گائیڈ

سندھ ایجوکیشن فاؤنڈیشن، حکومت سندھ

نام: _____ ایس ای ایف / گورنمنٹ: _____

پتہ (ڈسٹرکٹ، تحصیل / تعلقہ / ٹاؤن، گاؤں کا نام وغیرہ): _____

- کیا آپ اپنا تعارف کروانا چاہیں گے؟ (اساتذہ سے مضمون اور تعلیم، تجربہ کے بارے میں پوچھیں)
- کیا آپ سمجھتے ہیں کہ لڑکی کے لیے تعلیم ضروری ہے؟ کیوں؟
- آپ کی نظر میں لڑکیوں کی تعلیم کے کیا فوائد ہیں؟
- کیا آپ کے اسکولوں میں لڑکیوں اور لڑکوں کے اندراج / داخلے کا تناسب ایک جیسا ہے؟ کیوں؟ اگر نہیں ہے تو کیوں؟
- کیا آپ کو لگتا ہے خاندان کی معاشرتی اور ثقافتی حیثیت لڑکیوں کی تعلیم پر اثر انداز ہو سکتی ہے؟ (جیسے کہ، خاندان کی کم حیثیت، والدین کی اپنی تعلیم کی سطح، ثقافتی معیار اور عمل، خاندان میں لڑکے کی اہمیت، بیٹیوں کی جلدی شادی کروانا، پرانے عقائد اور روایتی سوچ اور مذہبی روایات)
- کیا آپ سمجھتے ہیں کہ لڑکیوں کی تعلیم پر غربت کا خاص اثر پڑتا ہے؟ جیسے غریب والدین لڑکیوں کی تعلیم کے متحمل نہیں ہو سکتے ہیں؟ یا اپنے بچوں کو مزدوری کے کام کے لئے بھیجتے ہیں۔
- کیا آپ کے خیال میں اسکولوں سے متعلق عام طور پر زیر بحث رہنے والے جیسے کہ اسکول کی جگہ / اس تک رسائی، سفری سہولیات کی عدم دستیابی، تحفظ، علیحدہ واش روم، سکول کی چار دیواری، خواتین اساتذہ اور درس و تدریس کا طریقہ کار وغیرہ جیسے عوامل لڑکیوں کی تعلیم پر اثر انداز ہوتے ہیں؟
- معاشرتی تفریق جیسے کہ دیہی اور شہری لڑکی ہونا، جنس کافرق، اور امیری اور غریبی وغیرہ، کیا آپ کی کیا رائے میں یہ عوامل بچیوں کی تعلیم پر اثر انداز ہوتے ہیں؟
- سندھ میں لڑکیوں کی تعلیم کی صورتحال کو بہتر بنانے کے لئے آپ کی اہم تجاویز کیا ہو سکتی ہیں؟

Annexures II

"سندھ میں لڑکیوں کی تعلیم کے مسائل" پر تحقیق

والدین کے لئے انسٹرویو گائیڈ

سندھ ایجوکیشن فاؤنڈیشن، حکومت سندھ

نام: _____ پیشہ: _____ تعلیم _____

پتہ (ڈسٹرکٹ، تحصیل / تعلقہ / ٹاؤن، گاؤں کا نام وغیرہ): _____

والدین کا تعارف۔ (نام، پیشہ، تعلیم)

- آپ کے کتنے بچے ہیں؟ کتنی لڑکیاں اور کتنے لڑکے؟
- کیا وہ اسکول جاتے ہیں؟ (پہلے بچے سے شروع کریں)۔ یقینی بنائیں کہ آپ لڑکیوں کو بھی شامل کرتے ہیں۔
- وہ کس کلاس میں پڑھتے ہیں؟ کیا آپ اسکول سے مطمئن ہیں؟ آپ کے بچے جارہے ہیں؟
- کیا آپ سمجھتے ہیں کہ لڑکیوں کی تعلیم ضروری ہے؟ کیوں؟
- کیا آپ اسکولوں کی سہولیات جیسے واش روم، حد مقام / رسائی، حفاظت اور تحفظ، خواتین اساتذہ، درس و تدریس کے عمل کے کچھ پہلو ہیں جو لڑکیوں کی تعلیم پر اثر انداز کرتے ہیں؟ (کے معیار کو ضروری سمجھتے ہیں؟ کیا یہ سہولیات لڑکیوں کے لئے اہم ہیں؟
- کیا آپ کو لگتا ہے خاندان کی معاشرتی اور ثقافتی حیثیت لڑکیوں کی تعلیم پر اثر انداز ہو سکتی ہے؟ (جیسے کہ، خاندان کی کم حیثیت، والدین کی اپنی تعلیم کی سطح، ثقافتی معیار اور عمل، خاندان میں لڑکے کی اہمیت، بیٹیوں کی جلدی شادی کروانا، پرانے عقائد اور روایتی سوچ اور مذہبی روایات)
- کیا آپ سمجھتے ہیں کہ لڑکیوں کی تعلیم پر غربت کا خاص اثر پڑتا ہے؟ جیسے غریب والدین لڑکیوں کی تعلیم کے متحمل نہیں ہو سکتے ہیں۔ یا اپنے بچوں کو مزدوری کے کام کے لئے بھیجیں یا پھر اسکول؟
- دیہی بمقابلہ شہری، لڑکیاں بمقابلہ لڑکا، امیر بمقابلہ غریب میں فرق کے بارے میں آپ کی کیا رائے ہے؟ کیا اس سے لڑکیوں کی تعلیم پر اثر پڑتا ہے؟
- کیا آپ سندھ میں لڑکیوں کی تعلیم کی صورتحال کو بہتر بنانے کے لئے کچھ اہم سفارشات پیش کرتے ہیں؟

Annexures III

Research on “Issues of Girls Education in Sindh”

Interview Guide for Key Informants

- Would you like to introduce yourself? (position, education, area of work)
- In your opinion, what is status of education in Pakistan and particularly in Sindh?
- How important is education for girls? How this benefit to them, society and overall country?
- Data informs that the literacy rate of girls is very low. Why it is that? Two main issues; girls never enroll in school or drop out early why?
- Do you think there is a relationship between family's socio-cultural background, political and religious factors are playing key role in girls' education?
- Do you believe that poverty has a significant impact on girls' education?
- Do you think schools' location, school environment, availability of female teachers, safety and protection, facilities, factors are hampering in girls education?
- Would you like to talk on government of Sindh's education policies and plans? How these are effective?
- What key recommendations, you would like to share with us for improving situation of girls' education in Sindh?

