Investigating the Issue of Out of School Children in Rural Pakistan: Implications for Policymakers

by

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Abstract

The problem of students dropping out of school is a barrier to poor and developing countries such as Pakistan meeting international education targets. This thesis explores the dropout phenomenon from secondary education (classes 9 and 10) through the perspectives of teachers, head teachers, community members of school councils, fathers of dropouts and the dropouts themselves, in a rural district of Pakistan. The study collected and analysed data on dropouts (N=844) of all the public secondary schools (N=38) of subdivision Pind Dadan Khan, a remote rural region of district Jhelum, during the academic years 2011-12 and 2012-13. In-depth individual and group interviews were conducted with 103 participants comprising 18 head teachers, 41 teachers, 18 school dropouts, 14 fathers of school dropouts, and 12 community members of school councils.

The findings of the study show several pull out, push out and policy- related factors of dropping out. The pull out factors are: absence of an educational environment at home; desire to seek religious education; pupils' and parents' lack of interest in schooling; poor academic performance; failure in class 9; household poverty; pressures of domestic responsibilities; large family sizes; local labour market conditions; seasonal migration; influence of feudalism in the remote rural areas; and the custom of dowry and marrying daughters off early. The push out factors are: locations of schools; a lack of academic and physical facilities; teachers' lack of interest in teaching; poor quality teaching; practices of rote learning and memorisation; and explicit bullying from class teachers. The public policy-related factors are: the syllabus being in the English medium; automated progression policy; different examination systems at primary, elementary, and secondary levels; a non-deregistration policy for long-absentee pupils; imposing non-teaching duties on teachers; and an ineffective school council policy. The in-depth investigation based on stakeholders' perspectives on dropout has a vital contribution to policy and intervention implementation.

The thesis argues that the policy focus at national and international levels should be on dropout prevention strategies to achieve the education targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Good intervention always requires local analysis of problems and assessments of potential strategies at the point of service delivery. This study, therefore, advocated a bottom-up policy approach to understand and address social phenomena, such as of dropouts, at the grass-roots level.

Dedication

To my late father

Who brought me up like a mother after she passed away in my early childhood. He did all for me he could do but left me while I was completing this project. Yet, he made me strong enough to face and cope with life's crises and challenges.

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AEPAM Academy of Educational Planning and Management

AMR Annual Ministerial Review

ASER Annual Status of Education Report

BARC Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council

BISE Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education

BISP Benazir Income Support Programme

CCT Conditional Cash Transfer

CM Community Mobiliser

CSP Child Support Programme

DE Dimensions of Exclusion

ECOSOC Economics and Social Council

EDO Executive District Officer

EFA Education for All

EVS Education Voucher Scheme

FFE Food for Education

FAS Foundation Assisted School

FATA Federally Administrated Tribal Areas

GDP Gross Domestic Product

GED General Educational Development

GMR Global Monitoring Report

GoP Government of Pakistan

GT Grand Trunk

HDI Human Development Index

HDR Human Development Report

IAC Inter-Agency Commission

ICI Imperial Chemical Industry

ISCED International Standard Classification of Education

KP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

LHV Lady Health Visitor

MDGs Millennium Development Goals

NEP National Education Policy

NIPS National Institute of Population Studies

NRSP National Rural Support Programme

NSP New School Programme

OOSC Out of School Children

PBM Pakistan Bait-Ul-Mal

PCR Pupil Classroom Ratio

PEC Punjab Examination Commission

PEF Punjab Education Foundation

PEEF Punjab Educational Endowment Fund

PESRP Punjab Education Sector Reform Programme

PI Parental Involvement

PIDE Pakistan Institute of Development Economics

PIHS Pakistan Integrated Household Survey

PSLM Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey

SAFED South Asian Forum for Educational Development

SBM School-Based Management

SC School Council

SDGs Sustainable Development Goals

SMC School Management Committee

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 Organisation

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

UIS UNESCO Institute of Statistics

UPE Universal Primary Education

USA United States of America

WFP World Food Programme

WoT War on Terror

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background to the Study

1.1 Introduction: Socioeconomic Significance of Education

The Inter-Agency Commission, consisting of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank, defines education as the: "provision of learning opportunities in a purposeful and organized manner through various means including, but not limited to, schools and other educational institutions" (Inter Agency Commission, 1990, p. ix). According to this definition, education is a process of providing learning opportunities in an organised way. This learning process can be carried out through any non-formal source; if provided in recognised schools with pre-decided curricula and some sort of certification on its successful completion, it becomes formal education.

This study is concerned with out of school children who are categorised as 'never enrolled' or 'dropped out'. Out of school children are those who for some reason are not attending school, whereas 'dropped out' are those who have, for whatever reason, made a decision not to attend (or their families did). The study will focus on children who dropped out of formal education. The study will discuss the various definitions linked to 'out of school' and 'dropout' later in the next chapter, but for this thesis, 'dropout' is used to indicate 'a pupil of formal education who has ceased their course of study without intending to return'.

Education is largely considered as a key to the development of social, economic, political and scientific institutions in a country (Lockheed & Verspoor, 1991). It is a driving force for technological progress which, in turn, is essential for social and economic development. Education leads to scientific and technical knowledge which increases labour productivity (McMahon, 1984). Furthermore, education improves health and malnutrition rates, increases income distribution equality and offers a basis for democracy, along with other social benefits (Colclough, 1982; McMahon, 1984; McMahon & Boediono, 1992; Psacharopoulos, 1985). Education also leads to scientific and technical knowledge, which increases labour productivity (McMahon, 1984). If the labour force is formally qualified, it is better able to implement and adopt new technologies which ultimately advance its growth (Benhabib & Spiegel, 1994). Thus, education heightens the efficiency of physical and human capital, and is indeed a main source of human capital. Human capital consists of skills,

knowledge and experiences that children gain at school and it is seen in terms of their value to a country. Sending children to school accumulates this human capital in a country (Rosati & Rossi, 2003). Furthermore, education plays a vital role in achieving social cohesion and the functioning of democratic institutions in a country (Kane, 2004). Schooling also develops a sense of social responsibility as it is argued that education: "serves a vital function in the process of social integration and in the development of politically aware and responsive citizens" (Guisinger, Henderson & Scully, 1984, p. 257).

The education of both males and females is equally important in economic development and social welfare (Tembon & Fort, 2008). The returns from investing in girls' education are multifaceted, ranging from decreasing child mortality rates, improving overall family health, reducing unwanted pregnancies, contributing economic growth, and empowering women; these, in turn, better protect them from abuse and exploitation in society (Tembon & Fort, 2008). An educated mother is better able to feed her children and protect them from malnutrition (Smith & Haddad, 2001). It has been shown that: "educating women to at least primary level is likely to be nearly three times more effective than increasing income by 10%" (Alderman & Garcia, 1993, p. 2). A common perception is that an educated mother can raise her children better than a mother with no or little education. Social exclusion factors in women's lives can be counteracted through educational opportunities. Clearly, "education reduces gender gaps in earnings and can play a vital role in attenuating inequalities in earnings in the labour market" (Tembon & Fort, 2008, p. 88). However, to achieve the individual and collective socioeconomic benefits of education, it is necessary for all children to complete an equitable and quality education. Equity is usually aligned to "fairness, social justice, to human (particularly, children's) rights, and to notions of equality, inclusion, or gender equality, or multiculturalism" (Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick, & West, 2012, p. 1). Quality education is inclusive of learners' good health and nutrition, as well as family support for learning, suitable school facilities, safe learning environment, standards-based curriculum structures, quality teaching practices, teachers' competence and school efficiency (UNICEF, 2000).

In 1989, the UN adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations Human Rights, 1989). A child is defined as anyone under the age of 18. Article 28 of the Convention ensures that the 193 signatory states recognise education as the basic human right of all children and ensures that every child has an equal opportunity to free and compulsory primary schooling. This Article also forces the beneficiaries to guarantee that children have easy access to secondary education. The right to education can only be fulfilled if children stay

in school and get quality education. For that reason, Clause 1(e) of Article 28 urges the participant states to: "take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and reduction of dropout rates" (United Nations Human Rights, 1989). According to the Convention, it is mandatory for the signatories to improve access to both primary and secondary education, but also to introduce effective policies to prevent dropping out from schools.

The evidence shows that the problem of dropping out is a serious issue across poor and low-income regions of the world. According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) and the 2014 Education for All Global Monitoring Report (GMR), although the primary school enrolment increased in developing countries, no progress was witnessed in reducing the dropout rate; it stood at 25 percent from 2000-2012 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), 2014b). The report furthers shows that in 2012, approximately 135 million children entered primary school and, if the dropout rate remains consistent, 34 million children will quit before completing their basic education. The school leaving rate is also at the highest level in Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asian countries compared to other regions of the world. The problem of dropout has superseded the problem of enrolment in developing countries; most children who are not in school have dropped out, rather than not being enrolled in the first place (Lewin & Little, 2011, p. 333).

Again, 193 countries throughout the world are committed to achieving free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education by 2030 through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which came into effect in January 2016 (United Nations, 2015). It is therefore necessary to address the issue of dropping out from primary and secondary education in the poor and low-income countries to achieve the targets of SDGs.

1.2 Background to the Study

Pakistan has declared its constitutional responsibility to provide free and compulsory education to all children aged five to sixteen (Government of Pakistan, 2012). However, it has the second largest number of primary aged out of school children in the world, after Nigeria (UIS, 2014). In Pakistan, there are currently 5.6 million primary, 5.4 million lower secondary and 9.8 million upper secondary school age children out of school (UIS, 2017). The problem of dropping out from public schools, particularly in rural areas, is serious in Pakistan. School entry age for children is 5 years in the country. According to a 2013 report of the Academy of Educational Planning and Management (AEPAM), out of the total enrolment in Class 1 at age 5, only 63 percent progress through primary stages 1-5; 40 percent progress through elementary

school classes 6-8; and only 27 percent reach secondary level (AEPAM, 2013). In total, 73 percent of children aged 5-16 (classes 1 to 10) drop out before reaching the final grade of secondary school. Because of this low completion rate, only 33.2 percent of the Pakistani population is educated to secondary level (United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, 2014).

According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) (2015), approximately 69.8 percent of rural children complete their secondary education from government schools, whereas this ratio for urban students is 39.6 percent in Pakistan. The ASER-Pakistan (2015) further asserts that 21 percent of rural children aged 6-16 are not in school, compared to 6.2 percent of urban children. Of the total number of out of school children in rural Pakistan, 11 percent are girls and 8 percent are boys (ASER-Pakistan, 2017a). The problem of out of school children is acute in rural areas. The statistics from ASER (2017) show that 19.3 percent of children aged 6-10 are out of school in rural Pakistan. Among them, 12.9 percent are those who never enrolled to a school and 6.4 percent are school dropouts. The problem of dropping out is evident among all age groups. However, across all levels, the dropout rate is highest at secondary school level (in particular classes 9 and 10), and nearly 15.6 percent of children aged 14 to 16 drop out of secondary classes in rural Pakistan (ASER-Pakistan, 2017a).

This research will explore the reasons for dropping out from formal education delivered in the public secondary schools. It will particularly investigate the dropout phenomenon at secondary level (classes 9 and 10) from public schools situated in remote rural areas of Pakistan. I argue that policymakers should focus more on addressing the dropout problem in order to meet the targets of Sustainable Development Goals in Pakistan. This is only possible if all girls and boys remain at school until they complete equitable and high-quality primary and secondary education.

I further argue that the problem of dropping out can better be addressed if it is understood through the perspectives of teachers, parents and the dropped out children themselves at the point of service delivery. The perspectives of the children and their parents are not often accounted for in the existing literature on school dropout. I also argue that the voices of schoolchildren, teachers, and parents should be embedded in public policies related to them in line with the principles of participation in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Therefore, a bottom-up policy approach is needed to address a social phenomenon, such as dropout, at the grass-roots level.

There have not been any studies previously on school dropouts in Pakistan that capture the problem by listening to the individual stories of secondary school dropped out children, their parents, teachers, and community members of local school councils living in the widespread rural areas. This study is intended to fill this gap and contribute to, and enhance, existing knowledge.

1.3 Research Questions for the Study

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the factors that influence the children's/family's decisions for children to drop out of school?
2. What support is available from the government, school, family and community to enable students to complete their secondary schooling and how effective is the support?
3. How can the issue of dropping out be effectively addressed at school level?
4. Why do some schools have higher dropout rates than others in the same geographical location?
5. What is the process of dropping out, and why and how do some children come back to school after dropping out and some others not?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 gives children the right to express their opinions on the issues and decisions that may affect them (Taylor, 2000). Involving children in research and value them as capable participants who can give their perspectives on the issue of dropping out can significantly contribute to better policy and practice. It is crucial to understand the dropout problem through listening to children's own experiences. Lloyd-Smith and Tarr (2000) argue that the meanings children give to their experiences are not necessarily the meanings their teachers and parents hold about them. Therefore, Taylor highlights that: "giving children a voice in decision-making makes them visible and gives them a stake in that process, thereby reducing the chances of their wanting to sabotage it" (Taylor, 2000, p. 32). Similarly, the narratives of the parents of the dropout children and community members of the local school councils do not necessarily corroborate the perspectives of school staff on the issue of dropping out. This study seeks the perspectives of the teachers, head teachers, community members of school councils, parents, and dropped out pupils equally. These collective perspectives provide a better understanding of the dropout

phenomenon at the grass-roots level and of great significance to policy and intervention implementation.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate dropout behaviour among secondary school children/young people, particularly what motivates their decisions for dropping out and how they, their teachers, parents and community members of school councils perceive it. Among other objectives, one was to understand why schools located in the same geographical area had differing dropout rates. Another objective was to understand the process of dropping out and investigate the reasons why and how some children came back to school after dropping out and some others did not. The ultimate purpose of this study was to communicate better policies and practices to reduce the dropout rate in rural areas. This study is not aimed at generalising or extrapolating the findings, but it aims to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the dropout phenomenon at the grass-roots level.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is comprised of eight chapters. In addition to this opening chapter, the next chapter highlights the problem of out of school children in the developing world and discusses the ambiguities of terminology and definition of out of school children. Then, it contextualises the issue of out of school children in Pakistan. It also presents an overview of the plans and policies in place to improve enrolment and prevent dropping out from public schools in Pakistan. The next chapter focuses on the problem of dropping out from the state secondary schools located in the rural areas, particularly in the province of Punjab. It presents an overview of the potential policy interventions commonly used to reduce the dropout rate. In doing so, it primarily focuses on the current policy interventions of the government of Punjab in Pakistan. Finally, it assesses the likely socioeconomic impacts of secondary school dropout.

Chapter Three presents a general review of the international declarations and their future commitments on children's rights and education. The main focus of this chapter is a review of the literature related to school dropout. It also sets out a theoretical framework for the study. It theorises and conceptualises the causes of dropping out through the existing literature. It also identifies the gap in the extant research, justifying the need for this study.

Chapter Four explores the research process and data collection methods. It clarifies the philosophical positions of the study and justifies the chosen research design. It also introduces

the research location and provides a rationale for selecting the rural district of Jhelum in particular as a sample for the study. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the ethical and cultural barriers in researching school dropout rates among girls living in the remote rural areas of Pakistan. Finally, I have offered my own reflections, as a researcher, on the research process.

Chapter Five is intended as the first of the analysis chapters. It records the problem of pupils dropping out from secondary education in the subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan, Jhelum, by presenting the dropout data collected from the public secondary schools. Following this, it reports the reasons for dropping out using the perspectives of male and female secondary school teachers and the head teachers. It also reports the governance structure of schools to understand how they interact with the local community to form school councils. It discusses the role of school councils in returning dropped out children to school. Finally, it accounts for the perspectives of the community members of local school councils on the issue of dropping out.

Chapter Six details the reasons for dropping out as described by the school dropouts themselves. It also examines the family profiles of such children and explores factors such as how the number of siblings, gender, birth order, and their parental socioeconomic status influences the likelihood of dropout at secondary level. To find out the degree of similarity in views, the chapter also compares the perspectives of the school dropouts and of their teachers and community members of the local school councils.

For cultural reasons, such as the custom of *Purdah* (veil) and the unacceptability of interaction between an outsider male and a local adult girl, this study could not recruit female school-aged respondents or their mothers. Chapter Seven reports only the perspectives of the fathers of dropped out boys. The chapter also compares the similarities and differences between the perceptions of school dropouts, their fathers, teachers and school councillors on the issue of dropping out.

The final chapter of this thesis summarises the findings of the research, stating the theories and frameworks linking to the dropout phenomenon that emerged in this study. Chapter Eight emphasises that the voices of dropped out children, their parents and school teachers should be included in policymaking. In order to do this, top-down and bottom-up policy approaches are discussed, and the latter is advocated. The chapter also highlights the policy measures suggested by the respondents of the study. It also communicates implications and recommendations for policymakers which are required to curb dropout rates from public

secondary schools in the remote rural areas. Furthermore, it identifies the contribution and limitations of the study and opportunities for future research. The mothers of dropped out children and dropped out girls themselves could not be accessed due to the cultural constraints in the research area. This is the major limitation of this work. Finally, the thesis closes with an overall conclusion of the study.

Chapter 2: Understanding the Education System and the Issue of School Dropouts in Pakistan

2.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the problem of dropout from schools in the poor and low-income regions around the world. It shows the size and scale of dropping out across Pakistan and discusses the issue of out of school children and contextualises the phenomenon of dropping out from public schools in Pakistan. It also states the existing complexities in defining out of school and dropped out children. Furthermore, the chapter gives an overview of the past efforts made by the government of Pakistan to address the dropout issue. The chapter particularly focuses on the dropout problem in the province of Punjab and it also introduces and evaluates the policy interventions of the government of Punjab to increase enrolment and reduce dropout rates. Finally, it discusses the socioeconomic impacts of dropping out on an individual, society and the state.

2.2 The Problem of Out of School Children in the Developing World

The UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) and Education for All Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2014 indicated that the world had not been able to get every child in school by 2015 as pledged on several occasions through international commitments. It stated that in 2012, approximately 57.8 million children aged 6 to 11 years had not begun school. In sub-Saharan Africa, 29.6 million children were out of school (16.6m female and 13.0m male); this number was higher than in any other region of the world. For example, there were approximately 8.7 million children out of school in Nigeria, the highest not only in Africa but in the whole world. Improving gender equality in schooling is a global target which was not met in sub-Saharan Africa, where the percentage of females out of school increased by 2 percent to 56 percent between 2000 and 2012. The total number of out of school children in this region remained approximately the same at about 30 million from 2007 to 2012 (UIS, 2014).

This report further stated that the South and West Asian countries showed significant progress in improving the state of basic education. In 2000, there were 34 million out of school children in the region, but this number had reduced to 10 million by 2012. Contrary to in sub-Saharan Africa, female enrolment in primary schools drastically improved in South and West

Asia from 2000-2012 (UIS, 2014). The region successfully reduced out of school girls from two-thirds to one-half in this period. Despite this improvement, the problem of out of school children in South and West Asia still posed a serious threat to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), set to be achieved by 2015. Over half of the out of school children in this region lived in Pakistan. The problem was more serious in Pakistan, where 5.4 million primary school aged children were not in school (UIS, 2014a).

The Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (2015) overviewed the achievements and challenges of the education targets during 2000-2015. It presented evidence from 70 countries on retention rate to the last grade of primary education and illustrated that it had slowed down in 37 states. The report further stated:

> Despite progress in access, dropout remains an issue: in 32 countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, at least 20% of children enrolled are not expected to reach the last grade. By the 2015 deadline, one in six children in low and middle-income countries – or almost 100 million – will not have completed primary school. (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 2015, p. xii)

It is vital for students to complete a good quality primary education in order to progress toward secondary education. The state of secondary schooling was also sub-optimal in low-income countries. In 2012 around the world, about 63 million lower secondary school children aged 12-15 were out of school, among whom 26 million were living in South and West Asia (UIS, 2014). Along with missing the goals of Universal Primary Education (UPE), by 2015 the world had also failed to achieve the universal lower secondary education goal (UIS & EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR), 2015). The UIS and EFA Global Monitoring Report (2015) asserted that although secondary school enrolment increased by 27 percent internationally, "one in three individuals in low and middle-income countries are projected not to have finished lower secondary school by 2015 and in low- income countries this statistic grows to 'three in five individuals' who do not finish lower secondary school" (UNESCO, 2015, p. 10). Almost 42 percent of the world's out of school adolescents lived in the South and West Asian countries. In the past, completion of primary schooling had been a global priority of the donors and governments. Thus, pre-primary and secondary education had been largely neglected which increased the number of out of school adolescents in the middle and low-income countries (UNESCO, 2015).

The current UIS (2018) data show that 263 million school age children, adolescents and youth were not in school in 2016. The data reveal that some 63 million children of primary school age (6 to 11 years), 61 million adolescents of lower secondary school age (12 to 14 years) and 139 million youth of upper secondary school age (15 to 17 years) are out of school across the world. The data further show that there are 21 million primary, 37 million lowers secondary, and 58 million upper secondary age children out of school in sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, 6 million primary, 17 million lower secondary and 48 million upper secondary age children are currently out of school in Southern Asia. Pakistan has more out of school children, adolescents and youth than any other country in South Asia. In South Asian countries, Pakistan has currently 5.6 million primary, 5.4 million lower secondary and 9.8 million upper secondary school age children out of school (UIS, 2018).

On 25 September 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted an agenda for 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 associated targets, aiming to achieve them by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). These goals and targets came into effect in January 2016. One of the targets of the fourth SDG is to ensure, "that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education by 2030" (United Nations, 2015, p. 17). However, the UIS reported that three years after the adoption of the fourth SDG, there was "no progress in reducing the global number of out of school children, adolescents and youth" (UIS, 2018, p. 1). The UIS 2014 and 2015 reports evidenced that pupils dropping out of school was a barrier to achieving the universal primary and secondary education targets (UIS, 2014; UIS, 2015). It is clear that the world can only meet the targets of the fourth SGD if all children stay in school and complete an equitable and high-quality primary and secondary education. Thus, the policy focus at national and international levels should be on dropout prevention strategies to achieve the prescribed targets of the SDGs by 2030.

To address the problem of out of school children, it is imperative to define who they are. It is difficult to precisely define 'out of school children' because of the complexities of education systems across countries. The next section will address some of the existing ambiguities in defining out of school children.

2.3 The Issue of Terminology and Defining Out of School Children

Out of school children have two subcategories: 'dropped out' and 'never enrolled'. The terminology 'out of school' is very general and has different meanings in different countries. The UIS describes out of school children as those who drop out before completing primary

education or having never enrolled in any school (UIS, 2013). However, the children who complete primary schooling but drop out during elementary or secondary levels are often not included in the statistics of out of school children. The official starting age of primary school is also debated: it ranges from 5 to 8 years, depending on the education system of a country. In one country, a six year old child could be included in out of school children, but in another they would be too young to start school (UNESCO, 2005). The primary school starting age in Pakistan is five years (AEPAM, 2013), whereas in Romania, South Africa, and Russia it is seven (The World Bank, n.d.).

Barakat and Bengtsson (2018) argue that the official school starting age in a given country and actual practice has serious consequences on the allocated education budget and its policy and planning. This ambiguity may misalign figures on out of school children (either never enrolled or dropped out) and subsequent research outcomes. For example, they say that official school entry age in Indonesia is seven years, however "the overwhelming majority of Indonesian children have in fact already entered school before their seventh birthday" (Barakat & Bengtsson, 2018, p. 203).

The duration of primary education also differs in some countries. In Nepal and the Maldives it lasts five years, but in Kenya and Malawi it runs for eight (Bray, 2001); in Mexico, the duration is six years (Gibbs & Heaton, 2014), in Pakistan, five years (AEPAM, 2013), in Brazil, seven years (Cardoso & Verner, 2007) and in Somalia, it lasts eight years (Moyi, 2012). A thirteen year old child has usually completed elementary schooling in Pakistan, but in Somalia a child of the same age is still in primary education. Such differences further confuse the definition of out of school children.

Similarly, complexities exist in defining both formal and informal education. According to UNESCO (2005), the children enrolled in informal schools are considered out of school if their primary schooling is not recognised as being equivalent to formal primary education. Furthermore, if the primary school aged children take pre-primary classes, they are also considered to be out of school. However, if the same children attend secondary school they are considered to be 'in school' (UNESCO, 2005). Thus, age, level, and formal/informal schooling are important factors which determine who is in school and who is not. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 determines that six years is the proper duration for primary level education (UIS, 2012). Yet it is hard to reach a unanimous definition of out of school children.

As school starting age and school grades fluctuate considerably between countries, the term 'out of school' is very contextual; one definition of out of school children may not fit another context. As UNICEF and UIS (2016) recognise, "there is a general lack of adequate tools and methods to identify out of school children to measure the scope and describe the complexity of exclusion and disparities, to assess the reasons for exclusion, and to inform policy and planning" (UNICEF & UIS, 2016, p. 25). There are various connotations associated with the definition of out of school children which are still open to debate.

This study argues that the definition of out of school children needs to be framed within the constitutional or officially declared (through other documents) responsibility of a country. If a state is constitutionally or officially responsible to educate its youth up to a certain age limit and it is not providing them with appropriate and sufficient educational opportunities in any formal and organised way, or not compensating the reasons for their non-attendance, they will be considered to be 'compulsive out of school children'. If the state provides them with every opportunity and the family gives all their support to attendance at school, but the child does not complete a prescribed compulsory educational level within their official school-age limit, they will be known as 'optional out of school children'.

2.4 Defining Dropout

The extant literature is characterised by the lack of an agreed-upon definition of the term 'dropout'. Generally, dropout is a notion assigned to those students who enrol but do not complete the compulsory level of schooling before their legal school age expires. According to Morrow (1986), dropouts are categorised according to the cause of their dropping out of school. For example: 'pushouts' are undesirable students; the 'disaffiliated' are those who disassociate from the school; 'educational mortalities' are those who fail exams; 'capable dropouts' are those whose family demands and socialisations disagree with school; and lastly, 'stop-outs' drop out but return to school within the same academic period. Another terms for dropping out is 'early school leaving' (Dekkers & Claassen, 2001; Smyth & Hattam, 2002), 'disengagement' (Rumberger, 1987) and 'exclusion' (T. Lee & Breen, 2007; UNICEF & UIS, 2011).

The term 'dropout' has also various connotations. UNESCO (2005) names it 'early dropout' and recognises primary education as a standard. However, this is a debatable term because early dropout is a contextual phenomenon and is not limited to primary education. The length and concept of basic schooling varies between countries; for example, Fentiman, Hall

and Bundy (1999) describe a dropout in Ghana as any child who left school before completing nine years of basic education. Therefore, it depends upon the contextual definitions of basic and compulsory schooling in a country.

It is also important to determine the point that an absent student becomes a dropout. Researchers have stipulated certain conditions before establishing that a student has dropped out. For instance, Ananga (2011) relates it to a percentage of attendance in the immediate past term, stating that if a child's attendance is less than 40 percent and they are no longer attending school or are absent for a whole term without telling the school, they should be considered a dropout. On the other hand, Akyeampong, Djangmah, Oduro, Seidu and Hunt (2007) define a dropout as a child who enrolled in a school but is not currently attending; however, they do note that there is a possibility the pupil may return to school at a later stage. Although this definition does not limit the period of absence, it is based on the assumption of resuming schooling in the near future. Secondly, the absence period may not enable the school to re-enrol the dropped out pupil. On the other hand, Dedze, Magia, Solvita and Ingrīda (2007) limit the absence period to six months and define dropouts in Latvia as those who have not completed basic education and are absent from school for six months. They argue that a child who remains absent from school for six months is unable to meet the requirements of basic education.

Ananga (2011) expands on the concept of dropout, including students who are physically present in the class but do not take any interest in their studies, and thus learn nothing. He dubs such students 'mentally dropped out' (Ananga, 2011, p. 43). Again, it is hard to recognise mentally dropped out children because it is an immaterial term. Schargel and Smink (2014) distinguish three types of dropouts: those who are leaving or have left school are known as dropouts; those who are in school but detach themselves from learning are named as tune-outs; and those who are suspended or expelled are recognised as force-outs. They further argue that the first category is easily visible, but the tune-outs are less identifiable. Force-outs are often trouble-makers both inside and outside school. What Ananga (2011) calls a mental dropout is essentially a child who has disengaged from classroom learning.

The US federal government sets a comprehensive definition of school dropout, as:

…a student who leaves school for any reason, except death, before completing school with a regular diploma and does not transfer to another school. A student is considered a dropout regardless of when dropping out occurs (i.e., during or between regular school

terms). A student who leaves during the year but returns during the reporting period (including summer program) is not a dropout.   (Ireland, 2006, pp. 7–8)

This definition appears to be more precise because it establishes as dropouts only those students who do not transfer to another institution or re-enrol during the reporting period. Nevertheless, the reporting period depends upon the contextual rules and regulations of an education system; a reporting period acceptable in the US may not necessarily be the same in another country. Secondly, it is hard to track transfer students, particularly if a dropout moves to another city, district, or country, or enrols in an institution which has no legal status or formal recognition but offers the same level of education privately. Hamilton (1986) defines dropouts as those who leave school but are capable of graduating. According to his definition of dropout:

Students who choose to leave school before graduating although they are intellectually capable of doing the work required for graduation. Excluded from this definition are those with such severe learning disabilities that they are unable to perform high school level work and those who are expelled or otherwise pushed out of school. (Hamilton, 1986, p. 412)

Hamilton limits the definition of dropouts to those who are able to complete high schooling but choose to leave. He excludes those students from the definition of dropout who are incapable of learning and those who are undesirable students and are expelled from school. This definition has two major problems. First, how can students with serious learning difficulties reach the high school level? If they were born with such disabilities, how have they progressed through primary and elementary schooling? Second, the pushed-out students might have the ability to graduate but they could have been expelled for the wrong reasons, such as being involved in a prejudiced inquiry, discrimination, or misjudgement by the disciplinary committee. This definition relieves schools of their responsibilities to help students with learning disabilities and offer support and counselling to students who have specific needs.

Ultimately, there is no universal or unanimous definition of a school dropout (Natriello, 1987); it is a highly contextual concept. Keeping these complexities in mind, Bjerk (2012) argues that categorising a student as being a dropout can be difficult, as many students 'leave and return to school' multiple times. An alternative term to 'out of school' is 'school exclusion'. UNICEF and UIS (2011) introduced five dimensions of this exclusion, as shown below in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE) Model

In School   Out of School

Dimension1 Not in Pre-primary	Dimension 2			Dimension 3		
	Attended but dropped out	Will never enter	Will enter late	Attended but dropped out	Will never enter	Will enter late

Pre-Primary age children

Primary age children   Lower secondary age children

Dimension 4
At risk of dropping out of primary school

Dimension 5
At risk of dropping out of lower secondary school

Primary school students   Lower secondary school students

Source: UNICEF & UNESCO UIS, 2011, p. 11

The extant literature on out of school children primarily focuses on primary school enrolment and completion rates; some attention has also been paid to elementary or lower secondary school students. However, investigation on upper secondary school students aged 15-17 who attended but dropped out is a largely under studied area in the developing countries. As age 16 is the final year of formal schooling in most countries, the hope that such children will attend for the first time, or re-attend after being absent, generally declines. Thus, examining the issue of dropped out children from upper secondary school will significantly contribute to the existing knowledge, with particular reference to developing countries like Pakistan.

This study further expands the Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE) Model by including upper secondary school students. This inclusion may be named Dimensions 6 and 7, as depicted in Figure 2.2 below.

Figure 2.2 An additional two dimensions added by the author to the above Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE) Model

Out of school   In School

Dimension 6		
Attended but dropped out	Will never enter	Will enter late

Dimension 7
At risk of dropping out from upper secondary school

Upper secondary school students aged 15-17

Source: by the author
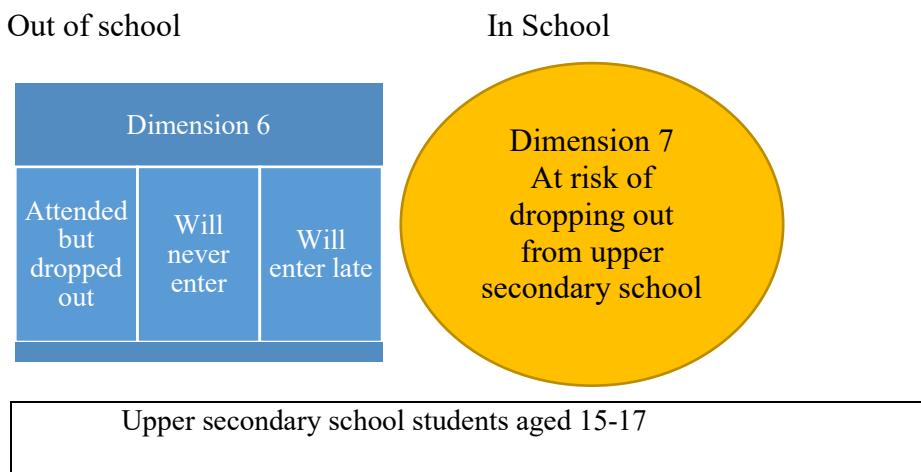
Among out of school children, the focus of this study is on Dimension 6 students aged 14-16 who attended but dropped out from secondary classes 9 and 10 before completing a formal secondary school certificate in the educational structure of Pakistan. As stated earlier, education stages vary between countries. In some educational contexts, the students of classes 9 and 10 are included in the lower secondary stage; however, in the Pakistan education system, pupils of classes 9 and 10 study in high schools.

In addition to the aforementioned notions of dropout, T. Lee and Breen (2007) identified explicit and implicit school exclusions when they interviewed twelve high school dropouts regarding their school experience in Western Australia. They highlight that explicit exclusion is when participants were asked to leave or were 'kicked out' of their education; implicit exclusion is when 'the participants were isolated and ostracized' (T. Lee & Breen, 2007, p. 336). Avilés, Guerrero, Howarth and Thoma (1999) showed similar findings when they conducted focus group interviews with Chicano/Latino high school dropouts in Minnesota, USA. They reported that low teacher expectations, hostile attitudes of school counsellors, and alienation and discrimination in school settings often led to students dropping out. The participants called themselves 'facilitated out' rather than dropouts. Thus, examining the reasons for dropping out is much more important than simply determining them. An individualised policy response to the different forms of dropping out could better understand and solve the problem. In the next section, a definition of out of school children, is contextualised in the given education system of Pakistan.

2.5 Defining Out of School Children in Pakistan

The Ministry of Education and Training Government of Pakistan classifies out of school children in the country into two categories: ones who never attended, and those who dropped out before completing primary schooling (Government of Pakistan (GoP), n.d.). This definition is limited to primary education, whereas the government has declared its constitutional responsibility to educate all children aged 5 to 16. Therefore, as this study argues, all non-attendants or dropouts of this age group will be considered out of school in Pakistan. The dropout may occur at any stage before completing compulsory secondary schooling. Furthermore, following the UNESCO (2005) definition of out of school children, the students of non-formal schools with no formal recognition, or primary age children attending pre-primary classes, will also be considered out of school in Pakistan if they are aged between five and sixteen. However, definition of out of school children is still open to debate because of existing disparities in school starting age, and in formal and non-formal education. Similar complexities exist in defining dropped out children in the country.

2.6 Defining School Dropouts in Pakistan

This study has already argued that the definition of dropout should be framed within a constitutional responsibility or official declaration that a country makes to educate its children, adolescents and youth. For example, Pakistan has declared its constitutional responsibility to provide free and compulsory education for children aged five to 16. According to Article 25-A of the 18th Constitutional Amendment, 2010: "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by law" (GoP, 2012). Thus, the children who entered officially recognised public, private or religious institutions at the age of five, but do not successfully complete compulsory secondary education or equivalent to it through a recognised awarding body by the age of 16, will be known as dropouts in Pakistan.

Nevertheless, the complexities in estimating and determining dropouts in Pakistani educational contexts still exist. For example, the intermediate and secondary education boards allow students to take exams as either a regular or a private student. Students of the public and officially recognised/affiliated schools are considered to be regular candidates, whereas the private candidates have no formal association with any school; rather they take board exams in an individual capacity. The majority of the private candidates are dropouts from public schools, a small number whom consist of students from non-formal institutions or study privately. The

examination system is almost the same across the country. Should the students who complete their secondary school certificates as private candidates or through long distance programmes still be considered as 'dropped out' in the education system of Pakistan? This question is open to debate. It is significant to note that alternate methods for access to education in the developing countries also challenge the definition of dropping out. The pupils who cannot continue formal schooling for some reasons may take admissions to online learning programmes offered by open universities to complete their intended level of education.

While defining 'dropout', Bjerk (2012) also attaches a condition of completing the high school diploma up to a certain age limit. He re-examined the impact of dropping out on criminal and labour outcomes in early adulthood by using the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 in the USA. He defines dropouts as, "individuals who had only attended up to grade 11 or lower by the age of 19 and had no high school diploma by age 19," (Bjerk, 2012, p. 113). However, the education contexts of completing high school qualifications are different in Pakistan and the USA. In Pakistan, the officially declared age of completing the secondary school certificate is 16 years (GoP, 2017), whereas in the US it is 19 years (Bjerk, 2012).

This study has set a contextual definition of dropouts by keeping in view the main objective of the research. Here, dropouts are those who successfully completed their primary and elementary schooling from a public school and progressed to the secondary level but dropped out from either class 9 or 10 and never returned to school; or they appeared in the annual or supplementary[1] secondary school board exams but failed to pass and did not obtain a secondary school certificate by the age of 16. The next section presents the country profile and education system of Pakistan.

2.7 Pakistan's Country Profile

Pakistan is a lower middle-income South Asian country with a population of 207.8 million, of whom 64 percent live in rural areas (National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS), 2018). According to the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) 2013-14, out of the total population, 37.5 percent (19.3 percent male and 18.2 percent female) were in the age group 5-19 years (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Thus, children, adolescents and youth made up a large percentage of Pakistani society. This survey further

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[1] If a student fails in annual examination, he has one chance to retake the exam, called supplementary examination in Pakistan.

showed that the literacy rate for the population over 10 years was 58 percent (70 percent male and 47 percent female) in the country.

The Human Development Report (HDR) 2014 showed the value of the Human Development Index (HDI) for Pakistan was 0.537, which ranks it at 146th position among 187 countries. The report further showed that out of the total population, 45.59 percent of the people were living in a multidimensional capacity and 26.46 percent in severe poverty. The portion of population living with under $1.25 a day was 21.04 percent; the share of working poor who earned less than $2 on a daily basis was 57 percent; the overall life expectancy rate at birth was 66.57 percent; the infant mortality rate per 1000 births was 69, whereas this rate for children under five was 89 (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2014). The report further indicated that the mean years of schooling was 4.73 and expected were 7.7 in Pakistan. Adult literacy was 54.9 percent; adults were defined as people aged 15 and above. The overall gross primary school enrolment rate was 93 percent. However, the gross enrolment ratio at secondary schools was 37 percent and at the tertiary level was just 10 percent. The HDR (2014) asserted that the government of Pakistan spent just 2.37 percent of GDP on education.

2.8 The Education System of Pakistan

Pakistan's education system mainly comprises three sectors: public, private and Madrasahs (religious schools). It is a signatory of the World Conference on Education for All 1990, the Dakar World Education Forum 2000, Millennium Development Goals 2000 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (GoP, 2014). Pakistan is also a signatory of the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2015-30.[2] The structure of the education sector from years five to sixteen is shown in figure 2.3 below:

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[2] https://www.dawn.com/news/1284960
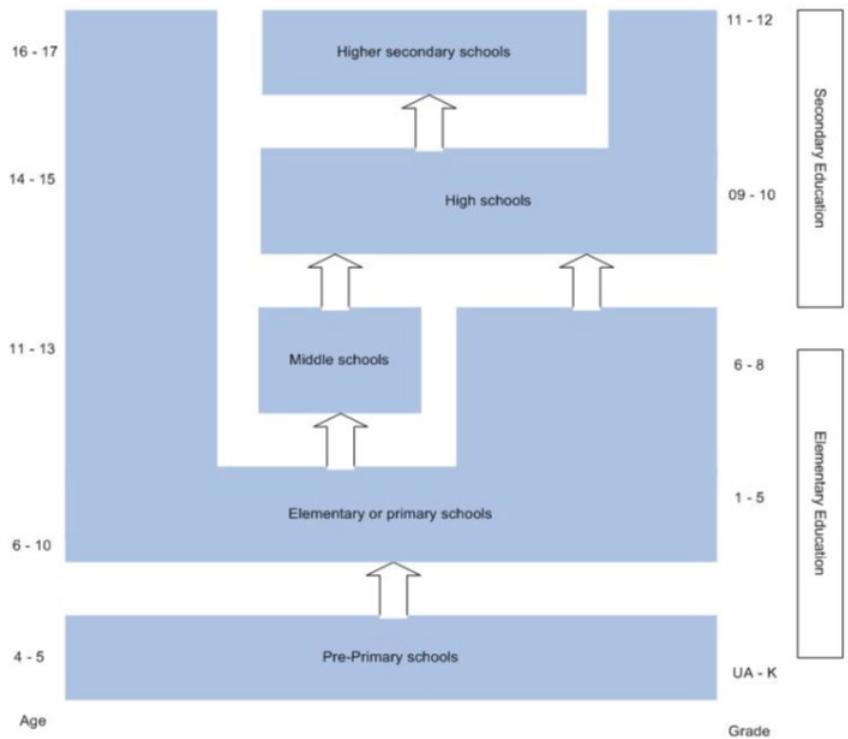
Primary schooling (grades 1 to 5) is the most pervasive part of the education system of Pakistan. According to the Pakistan Education Statistics 2015-2016, there are 145,829 primary schools in the country, of which 86 percent are in the public and 14 percent in the private sector. The public primary schools share 61 percent of total primary enrolments; the remaining 39 percent enrol in private schools. On the other hand, the private sector is more dominant in middle or elementary education (grades 5 to 8). There are 45,680 middle schools in the country, of which 63 percent are in the private sector. The share of total elementary enrolment in private schools is 37 percent. Secondary schools offer the final stage of schooling which consists of grades 9 and 10. This is called secondary education, which is the final compulsory stage of schooling. Pakistan Education Statistics 2015-2016 further show that there are total of 31,740 high schools in the country, of which only 41 percent are in the public sector. However, these 41 percent of schools share 65 percent of the total enrolments at secondary level. Thus, the governmental schools bear the burden of excessive enrolment at elementary and secondary stage of schooling in Pakistan, albeit they are fewer in number compared to private schools (GoP, 2017).

The next stage is higher secondary/inter colleges, which represent grades 11 and 12. After completing the secondary school certificate (classes 1 to 10), the students can enter a college for higher secondary education, which is usually delivered in colleges. According to the Pakistan Education Statistics 2015-16, there are 5,470 higher secondary or inter colleges in Pakistan, mostly working under the private sector (66 percent) but 78 percent of the total enrolments at this level occur in the public-sector schools. After achieving higher secondary education either in a college or school, the next level is undergraduate education, which represents grades 13 and 14, which is purely conducted in degree colleges. There are 1,418 degree colleges in Pakistan, of which 89 percent function under the public sector and share 86 percent of the total enrolments. The graduate degree is followed by postgraduate courses which run in universities for two years: these are grades 15 and 16. There are a total of 163 universities in the country (91 public and 72 private). The universities in the public sector account for 84 percent of the total enrolments at this stage (GoP, 2017).

Deeni Madrasahs (religious schools) are also a significant part of the education system in Pakistan, providing Islamic education to children, youth and adults. According to the Pakistan Education Statistics 2015-16, there are 32,272 Madrasahs (3 percent in the public sector and 97 percent in the private sector), with 2.26 million enrolments (65 percent male and 35 percent female).

Since its independence in 1947, Pakistan has implemented several education plans and policies to improve the state of education in the country. Nevertheless, it is continuously facing problems such as out of school children, adult illiteracy and poor quality of education. The next section presents an overview of the previous plans and policies to improve enrolment and prevent dropping out from public schools.

2.9 An Overview of the Past Educational Plans and Policies

At the time of its independence, Pakistan was comprised of East Pakistan (the present Bangladesh) and West Pakistan (the present Pakistan). The regions forming Pakistan were already undeveloped in all fields, including education as compared to what emerged as India after the British colonial rule ended in the Asia subcontinent in August 1947 (Bengali, 1999).

It was challenging for a newly emerged state to develop an infrastructure and educate the masses; the overall literacy rate was just 15 percent, and in some disadvantaged areas like Baluchistan it was even lower (Bengali, 1999). During the first decade there was only a one

percent improvement in the literacy rate. This poor performance was attributed to a lack of financial resources, less political commitment and the absence of an effective organizational and administrative mechanism (Behrman, Khan, Ross, & Sabot, 1997; Bengali, 1999; Malik, 2007).

After a decade of independence, Pakistan formally introduced and implemented seven Five Year Plans and five main national education policies to encourage socioeconomic and educational development. The main focus of the first two Five Year Plans (1955-60; 1960-65) was increasing primary school enrolment. However, the problem of school dropout was first recognised in the Third Five Year Plan (1965-70). One reason for the high dropout rates was related to the poor quality of education. It was acknowledged that, "the expansion of primary education depends, mainly, on three related factors; the prevention of dropouts, greatly expanded supply of better qualified teachers and better facilities, making the school more attractive to children" (GoP, 1965, p. 187).

The main strategies of the Third Five Year Plan (1965-70) were to ensure quality education, expand the base of primary schooling and facilitate technical and vocational education. The Third Plan targeted an increase of the enrolment rate from 45 percent to 70 percent by 1970, which required 5.8 million more children to attend school. Elementary education was declared compulsory and 2 million additional enrolments were anticipated at this level during the Plan (GoP, 1965). This Plan could not be executed properly because of the war with India in 1965 and 1971. East Pakistan separated in 1971 and became a new sovereign state: Bangladesh.

There was no Fourth Five Year Plan; instead the new National Education Policy 1970 was introduced. In the Fifth Five Year Plan (1977-83) the government admitted that half the primary students dropped out from schools because of the poor quality of education. The reasons associated with the dropout phenomenon were: open air schools; lack of female teachers in rural areas; teacher absenteeism; administrative inefficiency; poor means of transportation; and lack of a supervisory mechanism (GoP, 1977). The Fifth Plan focused on qualitative instead of quantitative improvements and envisaged the achievement of Universal Primary Education for boys by 1982-83 and for girls by 1986-87.

The Sixth Five Year Plan (1983-88) stated that after 35 years of independence the literacy rate was less than 25 percent and more than half the primary school age children were out of school in the country (GoP, 1983). The Plan aimed to improve primary enrolment to 75

percent by 1987-8. It was acknowledged in the Seventh Five Year Plan (1989-93) that the achievements of the Sixth Plan were lower than the targets and about 40 percent of children aged 5-9 years were still out of school in the country (GoP, 1989). The Seventh Plan proposed to achieve an 80 percent literacy rate by 2000 through motivating the private education sector. Again, the government accepted in the Eighth Five Year Plan (1993-1998) that despite the growing number of educational institutions, the past plans and policies had not attained their targets because of: financial constraints; rapid population growth; poor infrastructure and quality of education; lack of community participation at local level; and dropout problems (GoP, 1993). The Eighth Plan expected to achieve a 100 percent primary enrolment rate by 1998.

The New Education Policy 1970 affirmed universal enrolment up to class 5 by 1980 (GoP, 1970); the Education Policy 1972 determined to achieve universal primary enrolment (UPE) for boys by 1979 and for girls by 1984 (GoP, 1972); the National Education Policy 1979 dedicated attainment of this level for boys by 1986-87 and for girls by 1984 (GoP 1979); and the National Education Policy 1992 resolved to reach it by 2002 (GoP, 1992). The National Education Policy 1998-2010 planned to achieve a literacy rate of 70 percent by 2003 and 85 percent by 2010 (GoP, 1998). The current National Education Policy 2009 has not given a specific time scale in which to achieve improvement in literacy; it simply said that the eradication of illiteracy would be made possible within the shortest time (GoP, 2009).

Despite the over-ambitious targets of achieving Universal Primary Education by past educational plans and policies, Pakistan currently has 5.6 million primary, 5.4 million lower secondary and 9.8 million upper secondary school age children out of school (UIS, 2017). The next section explores the issue of out of school children and particularly of dropping out in Pakistan.

2.10 Issue of Out of School Children in Pakistan

The Academy of Educational Planning and Management (AEPM), working under the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Government of Pakistan, manages the education statistics on an annual basis, including the data on out of school children in the public sector. Similarly, the South Asian Forum for Educational Development (SAFED) publishes an Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) in Pakistan. Moreover, the Pakistan Standards and Living Measurement Survey (PSLM) provides statistical data on health, education, housing, water supply, sanitation and the perception of the economic situation in the

country. These three organisations use different survey methodologies to collect the data. There is the possibility of limitations in their procedures of collecting and presenting data, particularly on out of school children. However, this study is neither naïve nor optimistic about the accuracy of data, and simply accepts their statistics without raising any questions of their accuracy for an overall analysis of out of school children across Pakistan. The secondary statistics are used to identify and contextualise a social problem, such as dropping out, to build a case for primary research. The table below shows the national estimate of out of school children (OOSC) by age group and schooling level.

Table 2.1 National Estimate of Out of School Children by Level

Stage	Population (5-16 years)	Enrolment	OOSC*	
			Number	%
Primary (5-9)	21,887,353	15,808,459	6,078,894	28%
Middle (10-12)	12,336,385	5,854,226	6,482,159	53%
High (13-14)	8,179,188	3,206,745	4,972,443	61%
Higher Secondary (15-16)	8,385,880	1,895,807	6,490,074	77%
Total	50,788,806	26,765,237	24,023, 569	47%

Source: Pakistan Education Statistics 2014-15, p. 49

*OOSC: Out of school children

Table 2.1 illustrates that the number of out of school children is higher among the age group 13-16. It is evident that 61 percent of high and 77 percent of higher secondary school age children are out of education in the country. The table further reveals that only 47 percent of children aged 10-12 attend elementary schools, where 53 percent are still out of school. The world has shown significant improvement in increasing primary enrolment during the last decade; however, 28 percent of primary school age children have not yet entered a classroom in Pakistan (UIS, 2018). The figures for the middle and secondary school age group for out of school children are also alarmingly high in Pakistan.

Table 2.2 Percentage of Out of School Children in Rural Pakistan By Age Group

Province / Territory	Age group 3-5	Age group 6-10	Age group 11-13	Age group 14-16	Rank
Baluchistan	72.4	30.1	33.3	47.1	1
Sindh	63.3	22.6	28.8	41.0	2
Federally-Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA)	64.1	16.8	19.8	32.6	3
Punjab	44.9	9.7	14.0	26.9	4
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	61.8	12.6	14.7	22.9	5
Gilgit Baltistan	60.4	13.6	10.9	19.0	6
Azad Jammu and Kashmir	49.9	4.4	4.8	11.1	7
Islamabad -ICT	24.2	1.0	0.5	0.0	8
Overall National Rural	60.8	18.0	20.3	30.1	

Source: ASER, 2014

Table 2.2 illustrates that there are insufficient pre-primary schooling facilities for the age group 3-5 in rural Pakistan; a large number in this age group are out of school across the country. However, the government is not constitutionally responsible for pre-primary education, which could be a reason for the higher number of out of school children at this level. The table further shows that the government lags behind in fulfilling its constitutional obligation of educating all rural children aged 5-16. Baluchistan, Sindh and FATA respectively have the higher number of out of school children in the country. After the pre-primary age group, the second highest number of out of school children is in upper secondary students aged 14-16. Pakistan's urban areas also suffer with this problem throughout all age groups.

Table 2.3 Percentage of Out of School Children in Urban Pakistan by Age Group

Province / Territory	Age group 3-5	Age group 6-10	Age group 11-13	Age group 14-16	Rank
Punjab	41.4	4.5	8.1	16.3	1
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)	54.4	3.5	6.1	10.8	2
Sindh	40.7	4.9	5.1	9.2	3
Balochistan	47.3	2.3	2.7	8.5	4
Islamabad Urban	28.7	0.3	0.0	0.0	5
Overall National Urban	42.2	4.3	5.7	11.0	

Source: ASER, 2014

Table 2.3 shows that a large number of children in the age group 3-5 is also out of school in urban Pakistan. Similarly, the second highest number is of secondary students across the country, apart from the urban area of Islamabad, the capital. Tables 2.2 and 2.3 both show that the phenomenon of out of school children at upper secondary level is higher in rural and urban areas of Pakistan.

Out of the total population, 53 percent live in Punjab, 22 percent live in Sindh, 14 percent in KP, five percent live in Baluchistan and the remaining six percent live in different territories of the country (AEPAM, 2013). According to its population share, Punjab has the highest number of out of school children in Pakistan. Although Khyber Pakhtunkhwa shares only 14 percent of the total population of the country, it bears the second highest number of out of school children. Baluchistan is the most underdeveloped province of the country, sharing only five percent of the total population but having a large number of out of school children. The next section explores the problem of dropping out across all school stages in Pakistan.

2.11 Dropping out of State Schools: A National Problem in Pakistan

The problem of school dropout is serious in Pakistan. The country has a comparatively high rate at international level (Sawada, 1997). This phenomenon is visible at all stages; however, this varies from class to class and year to year up to elementary education but has been consistent for secondary schooling for the last three years. The following table shows total enrolments and retention rates up to class 10 in the years 2011, 2012 and 2013.

Table 2.4 Yearly Total Enrolment in Class 1 and Percentage of Retention up to Class 10

Enrolment years	Total enrolment in Class 1	Percentage of retention until primary level (Class 5)	Retention years	Percentage of retention until elementary level (Class 8)	Retention years	Percentage of retention until secondary level (Class 10)	Retention years
1999-2000	2678433	57	2003-04	39	2006-07	27	2008-09
2000-01	2765058	58	2004-05	39	2007-08	27	2009-10
2001-02	2687703	63	2005-06	40	2008-09	27	2010-11

Source: AEPAM, 2011; 2012; 2013

From 1999-2000, the total enrolment in class 1 was 2,678,433, but by 2008-9 only 27 percent of them had stayed in education until class 10 (AEPAM, 2011, p. 31). Similarly, in 2000-1, 2,765,058 children enrolled in class 1 and by 2009-10 only 27 percent had reached class 10 (AEPAM, 2012, p. 21). From 2001-2, the total enrolment in class 1 was 2,687,703 but by 2010-11only 27 percent had gone on to class 10, so 63 percent of children had dropped out before completing their secondary education (AEPAM, 2013, p. 91). Thus, by 2013 only 27 percent of the total enrolment had stayed enrolled up to class 10. These are alarming figures for the government and policymakers. Low educational rates demand effective policy interventions to address the dropout problem in Pakistan. Firstly, it is vital to understand dropout trends at different schooling stages and then design policy measures accordingly. Policies to prevent school dropout at primary level may not apply to the elementary or secondary students and vice versa. Secondly, without closely monitoring class dropout tendencies, we cannot apprehend the problem according to age group and schooling stage. Table 2.5 shows the total enrolment and detail of dropout class to class and year to year from 2001-2 to 2010-11 in Pakistan.

Table 2.5 Percentage of Retention Rate Class to Class and Year to Year (2001-02 to 2010-11)

Class	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
1	Enrolled 2687703 (100%)									
2		81%								
3			3%							
4				9%						
5					3%					
6						1%				
7							4%			
8								40%		
9									37%	
10										27%

Source: AEPAM, 2013, p. 91

Table 2.5 illustrates class to class retention rates from grade 1 to 10 during 2001-2 to 2010-11. It shows that 37 percent of children dropped out before completing primary school (classes 1 to 5); among those who proceeded to elementary level (classes 5 to 8), 23 percent dropped out; and similarly, 13 percent dropped out during secondary classes (classes 9 and 10). Out of the total enrolment, 63 percent stayed in school until primary, 40 percent until elementary, and only 27 percent until secondary level. Overall, 73 percent of children aged 5-16 dropped out before reaching the final grade of secondary class 10. Thus, the problem of school dropout appeared to be more severe than non-enrolment in the country.

To obtain a more precise overview of out of school children in Pakistan, it is vital to understand the trends of enrolment in state schools, non-state schools and Madrasahs among children of different age groups. Table 2.6 shows the trends of school enrolment and out of school children in urban Pakistan in 2014.

Table 2.6 Percentage of School Enrolment and Out of School Children in Urban Pakistan

Children	State	Non-state Providers			Out of school children		
Age group	Govt. schools	Private schools	Madrasah	Others	Never enrolled	Dropout	Total
6-10	30.1	64.0	1.2	0.2	3.2	1.1	100
11-13	38.1	54.2	1.8	0.1	2.3	3.4	100
14-16	41.4	45.6	1.8	0.3	3.2	7.8	100
6-16	34.6	57.5	1.5	0.2	3.0	3.2	100
Total	79.0				6.2 Boys 3%, Girls 3%		100
By type	36.9	61.3	1.6	0.2			

Source: ASER, 2015, p. 81

Table 2.6 reveals that the trend of private schooling is more evident at all levels in the urban areas of Pakistan. Overall, 61.3 percent of urban children complete their compulsory schooling in private institutions, which implies that parents in urban areas are more cautious about the quality of education and send their children to private schools. Also, private educational institutions are frequently available in big cities and are easy to access. It is assumed that they can deliver a better quality of education by hiring well qualified teachers and therefore the wealthier parents are attracted by private schools (Siddiqui, 2017). It can also be assumed that parents in urban areas are also far more likely to be able to afford private schooling than parents in rural areas due to the higher availability of good jobs.

However, the issue of out of school children still exists in urban Pakistan among all age groups. Almost 6.2 percent of children aged 6-16 do not attend school in urban areas, among them 3 percent are girls and 3 percent are boys. It is important to note that the rates of out of school girls and boys are the same in urban Pakistan, which implies that the gender bias disappears at secondary level in the cities. It is also significant to note that the dropout rate among upper secondary students (age group 14-16) is the highest at 7.8 percent, as compared to other age groups in the urban areas.

Nevertheless, the phenomenon of out of school children is more evident in the rural areas. The Annual Status of Education Report 2013 states that about 21.1 percent of children aged 6-16 were out of school in rural Pakistan (ASER-Pakistan, 2013), of which 10 percent were boys and 11 percent were girls.

Table 2.7 Percentage of School enrolments and Out-Of-School Children in Rural Pakistan 2014

Age group	Govt. schools	Private schools	Madrasah	Others	Never enrolled	Dropout	Total
6-10	55.4	24.1	1.7	0.8	15.2	2.8	100
11-13	58.2	18.7	2.1	0.6	12.6	7.7	100
14-16	**51.2**	**16.4**	**2.0**	**0.3**	**15.5**	**14.5**	**100**
6-16	58.1	18.3	2.0	0.6	15.0	6.0	100
Total	79.0				21.0 Boys, 10%, Girls 11%		100
By type	69.8	27.0	2.4	0.9			

Source: ASER, 2015, p.71

Table 2.7 shows that the state is a major education provider at all levels in rural Pakistan. 69.8 percent of rural children complete their secondary education in governmental schools, whereas the ratio for urban students is 36.9 percent (ASER-Pakistan, 2015). Furthermore, 21.0 percent of rural children aged 6-16 are out of school, compared to 6.2 percent of urban children. Of the total out of school children in rural Pakistan, 11 percent are girls and 10 percent are boys. Thus, the problem of out of school children is more acute in the rural areas. The table further illustrates that 15.0 percent of children aged 6-10 living in villages never enter a classroom. As in the urban areas, the dropout rate is also higher at secondary level in rural Pakistan. The table shows that 14.5 percent of secondary school children aged 14-16 drop out of school in rural Pakistan. The trends of a Madrasah education are also evident, both in rural and urban areas of the country, with no big difference, which implies that a small proportion of society prefers a religious education over formal schooling in Pakistan. The phenomenon of out of school children is further explored in the rural areas of the four provinces of Pakistan in the next section.

2.12 School Dropout Problem in the Provinces of Pakistan

Pakistan is comprised of four provinces, namely: Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The next section discusses the issue of out of school children and particularly the problem of dropping out from public schools.

2.12.1 Punjab

Punjab is the most populous province of Pakistan, with 110,012,442 people (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). The overall literacy rate in the province is 62 percent and 54 percent of its population has completed primary schooling (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Table 2.8 shows the share of school enrolment of state and non-state education providers and the proportion of out of school children of different age groups.

Table 2.7 Percentage of School Enrolment and Out of School Children in Punjab (Rural)

Children	State	Non-state Providers			Out of school children		
Age group	Govt. schools	Private schools	Madrasah	Others	Never enrolled	Dropout	Total
6-10	58.3	30.5	1.2	1.5	6.6	1.9	100
11-13	62.1	22.8	1.2	0.9	6.2	6.8	100
14-16	52.6	18.1	1.5	0.3	9.5	18.1	100
6-16	53.7	26.0	1.2	1.1	7.1	6.5	100
Total	86.4				13.6 Boys 6%, Girls 7%		100
By type	67.2	30.1	1.4	1.3			

Source: ASER, 2017, p. 180

Table 2.8 shows that state schools are the major education providers in rural Punjab; however, private schools also have a fair share of enrolment at all levels. Approximately 13.6 percent of children aged 6-16 are out of school in rural Punjab, of whom 7 percent are girls and 6 percent boys. It is evident that the rate of dropout increases along with transition from primary to secondary education. The rate of dropout during the primary cycle is 1.9 percent, at elementary 6.8% and at secondary 18.1%. The dropout rate of the upper secondary students aged 14-16 is also highest in rural Punjab. As a whole, the issue of gender inequality does not seem to be a big problem in Punjab; the gender ratio of out of school children is 6:7 percent for boys and girls in the province.

2.12.2 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

The total population of KP is 30,523,371 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). The overall literacy rate in KP is 52 percent; the proportion of the population aged 10 years and older that has ever attended a school in the province is 55 percent, and the primary school

completion rate is 44 percent (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Table 2.9 shows school enrolment trends and percentages of out of school children in the province.

Table 2.8 Percentage of School Enrolment and Out of School Children in KP (Rural)

Children	State	Non-state Providers			Out of school children		
Age group	Govt. schools	Private schools	Madrasah	Others	Never enrolled	Dropout	Total
6-10	62.3	24.6	1.3	0.3	8.8	2.7	100
11-13	65.4	19.7	1.2	0.1	7.0	6.5	100
14-16	59.6	17.6	1.4	0.1	9.9	11.5	100
6-16	62.4	22.0	1.3	0.2	8.6	5.5	100
Total	85.9				14.1 Boys 5%, Girls 9%		100
By type	72.6	25.6	1.5	0.2			

Source: ASER, 2017, p. 160

Table 2.9 shows that 72.6 percent of children aged 6-16 attend government schools in KP; however, 8.8 percent of children of primary school age have not yet entered a classroom. Of those who enrolled, 2.7 percent dropped out during primary, 6.5 percent from elementary, and 11.5 percent from secondary schooling. Overall, 14.1 percent children aged 6-16 are out of school in this province. The ratio of out of school girls is higher in KP compared to the other provinces. The main reasons for this wide gap are regional gender inequalities across the tribal districts of KP (Mustafa, 2012), as the tribal districts of KP are less developed compared to the urban areas. Girls from the tribal belt face more cultural barriers and unequal treatment when it comes to their schooling (Mustafa, 2012). The trends of a Madrasah education are also higher in the province; about 1.3 percent compulsory school age children attend Madrasahs.

2.12.3 Sindh

The total population of Sindh is 47,886,051 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). The proportion of the population that has completed primary level is 52 percent, whereas the overall literacy rate for the population of aged 10 years and above is 60 percent in the province (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Table 2.10 shows details of school enrolment and out of school children in rural Sindh.

Table 2.9 Percentage of School Enrolment and Out-of-School Children in Sindh (Rural)

Children	State	Non-state Providers			Out of school children		
Age group	Govt. schools	Private schools	Madrasah	Others	Never enrolled	Dropout	Total
6-10	72.2	8.9	0.3	0.6	16.1	1.9	100
11-13	68.7	8.9	0.4	0.4	14.2	7.3	100
14-16	57.1	7.2	0.5	0.1	20.4	14.6	100
6-16	68.9	8.6	0.4	0.5	16.4	5.2	100
Total	78.4				21.6 Boys 10%, Girls 12%		100
By type	87.9	11.0	0.5	0.6			

Source: ASER, 2017, p. 200

Table 2.10 shows that 21.6 percent of children aged 6-16 either dropped out or never enrolled in any school in rural Sindh; of them, 12 percent are girls and 10 percent boys. As with the previous two provinces, the dropout rate at secondary level is also higher in the rural areas of Sindh (14.6 percent). The governmental schools accommodate 87.9 percent of children aged 6-16, whereas the share for Punjab is 67.2 percent and for KP, 72.6 percent. The overburdened state schools may be one contributing factor to the poor quality of education in the province.

2.12.4 Baluchistan

Baluchistan is a province of western Pakistan with a total population of 12,344,408 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). The literacy rate in the province is 44 percent and the primary schooling completion rate is 34 percent, the lowest in Pakistan (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2014). This comprises 5 percent of the total population of Pakistan and is widely scattered over 44 percent of the country's land. The scattered settlements cause a high service delivery cost which hinders educational development within the province (Government of Balochistan, 2011). Table 2.11 shows the share of school enrolment across different sectors and the state of out of school children in Baluchistan.

Table 2.10 Percentage of School Enrolment and Out of School Children in Baluchistan (Rural)

Children	State	Non-state Providers			Out of school children		
Age group	Govt. schools	Private schools	Madrasah	Others	Never enrolled	Dropout	Total
6-10	64.0	3.8	2.1	0.2	25.3	4.6	100
11-13	59.1	3.1	2.3	0.1	20.4	15.0	100
14-16	45.7	2.2	2.7	0.1	23.9	25.4	100
6-16	59.4	3.4	2.3	0.2	23.9	10.9	100
Total	65.2				34.8 Boys 15%, Girls 19%		100
By type	91.1	5.1	3.5	0.3			

Source: ASER, 2017, p.86

Baluchistan is an economically deprived province of Pakistan. Table 2.11 shows that the number of children who have never been enrolled is higher for all age groups in Baluchistan than in the other provinces. The trend of private schooling is lower and Madrasah enrolment is more evident. Among out of school children, gender inequality is also evident. The number of out of school girls is greater than the number of boys in Baluchistan. School dropout trends in primary, elementary and secondary education are also higher in the province compared to the other regions of Pakistan. As in the other provinces, the dropout rate at secondary level is at the highest (25.4 percent) in Baluchistan.

The overview of enrolment shared across various sectors and state of out of school children at national and provincial levels demonstrates that private schools share significant enrolment numbers in Punjab and KP. On the other hand, the majority of children go to governmental schools in Sindh and Baluchistan. Gender inequality is more evident in KP. Trends for Madrasah education are higher in Baluchistan after the KP. However, the problem of out of school children, and particularly of dropout, prevails among all age groups across the country. The dropout rate is comparatively higher at secondary level, both in urban and rural areas. In urban Pakistan it is 7.8 percent compared to 14.5 percent in rural areas. This rate is also higher in the provinces: in Punjab it is 18.1 percent, in KP 11.5 percent, in Sindh 14.6 percent and in Baluchistan, 25.4 percent. Thus, secondary school dropout is a national problem in Pakistan.

Policy making remained a federal function in Pakistan until 2010. As with other ministries, the Ministry of Education made national education policies and plans along with designing curricula for the country. The provinces developed their own implementation strategies to put the central polices into practice. However, the Ministry of Education, along with 16 other ministries, was devolved to the provinces in 2010 (Mukhtar, 2010).

Although the provinces are independent in policy making after the aforementioned devolution, it would not be rational to investigate the dropout issue at national level because of varied provincial policies. Firstly, the provinces may be responding to the problem of dropping out with their own approaches and according to their local and regional conditions. Secondly, time and resources are limited for the intended research and it is not feasible to study the problem at country level. Thirdly, the objectives of the research can be better met through micro study. Hence, the province of Punjab is chosen to examine the phenomenon of secondary school dropout in detail.

There are various reasons for selecting Punjab. Firstly, it is the most populous province and has the highest number of out of school children in the country. Secondly, it is economically and culturally more developed compared to other provinces and can offer a well-balanced study. Thirdly, doing fieldwork in the remote rural parts of KP or Baluchistan is very risky because of the on-going War on Terror (WoT). Lastly, the researcher cannot speak or understand regional languages of other provinces, which would make social interaction difficult with the participants during fieldwork. The inability to speak or understand participants' languages may change meanings and interpretations of the results. Thus, Punjab is the rational choice for the study in the given circumstances. In the next section the problem of school dropout has further been explored in the province of Punjab.

2.13   The Problem of Secondary School Dropping Out in Punjab

The province of Punjab is divided into 36 districts. The district of Lahore and Multan have been classified as urban and the remaining 34 districts are rural (ASER-Pakistan, 2014b). However, some slum areas of districts in Lahore and Multan also fall into the rural class. Although this is the most populous province of the country, the majority of out of school children in Pakistan live in Punjab. There are huge variations in the number of out of school children among the districts in Punjab. Table 2.12 shows the percentages of out of school children in the rural districts of the province. A particular focus was given to dropout children aged 14-16.

Table 2.11 Trends of Out of School Children at District Level, Punjab (Rural)

No.	Districts	Out of school Children (%) 6-16 years old	Never enrolled (%) 6-16 years old	Dropped out (%) 6-16 years old	Out of school children (%) 14-16 years old	
					Never enrolled %	Dropped out %
1	Attok	10.6	5.9	4.7	12.4	14.0
2	Bahawalnager	19.7	9.4	10.3	12.2	28.4
3	Bahawalpur	23.8	15.3	8.5	20.5	27.1
4	Bhakhar	15.3	8.4	6.9	14.5	19.0
5	Chakwal	6.7	3.9	2.8	3.9	7.4
6	Chiniot	27.3	16.8	10.5	21.1	24.5
7	D.Ghazi Khan	29.8	21.5	8.3	19.8	26.5
8	Faisalabad	10.9	5.0	5.8	8.3	15.8
9	Gujranwala	6.6	3.0	3.6	3.7	11.7
10	Gujrat	5.1	0.9	4.1	0.7	11.3
11	Hafizabad	11.3	6.0	5.4	6.9	17.2
12	**Jehlum**	**10.3**	**5.2**	**5.1**	**3.5**	**14.5**
13	Jhang	15.6	5.1	10.4	8.8	22.4
14	Kasur	14.1	4.5	9.6	9.1	25.6
15	Khanewal	12.9	6.1	6.8	10.4	20.7
16	Khushab	18.2	11.2	6.9	15.6	14.6
17	Lahore	11.4	4.1	7.3	5.1	16.1
18	Layyah	11.4	6.3	5.1	8.3	15.0
19	Lodhran	21.2	11.3	9.9	17.9	30.6
20	M. Bahuddin	8.3	2.7	5.6	3.2	14.2
21	Mianwali	15.5	8.4	7.1	10.1	19.2

22	Multan	20.2	9.5	10.7	16.8	26.6
23	Muzaffar Garh	17.6	9.9	7.7	10.4	20.6
24	Nankana Sahib	11.0	6.1	4.9	8.3	11.5
25	Narowal	5.9	1.3	4.6	1.8	12.0
25	Okara	18.4	11.2	7.2	16.3	18.4
27	Pakpattan	18.9	9.3	9.6	18.1	27.8
28	R. Y. Khan	27.2	18.3	8.9	23.8	20.7
28	Rajanpur	40.7	32.4	8.3	33.8	20.1
30	Rawalpindi	7.3	5.0	2.3	7.7	4.5
31	Sahiwal	11.9	5.7	6.2	12.4	15.8
32	Sargodha	12.0	3.9	8.0	5.3	20.9
33	Sheikhupura	9.7	3.7	6.0	3.5	14.1
34	Sialkot	11.9	4.0	7.9	2.9	24.0
35	Toba Tek Singh	9.4	5.2	4.2	9.2	14.1
36	Vehari	18.3	10.3	8.0	15.1	23.0

Source: Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)-Pakistan, District directory, 2013

Table 2.12 shows the trends of never enrolled and dropped out students in the rural districts of Punjab. The dropout rate at secondary level is pervasive across the province, which is above 20 percent in sixteen districts and is highest in the district of Lodhran (30.6 percent) and lowest in Rawalpindi (4.5 percent). The district of Rawalpindi is adjacent to the capital territory of Islamabad and its rural areas are more developed as compared to the other regions. Various reports from local newspapers and international organizations observed that consecutive yearly floods caused devastation in South Punjab districts such as Lodhran, Rahim Yar Khan, Multan, Rajanpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Muzaffar Garh, Bhawalpur, Khanewal, Bhakkar, Bhawalnager, Layyah and Vehari in 2012, 2013 and 2014 (BBC, 2014; TRIBUNE, 2013; UNICEF, 2012). The high dropout rate in these districts could be the result of this natural disaster because their economy is mostly based on agriculture. The twenty-five districts of the Punjab have a higher than average dropout rate at secondary level in rural Pakistan, which is

14.5 percent. The ten districts show less than average national rural dropout rate for secondary students.

Jhelum was the only district of Punjab where the dropout rate for children aged 14-16 was 14.5 percent in 2014-15, exactly the same as at the national level in rural Pakistan. Thus, for this research, the district Jhelum was the perfect depiction of rural Pakistan to be chosen as the sample district to study the dropout phenomenon from secondary education at the grass-roots level. The rationales for selecting the district of Jhelum and the context and introduction to the research location have further been discussed in the methodology, Chapter Four. The next section highlights the likely socioeconomic impact of secondary school dropout.

2.14   The Likely Socioeconomic Impact of Secondary School Dropout

In Pakistan, children aged 6 to 16 are more numerous than in any other age group, but unfortunately a great number of them leave school before completing secondary education. According to the Pakistan Labour Force Survey 2013-2014, 45.2 percent of males and 30.6 percent of females aged 10 years and above have below secondary school education in the country (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2015). This survey further identifies that 35.3 percent of youths aged 19-15 (49.7 percent male and 19.2 percent female) is part of the labour force, whereas 11.7 percent of young people of the same age are unemployed. It is crucial to invest in their education and training to accumulate human capital for the labour market.

Completing compulsory schooling can contribute to individual well-being and to the socioeconomic development of the country. If pupils do not complete secondary education, they will have fewer future opportunities and the government's investment in their schooling goes to waste (Sabates, Akyeampong, Westbrook, & Hunt, 2011). School completion provides positive signals to potential employers and they see the graduates as more efficient and productive compared to the non-completers (Spence, 1973). High school graduates are more politically and socially active than dropouts (McCaul, Donaldson, Coladarci, & Davis, 1992); therefore, school completion has a greater socioeconomic impact on an individual and society.

In Pakistan, a secondary school certificate is a prerequisite to enter a college or to take other professional courses. Similarly, schooling is necessary in securing a job in government sector in the country where all jobs require qualifications, apart from as an unskilled worker, janitor or a watchman. Dropping out from the secondary stage limits the opportunities for further education and securing a job; this also reduces future earnings and increases

unemployment. The country suffers with poor labour (Oreopoulos, 2007; Rumberger & Lamb, 2003) and cannot meet the future demands of its job market.

Education brings many private and social rates of return for an individual, the community and the state. The individual or private rate of return to education is usually calculated through earning ability, which considers direct/indirect schooling cost and opportunity cost, whereas social returns to schooling are estimated through social costs and social benefits (Tembon & Fort, 2008). However, Tembon and Fort (2008) acknowledge that collecting social benefits is more difficult than estimating social cost, because social benefits are manifold. The analysts only account for those social benefits which are more visible in social life.

Psacharospoulos and Patrinos assert that the "average rate of return to another year of schooling is 10%" (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004, p. 112). On average, individual or private rates of return to schooling in developing countries are 27 percent for primary, 17 percent for secondary and 19 percent for higher education (Psacharopoulos, 1985). Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2004) further argue that social returns to education for women are higher than those for men at secondary level. The social rate of return to education has been estimated at 27 percent for primary and 16 percent for secondary schooling in developing countries; however, the private rate of return is even higher (Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 1986). Kenayathulla (2013) corroborates this and finds that average private returns to education for secondary schooling are higher for females (27.2 percent) than for males (16.5 percent) in Malaysia; she also maintains that these returns are highest at secondary level for both genders compared to the other educational levels and therefore she emphasises the need for completion of secondary schooling to gain a higher return to education, particularly for women.

Cuaresma and Mishra (2011) observe that investment in secondary education is a vital instrument to a steady economic growth in 120 countries. Similarly, Basten and Cuaresma (2014) advocate that investment in secondary education yields stronger economic effects in the least developed countries. Mingat and Tan (1996) further confirm that expansion of secondary education brings the highest social returns in middle-income countries. Nasir and Nazli (2000) found that an extra year of schooling gives 7.3 percent additional income to an individual in Pakistan. Generally, an individual can increase his/her lifetime wealth if he/she completes an extra year of compulsory schooling (Oreopoulos, 2007). However, this finding is based on the data drawn from compulsory schooling laws in the US, Canada, Britain and Ireland; its

replication to a developing country like Pakistan is difficult. Nevertheless, Birdsall, Ross, Sabot, Haen and Sathar (1993) argue that if Pakistan had achieved a primary enrolment rate equal to that in Indonesia in 1960, it could have increased its per capita income by 25 percent.

Hence, dropping out of school has serious implications for economic growth and income generation. Illiteracy is a major obstacle to the economic development of Pakistan (Alderman, Kim, & Orazem, 2003). Social and economic returns associated with schooling depend on the quality of education and Behrman, Ross and Sabot (2008) therefore argue that expanding the quantity and improving school quality can increase productivity and earnings. They further concede that improving school quality at primary level has a greater rate of return than increasing access to elementary schooling in Pakistan.

Investing in education accumulates human capital investment. Becker argues that "education and training are the most important investments in human capital" (Becker, 1994, p. 17). Human capital theory states that skills learnt at school become one's human capital resources in the labour market; further, education increases productivity and efficiency, improves job skills and readies the youth for later employment (Becker, 1994). Some studies ascertain that this investment is low in Pakistan as compared to other countries having similar per capita income levels (Behrman & Schneider, 1993; Birdsall et al., 1993; Sawada, 1997; Summers, Khan, & Sabot, 1992); this is one of many possible reasons for the large numbers of out of school children in the country. The poor quality of education is also an outcome of low investment in human capital and it instigates the problem of dropping out from school. School dropouts have lower education training and skills compared to the school completers; therefore, they have fewer job opportunities in the labour market (Brekke, 2014).

Dropping out from school negatively impacts an individual's behaviour and society (Maton & Moore, 2010). Dropouts may become involved in criminal or other immoral activities. Kronick and Hargis (1990) argue that it causes unemployment, physical/mental health problems and higher crimes. However, not all dropouts are necessarily involved in crime: Sweeten, Bushway and Paternoster (2009) argue that if high school dropping out for males occurs purely to take employment, it decreases the crime rate. Thus, activities after dropping out determine the behaviour of the dropouts in society. Nevertheless, dropping out from school carries some psychological problems, such as the sense of losing self-esteem in society and the fear of fewer career opportunities in the future (Kaplan, 1983). There is a strong correlation between dropouts, mental illness and homelessness (Kronick, 1994).

Dropouts often experience longer periods of unemployment (McCaul et al., 1992), and getting a place in the job market becomes more difficult for those dropouts who have previously been in incarceration (Miller & Porter, 2007). Dropout adults are also more likely to use drugs (Mensch & Kandel, 1988), and there is evidence that male high school dropouts consume more alcohol than their graduated peers, which causes a substantially negative impact to the individual and to society (McCaul et al., 1992). Townsend, Flisher and King (2007) presented a systemic review of the peer-reviewed studies published between 1990 and 2006 which showed a clear relationship between high school dropout and substance abuse.

Furthermore, high school dropouts would presumably remain unemployed or earn less than the graduates, pay less tax in the future, and use public welfare services, all of which are a great economic loss to society as a whole (Kronick, 1994). McCaul et al. argue that it has a deleterious effect on later citizenship practices and participation in a democratic society (McCaul et al., 1992, p. 204).

Women are more affected by the dropout phenomenon as it reduces their employment and further educational opportunities (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986), pushes them towards early motherhood (Mahler, 1999) and brings psychological dysfunction (Kaplan, 1983). Female dropouts, particularly those with children, face great disadvantages in the labour market (McCaul et al., 1992; Miller & Porter, 2007). Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2004) maintain that an extra year of schooling increases females' wages by 10 to 20 percent in developing countries. There is evidence that secondary schooling harvests more returns to women than men (Kenayathulla, 2013; Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004; Tembon & Fort, 2008). Therefore, investment in female education is vital to accumulating human capital.

Pakistan invests less in female education compared to other South Asian countries. Economic growth may well be "seriously affected by the low levels invested in human capital" (Sawada, 1997, p. 698). Tembon and Fort (2008) argue that a minimum of 10 years of schooling benefits women in the labour market in Pakistan. This finding implies that girls in Pakistan must complete secondary education to gain the benefit of the educational outcomes of their schooling.

In Pakistan, 132.19 million people out of a total population of 207.8 million live in rural areas (NIPS, 2018), where farming is a big source of income. Dropping out from school also affects the agricultural sector and there is evidence that completing four years of primary schooling increases productivity for the farmers by 8.7 percent in developing countries because

they can read relevant literature and protect their crops (Lockheed, Jamison, & Lau, 1980). In addition, farmers' schooling increases the likelihood of adopting new seeds and enhancing their profitability (Foster & Rosenzweig, 1996).

Apart from the economic benefits, school completion brings many social and private returns from education for the farmers. For example, in rural Pakistan, positive households' income reduces the possibility of dropping out from school (Sawada, 1997). When the farmers' productivity is increased, they earn more from their crops. This extra income may help the poor families to keep their children in school. Some other common benefits of completing school education include better family health and nutrition, and lower fertility rates and child mortality (Sawada & Lokshin, 2001). At the individual level in Pakistan, low income and poor educational achievement of adults further limits their capacity to afford to school their children (Alderman et al., 2003). Most of the sub-Saharan African and South Asian countries, including Pakistan, are trapped in this vicious circle.

Another adverse impact of girls' school dropout is that the country would suffer a shortage of female teachers in the future. There is evidence that a lack of female teachers causes girls' low rates of enrolment in Pakistan (Alderman, Behrman, Khan, Ross, & Sabot, 1996). This problem is more apparent in Baluchistan, a thinly populated province of Pakistan (Alderman et al., 2003), but Sawada and Lokshin (2001) also report a problem of the shortage of female teachers. The effects of dropout from school at secondary level are manifold; they not only slow down economic growth at the national level, but also cost individuals' welfare and community development.

In rural Pakistan, the dropout rate among the children of secondary classes aged 14-16 was 14.5 percent in 2014 and 2015; however, it increased to 15.6 percent in 2016 (ASER-Pakistan, 2014a, 2015, 2017a). Thus, the problem of dropping out from secondary schools needs the urgent attention of policymakers in Pakistan. The country is also investing less in education in comparison to the other countries in the region. Therefore, it cannot afford to waste the scarce financial resources it invests in children's education. The country will also be deprived of many socioeconomic gains if a large number of pupils drop out before completing compulsory secondary schooling. The next section discusses the policy interventions introduced by the government of Punjab to increase enrolment and prevent school dropout in the province.

2.15   Potential Policy Interventions to Prevent School Dropout in Punjab

As with the phenomenon of out of school children, policy interventions to address dropout are also contextual in their nature; one particular policy action may or may not work in every situation. For example, Schargel and Smink (2014) recommend fifteen strategies to solve the dropout problem in the USA. They endorse family involvement, early childhood education, reading and writing programs, mentoring, service learning, alternative schooling, out of school enhancement, professional development of teachers, openness to diverse learning styles, adoption of instructional technologies, individualised learning, systematic renewal of the school's goal and objectives, community collaboration, career education and conflict resolution and violence prevention programmes (Schargel & Smink, 2014, pp. 41–44).

Pakistan is dependent on international aid for its educational development (Lingard & Ali, 2009). It has few resources to introduce early childhood education, alternative schooling for dropouts and arrangement of extra reading and writing programmes for in-school children. Furthermore, 64 percent of its population live in rural areas (NIPS, 2018) and the overall literacy rate in the country is 60 percent (PSLM, 2014); therefore, family involvement in schooling, particularly when parents are illiterate, may not be very helpful. Similarly, social and cultural contexts are different in the remote rural areas compared to the urban areas. Thus, policy interventions to prevent dropout in the remote rural areas are certainly different.

A number of studies show a positive relationship between household income and schooling (Behrman & Knowles, 1999; Behrman & Schneider, 1993; Birdsall et al., 1993; Holmes, 2003; Sawada, 1997). To compensate for sudden household income shocks and to encourage poor households to invest in the human capital of their children, conditional cash transfer (CCT) is a common policy intervention adopted by many developing countries, including Pakistan. The condition of cash transfer is linked to school attendance. These schemes aim to help the poor students meet their educational expenses and compensate for their out of school labour activities. Conditional cash transfer, fee exemption and school feeding schemes significantly improve enrolment, attendance and progression (UIS, 2017a).

2.15.1 Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Programmes in Pakistan

In Pakistan, the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and the Child Support Programme (CSP) are well-known forms of conditional cash transfer schemes. The BISP was started in 2008 to help underprivileged households. Currently, a cash support of Rs.1500 ($15)

per month is given to needy families to eliminate extreme poverty, empower women and achieve universal primary education targets. At present, approximately 4.7 million households are receiving benefits through this programme (Government of Pakistan, n.d.-a). Additionally, Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) runs a child support programme in fifteen districts across the country, where eligible families get a cash subsidy of between Rs.300 and Rs.600 on condition that their child attends school (Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, n.d.). Such CCT programmes have a positive impact on girls' enrolment in schools in Pakistan (Fiszbein & Schady, 2009).

A large number of studies from other countries confirm that conditional cash transfer programmes have a positive impact on school enrolment and retention. Mo et al. (2013) explored the effectiveness of CCT in one poor county in Northwest China and found that overall it decreased the dropout rate to 60 percent. The programme proved more effective for girls, junior students, and those with poor academic performance. Similarly, Schultz (2004) analysed the impact on school enrolment of a school subsidy programme in poor rural communities in Mexico, known as Progresa. He observed that school enrolment at primary and secondary level increased for both boys and girls and further noted that the impact was greater for girls than boys at secondary level. Moreover, the subsidy also reduced working patterns in the targeted areas.

However, Janvry, Finan, Sadoulet and Vakis (2006) studied the same Mexican Progresa program and observed that although conditional cash transfer programs served as safety nets for keeping children at school, it did not stop them from working when exposed to income shocks in the form of illness, unemployment of adult family members, or losses to agricultural crops due to natural disasters. They argued that the income effect of the cash transfer was not enough to change the household's behaviour towards child labour in response to such shocks. Nevertheless, a large number of studies agree that conditional cash transfer programmes help poor children to continue their schooling. For example, Khandker, Pitt and Fuwa (2003) found that the Female Stipend Programme in Bangladesh significantly increased female enrolment and attendance at secondary level in rural areas. However, it did not impact males' enrolment at the same level. This implies that the secondary school students in rural areas have other reasons for non-attendance which cannot be compensated by the female stipend programme for the family. Filmer and Schady (2008) corroborate these findings and show that, in Cambodia, the female scholarship programme, the same as the CCT, increased girls' enrolment and attendance in secondary schools by 30 percent. They further showed that the impact of this programme was far greater for females than males from economically disadvantaged families.

Thus, conditional cash transfer schemes do significantly increase secondary school attendance for females (Slavin, 2010). Poor students from developed countries also benefit from such programmes; for example, Akabayashi and Araki (2011) confirm that tuition support programmes to poor students doing vocational courses at private high schools in Japan significantly reduced the dropping out figures. The extent of transferred cash varies between countries and impacts school attendance accordingly. Filmer and Schady (2011) studied this in Cambodia and found that cash transfer nearly equal to 2 percent of the household consumption increased school attendance by 25 percent, whereas a larger amount had only the same impact. Therefore, a modest cash transfer is more useful in improving attendance than a higher one.

The Government of Punjab, Pakistan, introduced the Punjab Education Sector Reforms Programme (PESRP) in 2003 to improve quality, access and governance of the education sector in the province. It brought in a number of policy interventions for educational development, such as the provision of free text books up to secondary classes, a female scholarship programme in fifteen districts having a literacy rate below 40 percent on condition of 80 percent school attendance, upgrading schools, improving infrastructures, recruitment of new graduate teachers, strengthening the school councils by assigning them more financial powers, and improving the monitoring and evaluation mechanism (Chaudhury & Parajuli, 2010).

In 2009, the Government of Punjab established the Punjab Educational Endowment Fund (PEEF) to provide scholarships to the talented but poor students of 16 less developed districts of southern Punjab. The poor secondary students of these districts get Rs.800 ($8) if they are day scholars, and Rs.1500 ($15) if they are boarders, provided they achieve at least 60 percent in their elementary board exams and their parental monthly income is less than Rs.1500 ($150) (Punjab Educational Endowment Fund (PEEF), n.d.). However, the extent that financial incentives improve the actual learning and educational outcomes of the beneficiaries is a largely under-studied area. Overall, the main purpose of CCT programmes appears to be increased enrolment and attendance rates. It is a short-term poverty alleviation policy measure in response to household income shocks.

2.15.2 Abolition of School Fees

Abolition of school fees is another prominent incentive to increase access and retention. However, Ohba (2011) argues that this policy intervention encourages poor primary level students to stay at school in rural Kenya, but the impact is insignificant at secondary level. He further argues that the continuation to secondary schooling largely depends on the opportunity

cost and immediate economic returns. If the low-income families perceive fewer economic benefits of secondary education, fee waiver policies are less effective in poor countries like Kenya. Yi et al. (2012) reported similar findings from rural China, where older students are more likely to drop out of school because of the high cost of schooling. Colclough, Rose and Tembon (2000) also found that although school fees were waived in Guinea, it was hard for poor households to meet indirect schooling costs, such as uniform and stationery, and produce birth certificates for enrolment in schools. There is no significant school fee in public schools in Pakistan; the government hardly charge, at £2 for a year up to secondary schooling (Siddiqui, 2017b); thus, school fees is not a barrier to continue schooling in public schools in Pakistan.

Recently, the government of Punjab has implemented a number of programmes to facilitate poor students and extend free educational facilities to poverty-stricken areas of the province. This includes supplying free textbooks, giving stipends to female students, the Danish school project, foundation assisted schools (FAS), the new school programme (NSP), and the education voucher scheme (EVS).

2.15.3 Supply of Free Textbooks

The government of Punjab has been providing free textbooks to all students from nursery to class 10 studying at public or public-private partnership schools in the province since 2004 (PESRP, 2015). This provides all pupils with free textbooks regardless of their financial background. This is a good policy initiative of the government to expand schooling and share the educational expenses with parents as the children of poor families do not need to buy text books for school.

2.15.4 Khadim-E-Punjab Zewar-e-taleem Programme for Girls

The chief minister of Punjab Mian Shabaz Sharif has given himself a title: *Khadim-E-Punjab* (servant of Punjab) and *Zewar-e-taleem* means 'ornament of education'. This project is operating in 16 districts of Punjab namely Bhakkar, Kasur, Okara, Lodhran, Vehari, Pakpattan, Khanewal, Jhang, Dera Ghazi Khan, Rajanpur, Muzaffargarh, Layyah, Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, Rahim Yar Khan and Chiniot; these districts are comparatively underdeveloped and have lower enrolment and retention rates than other districts. The girls enrolled in grade 6-10 received Rs.1000 ($10) per month on a quarterly basis, on condition of achieving at least 80 percent attendance at school (Government of Punjab, 2018). The main objective of this stipend is to increase and maintain female enrolment in public schools in the targeted districts,

and some 80,000 school girls were added to the Zewar-e-taleem Programme in the first phase (Iqbal, 2017).

Chaudhury and Parajuli (2010) assessed the impact of a stipend programme on female enrolments in government-funded middle schools in the Punjab. They found that enrolment increased by 9 percent and school attendance by 10 to 13 percent for girls aged 10-14. Similarly, Alam, Baez and Carpio (2011) evaluated how the Punjab Female Stipend Program addressed the gender gap in secondary education, and observed that female enrolment in elementary classes had increased to 9 percent and they were more likely to complete their secondary school certificate. Furthermore, this programme encouraged them to work less and delay getting married.

The government of Punjab provides free education to children of brick-kiln workers; under this programme, 87 thousand children of brick-kiln workers have been enrolled in different government sponsored schools across Punjab and these children get free education, books, stationery items, uniform, shoes and a monthly stipend of Rs.1000 ($10). The brick-kiln workers also get Rs.2000 ($20) at the time of registration as an incentive to get their children enrolled in school (Government of Punjab, 2017).

2.15.5 Punjab Daanish Schools

In 2009, the government of Punjab initiated the Daanish school project to provide quality education to the talented children of underprivileged families of the Province. Daanish is a Persian word that means 'deep roped wisdom'. These are residential schools and cater for all the educational needs of destitute boys and girls who otherwise could not afford expensive English boarding schools. At the moment, there are seven Daanish schools with 5,390 students in Punjab. According to the education department of Punjab, Daanish schools enrol a marginalised child if the gross monthly income of its family members is less than Rs.7000 ($70) or meet some other disadvantaged categories.[3]

2.15.6 Foundation Assisted School (FAS) Programme

According to the Punjab Education Foundation's (PEF) 2014 annual report, this programme was initially implemented in six districts in Punjab in 2005 but has now been

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[3] http://www.daanishschools.edu.pk/

extended to all 36 districts and is based on the public-private partnership model. The main purpose of FAS is to provide quality schooling facilities to poor students across Punjab. The foundation provides free text books and a monthly fee per student to the private partner schools and facilitates pupils from primary to higher secondary level. The private partner school receives Rs.450 ($4.50) per month for each student up to primary classes, Rs.500 up to elementary classes, Rs.600 for secondary classes and Rs.800 for higher secondary classes; the schools also receive Rs.100 extra for science students at secondary and Rs.200 for higher secondary levels respectively. There are 2,311 private schools working under this programme across the province and they are educating 1,299,855 students (Government of Punjab, 2014).

This is a revolutionary programme for the indigent students who otherwise would not be able to afford private schooling, providing them with a sense of privilege through going to a private school and encouraging them to complete secondary education. They may also notice a higher return to education at private schools as compared to the public ones. However, this programme may encourage students at public schools to drop out and gain admission to private-partner schools. Private schools may also induce poor students to drop out from public schools and get admission to their schools so that they can become partners of this scheme to maximise their financial benefits. Therefore, a careful study is needed to see whether this programme is helping reduce the dropout rate or not. At present, there is no evidence on the results of Foundation Assisted Schools.

2.15.7 New School Programme (NSP)

According to the PEF annual report 2014, this programme was initiated in 2008 in those districts of Punjab where the literacy rate was very low, and the number of out of school children was very high. The project aimed to increase enrolment and retention rates in the remote rural areas of the province, and functions on the basis of public-private partnership approach. The NSP encourages private entrepreneurs to set up a new school in the underdeveloped areas where there is a shortage of public or private schools. The preferred areas for opening a new school are those with a population of at least 300 that have no schools within a one-kilometre radius. To ensure quality, the NEP provides capacity development to the partner schools. The NSP has created 1,588 schools across the province with 87,822 students from primary to secondary level. This programme provides partner schools with Rs.450 per student up to elementary classes and Rs.500 per month for arts and Rs.600 for science classes at secondary level (PEF, 2014).

The NSP appears to be a useful policy intervention for the out of school children living in remote poverty-stricken areas. However, this programme does not offer any direct material incentive to poor families to send their children to school. It may be helpful to those families who want their children to continue schooling but cannot afford the cost. If a family is already living in absolute poverty and they need their children to work to meet the household consumption needs, there are fewer chances they will send their children to a free school. It is crucial to compensate for the child labour cost while providing a free education, to encourage impoverished families to keep in or send their children to school. Moreover, the NSP may encourage the students of nearby public schools, particularly if they are located more than one kilometre from their homes, to drop out and get admission to the new schools nearer home. Thus, to evaluate the effectiveness of NSP it will be helpful to study whether they are attracting the never enrolled or permanently dropped out children or recruiting existing students from neighbouring public schools.

2.15.8 Education Voucher Scheme (EVS)

The purposes of the Education Voucher Scheme include expanding schooling opportunities, improving school quality, strengthening public-private partnership and introducing competition amongst public and private schools (Morgan, Petrosino, & Fronius, 2013). In Punjab, the EVS was introduced in 2006 for destitute children who were out of school, dropped out or at risk of dropping out, orphans, those with disabled or ill parents, or those engaged in labour and who otherwise were not able to continue schooling. The children aged 6-16 years can register for the EVS provided they fulfil the deserving criteria. This scheme was also launched through public-private partnership. The PEF has specified conditions for the partner organizations; the EVS provides Rs.450 for primary, Rs.500 for elementary and Rs.600 for secondary classes per student on a monthly basis to the partner schools. There are more than 1,365 private schools and 0.3 million children registered under this scheme in the province (Government of Punjab, 2014). One prominent feature of this scheme is the evening classes for working children in the urban slum areas. The government of Punjab has also established a monitoring and evaluation department to make sure all the education development programmes are being implemented in their true spirit. However, EVS has not been evaluated yet in reference to its effectiveness in preventing dropping out from public schools.

The Foundation Assisted School, New School Programme and Education Voucher Scheme are identical in their nature and operation, which are targeting different localities and

segments of society. Such schemes provide a supply-side financing intervention to increase enrolment and encourage persistence and are based on public-private partnership and financial or material support provided direct to the schools, not to the children or their families. These programmes appear to stimulate the expansion of private schools with public partnership in the province of Punjab. They are offering an opportunity to financially disadvantaged children to gain a quality education at a private school to increase their return to education in future. However, the private schools in receipt of school vouchers do not necessarily provide quality education to poor students, rather they may maximise their enrolment to gain more money from the government (Morgan et al., 2013).

The existing literature mainly focuses on the evaluation of conditional cash transfer programmes and other material subsidies in response to enrolment and attendance at schools (Alam et al., 2011; Chaudhury & Parajuli, 2010; Essuman & Bosumtwi-Sam, 2013; Gelli, Meir, & Espejo, 2007). These studies quantify the outcomes in percentage increases of enrolment and attendance. Further to the supply side, the current literature emphasises the formation of school committees at local level (Amevigbe, Tchamegnon, Kodjo, & Finou, 2002; Baku & Agyman, 2002; Barrera-Osorio, Fasih, Patrinos, & Santibáñez, 2009; Bray, 1996; Pellini, 2005; Swift-Morgan, 2006).

However, the demand-side interventions are less evident in the extant literature; it largely lacks an offering on the perspectives of the teachers, parents and school dropouts at local level. Nevertheless, it is also pertinent to understand the perspectives of the people receiving these services on the solution of problems they face at the point of the delivery (Hjern & Hull, 1982; Majzub & Rais, 2010).

Majzub and Rais (2010) investigated effective dropout prevention strategies from the perspective of parents and head teachers in Malaysia. They used focus group discussions as a research method and proposed a number of actions including parental and community engagement, developing new curricula, improving the learning environment and focusing on issues related to dropping out. However, they did not include the students' perspective in their study. This study has taken account of the perspectives of the dropout boys. Therefore, this study will account for the perspectives of teachers, head teachers, community members of school councils, school dropouts and their parents, to understand their needs and demands at local level to prevent dropping out.

2.16 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the problem of out of school children in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asian countries, where the problem of dropping out intensified the issue of out of school children in those countries. The Education for All (EFA) and Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2015 identified that in 32 countries at least 20 percent of enrolled children were not expected to reach the last grade. The EFA and GMR 2015 concluded that dropout rates remained an unresolved issue in the low and middle-income countries during 2000-2015. The chapter identified a clear division of opinions when defining out of school and dropout children across various educational contexts. The existing literature is characterised by the lack of an agreed-upon definition of the term 'dropout'.

The chapter contextualised the problem of out of school children and dropping out of school in Pakistan. As evidenced by this chapter, Pakistan has more out of school children, adolescents and youth than any other country in South Asia. Pakistan has a high number of out of school children as well as dropouts at all levels. The dropout rate was the highest among secondary school children compared to other age groups, both in urban and rural areas. However, the problem of dropping out from secondary classes is more serious across rural Pakistan. It was evident that 15.6 percent of children aged 14-16 dropped out during secondary education in rural Pakistan. This phenomenon is also widespread across the rural areas of the provinces. In rural Punjab, 18.1 percent, in KP 11.5 percent, in Sindh 14.6 percent and in Baluchistan 25.4 percent of children drop out of secondary classes (ASER-Pakistan, 2017). Thus, dropping out from secondary education is a national problem in Pakistan.

The chapter also discussed the socioeconomic benefits of completing secondary education and the likely disadvantages of dropping out. The government of Punjab has introduced several policy interventions to increase enrolment and improve attendance at schools. An overview of these policy interventions and their effectiveness was also discussed in the chapter.

The next chapter highlights international policies and commitments with respect to children's rights and education. It presents various patterns and theoretical frameworks to study the dropout phenomenon. It captures and conceptualises the causes of dropping out through the

existing literature. The chapter presents a brief review of literature related to the study and justification for this research.

Chapter 3: International Policies and Commitments on Children's Rights and Education and Review of the Literature on School Dropout

3.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the international policies and commitments to children's rights in education and assesses their progress. It also discusses the obstacles to meet the targets of universal primary and secondary education in low-income countries such as Pakistan. The main purpose of the chapter is to review a number of empirical studies on dropout related to this research. The chapter focuses on studies that have explored the dropout phenomenon, directly or indirectly, through the perspectives of teachers, head teachers, dropped out children and their parents. The conceptual framework for the study has been drawn on the existing literature. Finally, the review of the relevant empirical studies helps with the identification of the gap in the existing literature. It also justifies the need for this research.

3.2 International Policies and Commitments on Children's Rights and Education

Recognising education as a basic human right and materialising its social and economic benefits, the majority of the world's governments have signed significant agreements to provide equal and quality schooling facilities to their children, youth and adults. However, signing official agreements does not necessarily mean better conditions for children and young people will be realised. The gap between commitment and actual outcomes is more evident in low- income countries for range of reasons, including limited job markets and poor economies, particularly in rural areas, where people already living in poverty are prevented from improving their lives. The gap between commitment and outcomes challenges the rationality of the targets set for the poor and low-income countries in achieving primary and secondary education in the future. There are four main international declarations for educational commitments.

3.2.1   World Conference on Education for All, 1990

To further support the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, where education was affirmed as a basic human right for everyone, in

1990 an International Literacy Year was celebrated all over the world to promote basic universal education. In the same year, a large number of representatives from 155 countries and 150 different organisations gathered at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand and they adopted the World Declaration on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs (Inter Agency Commission, 1990). The participants vowed to provide equal educational opportunities to everyone and meet their basic learning needs.

The slogan 'Education for All' encompasses children, youth and adults within and outside school. The declaration emphasises equity and access to basic education by eliminating all kinds of gender and racial disparities and prejudices. The quality of education was also set as a priority. It was also ensured that all necessary steps would be taken to remove any obstacles to educating women and disabled persons. However, the expansion of educational opportunities cannot yield the desired results for an individual and society if the actual learning outcomes remain poor; therefore, particular focus was given to adequate learning outcomes, rather than increasing enrolment and completing a formal certification (Inter Agency Commission, 1990).

In the conference, attaining Universal Primary Education (UPE) was declared a main goal for the 1990s. It was realised that developing countries needed immense resources and extra schooling infrastructures to achieve this level, which was not possible in the short term. For that reason, the scope and means of basic education were made wider. Apart from formal primary schooling, some alternate sources of education, in the form of religious and non-formal literacy programmes, were encouraged to fulfil the learning needs from children to adults. It was also asserted that mass media and community-based learning activities were broadly used to meet the learning needs of basic education. The purpose of widening the scope of primary education was to overcome the dearth of resources to reach the goal of UPE. Strengthening the partnership between different stakeholders and improving the learning environment were initiatives also promised by the conference members.

The declaration set forth some basic strategies at regional, national and international levels to attain the goal of Education for All in the 1990s. The national governments were asked to assess the needs, plan actions, define targets, create a supportive policy environment, build partnerships, mobilise sources, and design effective strategies to improve basic education in the countries concerned. At the regional level, it was suggested that, where possible, members

share experience and skills within local areas or with other countries with similar conditions, and design joint activities.

External assistance is a main source of the educational budget in many developing and poor countries. According to the conference report, this share went down in the early 1980s, but it rose slightly after 1987. The report further showed that less than five percent of the total foreign funding was spent on primary education, whereas the low-income countries received only one-third of this aid, despite the fact that they bear two-thirds of the total global population. Therefore, an increase in external assistance for primary education was advocated in the conference. It was committed that additional financial aid would be provided to the most disadvantaged countries so that they could implement their national plans for basic education. Moreover, to accomplish Universal Primary Education, other international pledges were undertaken, such as helping to enhance capacities, provide consultations on policies, and extend cooperation.

In 1999 and 2000, six regional conferences were held around the world to review the international commitments made at the World Conference on Education for All, where each country reported its progress towards achieving the Universal Primary Education goals. It was perceived that the targets envisaged in the 1990s had not been fully met. As a follow-up to these six conferences, in April 2000 the World Education Forum was held in Dakar, Senegal, and the participants adopted the Dakar Framework for Action. It was entitled 'Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments' (UNESCO, 2000).

Again, the vision of the Jomtien conference was re-affirmed: it was collectively committed to achieve the Education for All goals. The main purpose of the Dakar Forum was to assess the progress over the last decade and learn future lessons towards the Education for All targets.

3.2.2 Dakar World Education Forum, 2000

In the Dakar World Education Forum, the Education for All 2000 assessment was presented. It noted that 82 million more children had been enrolled in primary schools than in 1990. The girls' enrolment was also increased; compared to in 1990, 40 million more girls were in school in 1998. While some countries had made significant progress in achieving the Education for All goals, by 2000 around the world there were still 113 million children out of school and approximately 880 million adults were illiterate. Once again, the vision of the Jomtien conference was re-affirmed and it was jointly committed to achieve the goals such as:

improving early childhood education; ensuring every child completed primary schooling by 2015; meeting the learning needs of both the young and adults; increasing adult literacy rates by 50 percent until 2015, particularly for women; abolishing gender inequalities in primary and secondary schooling by 2005; attaining gender equality in schools by 2015, and providing quality education (UNESCO, 2000).

The participants pledged to achieve the goals set in the forum. They reiterated the need to mobilise political will at national and international level and develop effective action plans to reach the targets for basic education. They also resolved to involve civilians in the planning, designing and implementation of educational policies. Further improvements focused on educational governance and management, creating an effective monitoring system, eliminating gender inequality, ensuring a better educational environment, enhancing teacher training programmes, implementing new communication technologies, taking care of schooling systems in conflicts and disasters, and creating a system to supervise the progress on Education for All goals. Furthermore, it was promised that Education for All strategies were to be integrated with poverty alleviation and combating HIV/Aids programmes (UNESCO, 2000).

The member states were asked to better the existing strategies by 2002 or develop new policy actions with the help of stakeholders to ensure that the Education for All goals were met by 2015. The forum realised that many countries faced a lack of resources to achieve the targets within the given timeframe. Financial resources were mobilised through grants and assistance by funding agencies, particularly the World Bank, to ensure that countries were not left behind because of a lack of funds. The international community showed combined commitment in formulating strategies, mobilising sources, extending mutual cooperation, and supporting national efforts for the promotion of basic education.

The Education for All 2000 assessment showed that the problem of basic education was more severe in sub-Saharan African, South Asian and the least developed states of the world; therefore, these countries were prioritised for international assistance. Furthermore, the experience and progress of the Jomtien conference revealed that political commitment, civil partnership and strategic support of the funding bodies could make significant progress towards the Education for All goals.

The Asia-Pacific Conference on Education for All assessment 2000 was held in Bangkok, Thailand in January 2000 (UNESCO, 2000a). The Asian-Pacific countries showed some good progress in increasing primary enrolment, improving adult literacy, improving the

educational management system, enhancing the national budget for basic education, and strengthening civil partnerships. However, some challenges were also identified which hampered the goals of Education for All. One major challenge was retaining children in school. It was noted that increasing enrolment remained the main agenda in those countries, but less attention was given to retention and school completion rates. Thus, school dropout was identified as a major problem to the Universal Primary Education targets, particularly in South Asia.

3.2.3 Millennium Development Goals, 2000

In 2000, the UN Millennium Summit was held in New York where world leaders committed to end absolute poverty through global partnership. They adopted a UN Millennium Declaration and set targets for nations to achieve by 2015. The Millennium Campaign started in 2002 and nations of the world were urged to eradicate extreme poverty, achieve Universal Primary Education, ensure gender equality and empower women, reduce child morality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDs, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability, and develop a global partnership for development by and beyond 2015; these are called Millennium Development Goals (United Nations, 2014). According to the second goal of the MDGs, by 2015 every child should be able to complete a primary education.

The UN Millennium Development Goals Report 2014 indicated that since 2000, developing countries had made significant progress in primary enrolment. They had achieved 90 percent net primary enrolment by 2012, which was 7 percent higher than in 2000. Globally, however, 58 million children were still found to be out of school (United Nations, 2014). This report also identified that a high dropout rate was the primary obstacle to achieving the Universal Primary Education targets in developing regions. It further highlighted that of every four enrolled children, one or more were likely to drop out of school before completing primary school in those regions.

According to this report, sub-Saharan African countries also showed substantial progress: school enrolment increased by 18 percent from 2000 to 2012, but the rapid growth in population, conflicts and other disasters left 33 million children out of school in the region. It further revealed that the primary school dropout rate remained at 40 percent in sub-Saharan Africa between 2000 and 2011. The report also stated that the progress on getting children into school stopped in 2007, as donors did not honour the funding commitments they had made at Dakar in 2000 (United Nations, 2014). Despite the national and international commitments to

achieve the targets of Universal Primary Education by 2015, approximately 58 million children were out of school in disadvantaged and developing regions of the world (UIS, 2015).

The overview of three main international accords demonstrated that high school dropout, scarcity of sources, over-ambitious targets and donors' inability to fulfil funding promises, lack of political commitment and civil partnership, ineffective policies and conflicts were the main obstacles to attaining the UPE targets by 2015. Because of these impediments the poor countries were unable to retain all the enrolled children at schools. Further, preventing dropout had not been a main policy agenda in the international commitments'; for example, the Dakar Framework for Action set some goals and strategies for achieving objectives of Education for All, but no separate policy measure was suggested to prevent school dropout.

On the other hand, achieving the UPE targets within a certain time period was not universally feasible. The low-income countries not only needed enormous financial resources, but also improvements to infrastructure, teachers, training institutions and governance. Funds needed to be used transparently, and political stability needed to be implemented to meet the international education demands. They needed extra financial sources to compensate the reasons for non-attendance, along with effective community support at school level. Political instability, corruption, poor infrastructure, poor governance, internal conflicts and extreme poverty are some of the common characteristics of the low-income countries. For those reasons, most remained unable to achieve the internationally-set goals in education by 2015.

3.2.4 Sustainable Development Goals, 2016

In 2016, in order to follow the Millennium Development Goals (2000), the United Nations (UN) introduced Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among 17 SDGs, the fourth goal ensures that all girls and boys complete a free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education by 2030 (United Nations, 2016).

Currently around the world some 61 million children of primary school age (6 to 11 years), 62 million who are of lower secondary school age (12 to 14 years) and 141 million youth of upper secondary school age (15 to 17 years) are out of school (UIS, 2018). This problem is more serious in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The world can only meet the prescribed Sustainable Development Goals if all boys and girls complete 12 years of good quality education. The problem of dropping out from school is a barrier to such goals in poor and developing countries. Therefore, policy should focus more on retention strategies at local and global level.

3.3 Influencing Factors of Dropping Out

The existing literature on school dropout discusses the problem through the influence of demand and supply (Hunt, 2008), push out and pull out factors (Jordan, Lara, & McPartland, 1996), and the cost of schooling and rate of returns to education (Becker, 1994). Generally, demand factors are linked to individual and family characteristics, whereas supply factors are external, relating to school and community. Similarly, push out factors are associated with the school environment and pull out factors pertain to external social pressures conflicting with educational objectives. According to the standard human capital theory (Becker, 1994), schooling decisions are determined by the cost of education and rate of return to education. The opportunity cost of schooling is measured by expected foregone income as a result of attending school, whereas the return of education is measured by the expected increase in lifetime income after completing schooling. If students perceive that the cost of schooling is higher than its rate of return, they will be more likely to drop out. This theory argues that the local labour market conditions play a significant role in estimating the cost of schooling and the rate of return to education. When the youths fail to appreciate the future, the existing employment opportunities attract them to quit schooling (Oreopoulos, 2007).

Watt and Roessingh (1994) state that when a student shows poor academic performance and becomes uninterested in completing schooling they will typically drop out of school. Rumberger and Lim (2008) reviewed 25 years of research on school dropouts in the US and analysed 302 studies published on this issue by local and national institutions. They identified that the main factors associated with the dropout phenomenon were individual characteristics such as performance, behaviour, attitude and background, and institutional characteristics such as family structure, resources and practices, as well as school composition, its resources, structural features, and policies. A number of empirical studies show that the individual characteristics of pupils, demand-supply, push-pull factors and cost of schooling and expected returns of education, largely contribute to a pupil deciding to drop out of school.

To theorise and conceptualise the causes of dropping out through the existing literature, I have explored many causal factors which are related to pull out, push out factors, individual and family characteristics, and the cost of schooling versus the expected rate of return of education.

3.4 The Impact of Demand Factors: Pull Out of School

The individual and family characteristics and social and economic pressures sometimes do not match with the schooling objectives. When the individual and family characteristics mismatch with education objectives and impact of demand factors is strong, it pulls children out of school.

3.4.1 Parental Socioeconomic Status

A number of empirical studies have shown a strong relationship between parental socioeconomic status (SES) and school dropout. Parental socioeconomic status and household poverty are commonly reported factors that affect a child's education (Abuya, Oketch, & Musyoka, 2013; Al-Hroub, 2014; Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Bridgeland, 2010; Chugh, 2011; Dakwa, Chiome, & Chabaya, 2014; Huisman & Smits, 2009; Moyi, 2012; Munsaka, 2011; Stephens, 2000; Yi et al., 2012). It is generally believed that families with enough socioeconomic resources can easily afford the cost of schooling and they do not demand their children help in household chores. Sufficient resources and a lower labour demand enable children of more affluent families to continue their schooling. On the other hand, families with limited resources often require children to help their parents with manual labour and in other household activities. The pupils who engage excessively in paid or unpaid labour at home are more likely to leave school early.

Huisman and Smits (2009) investigated household effects and district level factors on primary school enrolment in thirty developing countries. They found that the characteristics of family structure, education facilities in the area, parents' educational level, father's employment status and household wealth significantly impacted the schooling decisions. Similarly, Moyi (2010) studied household characteristics and delayed school enrolment in Malawi and reported that the children of higher socioeconomic households were more likely to attend school and stay in formal education. Furthermore, Yi et al. (2012) conducted a survey of 46 junior high schools in two provinces in North and Northwest China from 2009-10 to measure the rate of dropout; they found that students with fewer family assets were more likely to prematurely leave school.

A large number of studies also report that the inability to pay for travel to schools that are a considerable distance from home caused pupils to drop out, particularly girls (Bilquees & Saqib, 2004; Chugh, 2011; Colclough et al., 2000; Holmes, 2003; Hunt, 2008; Seidu &

Adzahlie-Mensah, 2010). The cultural constraints of walking long distances to girls' schools and their parental inability to afford the cost of travelling cause the female pupils to drop out in Pakistan (Bilquees & Saqib, 2004; Holmes, 2003; Mughal & Aldridge, 2017). Also, Seidu and Adzahlie-Mensah (2010) highlighted teachers' views that travelling long distances to schools in rural Ghana was causing some poor children to drop out. Similarly, Bilquees and Saqib (2004) reported that travelling over 2km to school affected poor girls' schooling in urban Pakistan.

However, Holmes (2003) found that the distance does not affect primary schooling, only in middle and high school attendance for both male and female students in rural Pakistan. This is perhaps where young women who cannot afford transportation costs are reluctant to walk long distances to schools because of safety and cultural issues prevailing in the remote rural areas. Furthermore, Colclough et al. (2000) found that parents in rural Ethiopia and Guinea were reluctant to send their girls to schools far away from homes because of safety risks and fear of sexual harassment. Thus, financial inability to afford travel and indirect costs of school such as buying books, uniform and stationery influenced the likelihood of students dropping out from school (Ananga, 2011; Colclough et al., 2000; Huisman & Smits, 2009; Hunt, 2008; Lewin & Caillods, 2001; Liu, 2004).

3.4.2 Family Structure and Characteristics

Family characteristics have also been systematically linked to dropping out. For example, Sathar and Lloyd (1994) identified birth order within a family as a reason for school dropout in rural Pakistan. They asserted that having many siblings as result of high fertility caused educational inequality; however, first born children are more likely to attend school than their younger siblings. Therefore, they argue that in rural areas the birth order is more significant than the number of siblings. Sibling size restricts the probability of a child completing primary schooling in urban areas, but the effect is not significant in rural areas because of lower schooling costs in the latter. The possibility of completing primary education with six siblings is 14 percent for boys and 19 percent for girls in urban areas (Sathar & Lloyd, 1994). Huisman and Smits (2009) also support this, reporting that first born sons have higher enrolment rates than later born sons. Moreover, when there are three or more brothers or sisters in a family it reduces the enrolment of both girls and boys.

On the other hand, Sawada and Lokshin (2001) report that a greater number of older siblings, particularly sisters, can help with the completion of primary schooling for younger

siblings, as female family members typically contribute more to the household's labour. They also highlight that the financial contribution of employed older brothers also increases schooling possibilities for the younger siblings at secondary level. Thus, the financial contribution of older brothers to a household's resources is more important at the higher level of schooling than the non-financial contributions of older sisters in domestic labour.

In contrast, Gibbs and Heaton (2014) assert that family size in Mexico has less impact on school dropout at secondary level than at primary level. Meanwhile, Mukherjee and Das (2008) argue that family size significantly impacts dropping out rates and increases the chance of child labour. They explored the relationship between parental human capital and the child's outcomes in terms of schooling, dropping out and working as a labourer in urban India. Also, Siddhu (2011) argues that poor households with larger numbers of children in Utter Pradesh, India, tend to prefer to send their sons to secondary schools. This trend is stronger among the poor Muslims and the scheduled castes[4] that cannot afford the travel costs of distant secondary schools for all children. Thus, the number of siblings in a family has a negative effect on high school attendance of poor households' children, particularly girls (Hu, 2012; Yi et al., 2012).

Nevertheless, the number of siblings is not always a significant factor to establish school attendance: Colclough et al. (2000) found no link between sibling number and school status in rural Guinea and Ethiopia. They observed that the children attending school in Ethiopia belonged to larger families than those who did not attend. They argued that a large number of siblings distributed the household work equally and it benefited the girls' education because they had less pressure from chores. Rosati and Rossi (2003) show similar findings in both Pakistan and Nicaragua; they maintain that a large family size has a negative effect on a child's working hours. However, the presence of additional pre-school aged children at home increases their older siblings' working hours. Therefore, the burden of additional pre-school aged siblings limits the possibility of their older siblings attending school, Rosati and Rossi (2003) further argued.

However, Muganda-Onyando and Omondi (2008) contend that it is not the number of siblings, but the total amount of labour demanded from girls in a household that threatens their education. If girls are required to do more chores at home, it negatively affects their schooling (Abuya, Onsomu, & Moore, 2012). Yet, Huisman and Smits (2009) conclude that the presence

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[4] The official name given in India to the lowest caste

of grandparents in the family increases enrolment rates; likewise, children living with their extended families or grandparents are more likely to attend school. Fleisch, Shindler and Perry (2012) report similar findings in their community survey study in South Africa and argue that children living with biological parents and grandparents have better chances of going to school. One possible explanation is that grandparents or extended family members share the burden of household chores, particularly looking after the younger children, so the older siblings have a better chance of attending school. Furthermore, in the absence of biological parents, grandparents or extended family members serve as guardians for the children and extend help in their schooling.

3.4.2.1 Gender Bias

Gender bias also matters in schooling decisions in a traditional rural setup. Parents in Pakistan prefer sons over daughters (Sawada, 1997), and perceive a lower return for investment in girls' education than boys because of their limited job opportunities and bindings with future husbands (Sathar & Lloyd, 1994). The gender gap is evident in primary schooling in rural Pakistan; however, it is less perceivable at secondary level, as observed in Chapter 2, and also confirmed by Sawada and Lokshin (2001). Cole and Bojang (2002) also assert that in the Greater Banjul division of Gambia, the majority of parents think that the schooling of boys yields higher economic benefits than that of girls, so they prefer to send their sons to school rather than their daughters. Abuya et al. (2012) reported similar findings from the girls' perspective in the Nairobi province in Kenya. The girls told the researchers that their mothers advocated their sons' education at their expense. In a patriarchal rural society, the birth of a girl is not welcome. Therefore, the unwanted birth of a sibling, especially of a girl, increases the likelihood of dropout from primary schools in rural Pakistan (Lloyd, Mete, & Grant, 2009). Thus, the girls' schooling suffers from gender bias at home, in the labour market and in societies where men have dominant roles and female social interaction with the opposite sex is largely discouraged (Colclough et al., 2000).

3.4.2.2 Parental Interest in Education of their Children

Parental interest plays a major role in children's schooling, as a lack of parental interest encourages children to drop out from school (Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009), which has been noted as a cause of school dropout in developing countries; Jeynes (2007) confirms that if parents show little or no interest in the schooling of their children then the child is likely to drop out; thus, parental involvement is important to prevent the child from dropping out of

school. Tsujita argues, "Parents' higher motivation concerning their children's education plays a significant role in children's schooling and prevents children from dropping out" (Tsujita, 2013, p. 353).

There are many possible reasons for a lack of parental interest in their children's education; they may worry about the cost of sending them to school, or if they are working away from home, they may have little to no time to monitor their child's educational progress. Yi et al. (2012) confirm this in rural China and assert that children of the migrant workers, who usually stay away from home, are more likely to drop out of school.

Sometimes, schools have no effective mechanism for contacting parents and informing them about their child's progress. It is also possible that the school culture does not encourage parents to challenge the teachers' performance or take part in school management and governance. For example, the Pakistan National Educational Policy (2009) identifies that head teachers have no adequate training in working with local communities and the concept of involving parents in school affairs lacks community and school understanding (GoP, 2009). Similarly, Joshi (2014) found that the limited parental participation at public schools was due to an obvious socioeconomic gap between the teachers and relatively poor parents in two urban districts of Nepal.

3.4.2.3 Parental Education Level

Parental education has been argued to be a main cause of children dropping out from school. Children of less educated parents are more likely to drop out (Gibbs & Heaton, 2014), whereas children with educated parents have a higher educational advantage (No, Sam, & Hirakawa, 2012). However, a debate is ongoing among researchers as to whether the father's education influences a child's education more, or the mother's. Similarly, rural and urban disparities have also been disputed while observing the dropout phenomenon in relation to parental educational level.

Some studies argue that the probability of dropping out substantially decreases if the mother has attended a school; this impact is particularly positive for girls in rural Pakistan (Lloyd et al., 2009). Additionally, an educated mother increases the chance of the child completing their education by between 10 and 20 percent; the impact is greatest for rural girls (Sathar & Lloyd, 1994). Sathar and Lloyd (1994) report that a father's education is an insignificant element in completing primary schooling in rural areas because the mother helps the children more in their homework and offers a good learning family environment. Andrabi,

Das and Khwaja (2012) corroborate these findings, arguing that a mother with some education in Pakistan spends more time, approximately 72 minutes per day, on her child's educational activities and helps them with their homework. Similarly, Huisman and Smits (2009) present evidence from 30 developing countries showing that the mother's education has a significant effect on primary school enrolment.

On the other hand, Sawada and Lokshin (2001) argue that in rural Pakistan both the father's and the mother's education is of great significance at all levels of a child's education, although it does not affect the likelihood of them dropping out from secondary school. Siddiqui (2017) also shows that in Pakistan, the percentage of children's school enrolment increases to 71 percent if both parents have some sort of formal schooling experience. Overall, however, Siddiqui ascertains that the father's schooling has a greater impact on the child's school enrolment. Also, Gibbs and Heaton (2014) argue that the mother's education matters less in preventing school dropout at secondary level in Mexico. Meanwhile, Mukherjee and Das (2008) offer a contrary view, arguing that although parental education makes the child less likely to drop out, the mother's education is a more significant factor in completing secondary education. This view is also supported by Hu (2012) who reports similar findings in rural China and argues that the mother's education is particularly important in the child's high school education.

It is generally argued that educated parents perceive the returns of education as being higher than uneducated parents. Holmes (2003) insists that the impact of the mother's education is greater for girls than for boys, while the case is the opposite for the father's education. Nevertheless, the higher the education of both parents is crucial for their children's schooling, Holmes further argues. Similarly, Hazarika (2001) found a mother's education to have a greater effect on a girl's than a boy's primary school enrolment in rural Pakistan. However, Amadi, Role and Makewa (2013) report that both parents' education greatly impact the likelihood of a girl to prematurely leave school in rural Kenya. On the other hand, Bilquees and Saqib (2004) have somewhat different opinions, stating that an educated mother substantially decreases the likelihood of a girl dropping out from all levels of schooling in urban areas. In villages, they say, only highly educated mothers can reduce female dropout. If the father's education is above primary level, he can better prevent male dropout, both in rural and urban areas, but only female dropout in urban and not in rural areas. Moreover, they argue that a father with a high level of education prevents a girl's dropout in rural areas. Concurrently,

Kane (2004) found that the mother's education had a larger impact on boys compared to girls in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Mali, Morocco, and Zambia.

However, Yi et al. (2012) differ, maintaining that the mother's education does not play a significant role in preventing school dropout; it is the father's education that makes a difference, they argue, because he is the decision-maker in a patriarchal family set-up. Nevertheless, their findings are based on a specific locality of rural China, where the father's role might be more powerful as a family member, particularly when under financial constraints. However, when the family is more financially secure as the result of rural-urban migration, the mother's education becomes a more significant factor in the high attendance of children when left behind with relatives when their father has moved for work in rural China (Hu, 2012). Evidence also shows that when women in Pakistan have greater decision-making power at home, children, mainly girls, are more likely to attend school (Hou, 2011).

3.4.2.4 Parental Occupation

Parental occupation also plays a significant role in children's education. For example, Gibbs and Heaton (2014) show that if the father is unemployed or working in the agriculture sector, the children are at greater risk of dropping out from school, because the income from crops is inconsistent; the agriculture sector is more prone to income shocks. This is why Huisman and Smits (2009) assert that when a father is in an upper non-farm occupation, children are more likely to attend school; the income from a non-farm occupation is more consistent. Similarly, Micklewright, Pearson and Smith (1990) argue that parental unemployment pulls children out of school because they cannot afford the cost of schooling; under poor economic conditions, children may have to contribute to the household income instead of attending school. Therefore, the parents' employment status plays a significant role in schooling decisions for their children.

3.4.2.5 Parental Illness or Death and Loss of Family Income

Parental illness or death also affects children's schooling behaviour (Case & Ardington, 2006; Kane, 2004; No & Hirakawa, 2012; Woldehanna & Hagos, 2015; Yi et al., 2012). The children of sick or handicapped parents, one or both, are 10.1 percent more likely to drop out of school in rural China (Yi et al., 2012). Parental sickness reduces household income, which directly impacts on children's schooling. This finding implies that in the absence of a strong social safety network, sick parents are not able to afford their medical expenses and they

become a burden on the family. In this case, school-going children of the sick parents have to work and tend to their sick parent.

Parental death also causes dropping out from school, and orphaned children suffer more if they already belong to poor families; they are deprived of parental affection and financial support at the same time, which affects their education greatly. Ananga (2011) reported that parental death was one of the many reasons for dropping out of school in rural Ghana, categorising it as 'event dropout'. No et al. (2012) found the same result in rural Cambodia; they reported that the chances of orphaned children dropping out were eight times higher than those who had living parents. These studies unanimously agree that the death of both parents negatively impacts school-going children. If such children do not have proper support from the school, family members and society, they will drop out of school. However, the extant literature has rarely focused on the impact of a mother's death on her child's school attendance.

3.5 Poor Academic Progress

Sometimes students become disengaged with their studies in the classroom as well as at home. This disengagement often leads to poor academic performance and then to early withdrawal from school, known as 'falling out of school' (Watt & Roessingh, 1994). This is a process where a student fails to show satisfactory progress in his coursework and gradually becomes unable to complete their education. Falling out of school is usually a "side-effect of insufficient personal and educational support" (Watt & Roessingh, 1994, p. 293).

The academic mediation theory of dropout establishes that poor academic performance in early classes is an indicator of dropping out from high school (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000). Poor academic background and subsequent failure in class 9 is a main cause of dropping out from public secondary schools in rural Punjab, Pakistan (Mughal & Aldridge, 2017). Rumberger and Lim (2008) identified various aspects of educational performance such as grades, previous academic achievement and retention in early classes which caused dropping out in high school in the USA. Retention and grade repetition are directly linked to poor educational progress.

3.5.1 Grade Repetition

It has largely been argued that grade repetition is a contributory factor to dropping out of school (Grissom & Shepard, 1989; Jimerson, Anderson, & Whipple, 2002; Motala, Dieltiens, & Sayed, 2009; Stearns, Moller, Blau, & Potochnick, 2007). Grissom and Shepard

(1989) argued that repetition of the same class causes dropping out from high school regardless of the socioeconomic status of the student. They further maintained that repetition results in students becoming discouraged and failing, which ultimately affects further progression and reinforces their decision to drop out. In their systematic review of 17 studies specifically addressing the association between high school dropout and grade repetition, Jimerson et al. (2002) established grade repetition as the strongest predictor of students' dropping out from high school. In their review, all 17 studies, mostly done in the USA, showed that grade retention was linked to later dropout behaviour.

3.6 Household Chores/Child Labour: Opportunity Cost of Schooling

Opportunity cost of schooling is a missing expected income when a child goes to school instead of performing paid labour. Some research has shown that the opportunity cost of the children in the family business or in the labour market influences dropout (Colclough et al., 2000; Liu, 2004). This is more evident in rural areas where parents withdraw children from school to help farm (Cole & Bojang, 2002). Colclough et al.'s (2000) survey in Guinea and Ethiopia showed that the main reasons for school dropout for girls was engaging in home chores; for boys it was helping their parents on farms. Also, Abuya et al. (2012) confirmed that household workload made girls tired and affected their studies, and consequently they dropped out of school in rural Kenya. Thus, child labour in any form is a core reason of dropping out of school (Al-Hroub, 2014).

In Pakistan, 64 percent of people live in rural areas (NIPS, 2018) where agriculture is the main source of income. Helping parents on farms and in-home chores is common in a rural society. Child labour is largely connected to household poverty. According to the Pakistan Labour Force Survey 2013-14, 10.6 percent of children aged 10-14 are engaged in some sort of paid labour in the country (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2015).

A large number of quantitative studies show that child labour immensely affects schooling in Pakistan (Bhalotra, 2007; Hazarika & Bedi, 2003; Lloyd et al., 2009; Ray, 2000; Sathar & Lloyd, 1994). The root cause of child labour in Pakistan is substantial household poverty. Ray (2000) found that household poverty in Pakistan is likely to increase a child's paid employment up to 500 hours annually and consequently the child's schooling is significantly decreased; this impact is greater for girls. Sathar and Lloyd (1994) also noted that households in rural Pakistan realised a lower return from investing in female education; therefore, they were more prone to poverty when it came to schooling decisions.

Bhalotra (2007) tested a common hypothesis that child labour is a result of household poverty for rural Pakistan by using the Integrated Household Survey (PIHS) 1991. She included children aged 10-17 years in her analysis. She testified that poverty forced boys to work; however, the case for girls' labour was somewhat different. She argued that poverty did not necessarily compel girls to work; this was a cultural practice of the traditional rural society where men demanded women work at home and on farms. One possible reason for this argument was that men perceived relatively low returns of education for women. Therefore, she supported gender specific policy interventions to condense child labour and enhance schooling. She further argued that poverty reduction might reduce work and increase schooling for boys, but to get similar results for girls it was necessary to improve the perceived returns of education.

Lloyd et al. (2009) assessed the factors which caused dropouts in primary and middle schools during the period from 1997 to 2004 in rural Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They also found that household income shocks caused child labour, which increased the likelihood of dropping out of school. Hazarika and Bedi (2003) distinguished between child labour within the household and in the labour market for children aged 10-14 in rural Pakistan and showed their relevant impact on schooling costs. They showed that extra-household child labour was positively related to the schooling costs, but within-house child labour had no impact on schooling costs. Consequently, they argued that a reduction in schooling costs had a limited effect on reducing child labour in rural Pakistan.

Nevertheless, it is argued elsewhere that children who work are more likely to fail at school and their educational achievements are at a lower level (Patrinos & Psacharopoulos, 1997). However, Holgado et al. (2014) argue that there are certain determinants that impact the academic performance of the labourer children. They studied the 'Educame Primero Colombia' programme to investigate the impact of child labour on their academic performance, and found that poor working conditions, high weekly working hours and a pattern of early morning shifts negatively affected academic performance. In urban-Brazilian contexts, Cardoso and Verner found that "working does not necessarily have a detrimental effect on school attendance. Dropping out of school leads most often to inactivity, and not to work, which could be due to the lack of employment opportunities" (Cardoso & Verner, 2007, p. 14). They further argue that the conditions of extreme poverty make it harder for some students to afford school fees and transportation costs; if they work, they can meet such expenses and are more likely to stay at school than drop out. However, Cardoso and Verner did not consider how those working

patterns could affect academic performance in the long run. J.C. Lee and Staff (2007) established that the high school students who worked more than 20 hours per week in the US were more likely to drop out than those who worked less than 20 hours. Therefore, they argue, besides the characteristics of the students, such as their socioeconomic status, educational aspirations and performances, intensive working hours can cause students to drop out of high schools.

There is also evidence from the poor countries that not all the students are able to combine employment and schooling. Colclough et al. (2000) found that of the students engaging in paid work in rural Ethiopia and Guinea, some were able to balance their economic activities and schooling while others were not; the latter group consequently dropped out of school. Here, the contexts of rural and urban job markets do matter. The urban students may able to combine employment and schooling owing to good working conditions and availability of flexible job opportunities, whereas the nature of the job market is different in rural areas. It is less efficient, and the rural students may have to travel to nearby towns and cities to perform economic activities, making it more difficult for them to balance work and their education.

Quantitative studies which measure the impact of household chores and child labour on education by using large amounts of survey data found almost similar results. The existing literature presents less evidence on the estimation of forgone income when children attend school and significance of their contribution to household chores or paid labour when their families are living under financial constraints. There may be very good reasons for leaving school and helping parents or undertaking paid work. The qualitative perspective of the pupils who choose paid work over their education is largely missing in current research.

3.7 The Impact of Supply Factors: Push out of School

The influence of supply factors such as human and physical facilities at school, school policies and practices, quality of teaching and learning environment, and teachers' attitude etc., sometimes push children out of school.

3.7.1 Facilities at School and Quality of Learning and Teaching

The influence of supply factors also pushes children out of school. A lack of physical facilities like toilets, boundary walls, drinking water, classrooms, desks and blackboards negatively impact on children's education. Girls are prone to missing school when they are menstruating if appropriate, hygienic facilities are not provided (Brock & Cammish, 1997;

Colclough et al., 2000). A lack of extracurricular activities in school is also linked to dropout behaviour (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; McNeal Jr, 1995). Mahoney and Cairns (1997) examined the relationship between involvement in extracurricular activities and dropping out through a longitudinal assessment study consisting of 392 children in grades 7 and 8 in the USA. They found that the risk of dropping out was lower among those students who participated in extracurricular activities compared to those who did not participate. Similarly, McNeal Jr (1995) also established that students' participation in athletics and fine arts significantly reduced their likelihood of dropping out from school, compared to participating in academic or vocational clubs. He speculates that the need to feel involved in a "group or community may lead students to participate in activities and persist in school" (McNeal Jr, 1995, p. 76).

A shortage of teachers and teacher absenteeism affects the quality of learning and teaching and can consequently cause dropping out in rural areas (Alcázar et al., 2006; Colclough et al., 2000; Ghuman & Lloyd, 2007; Mughal & Aldridge, 2017). Mughal and Aldridge (2017) reported from head teachers' perspectives that a shortage of subject specialist teachers at public secondary schools in rural Punjab was contributing to the poor academic performance of students and causing them to drop out. The shortage of female teachers to teach girls in rural Pakistan (Ghuman & Lloyd, 2007), and the same in rural Ethiopia (Colclough et al., 2000), caused girls to drop out. Ghuman and Lloyd (2007) also found that teacher absenteeism was a problem in rural Pakistan. Similarly, Alcázar et al. (2006) found that more educated teachers tend to be absent more than teachers with less education in Peru. They further argue that poor rural communities are less able to hold teachers accountable, and this ultimately affects the quality of teaching and learning at school.

3.7.2   School Policies and Practices

Sometimes school policies and practices push pupils out of school. These include: gender-specific practices in classrooms (Colclough et al., 2000; Kane, 2004); use of corporal punishment (Boyle, Brock, Mace, & Sibbons, 2002; Mughal & Aldridge, 2017; Seidu & Adzahlie-Mensah, 2010); bullying and verbal abuse of pupils by teachers (Liu, 2004; Machingambi, 2012); negative student-teacher relationships (Machingambi, 2012); the medium of instruction; type of syllabus; and the absenteeism policy for long-term absent pupils (Boyle et al., 2002; Machingambi, 2012; Mughal & Aldridge, 2017). Boyle et al. (2002) showed in a comparative study of six countries (Bangladesh, Nepal, Uganda, Zambia, Kenya and Sri Lanka) that boys largely relate the quality of schooling to the practices of corporal

punishment. Similarly, Liu (2004) shows that verbal abuse of teachers discourages students and leads them to drop out in rural China. Mughal and Aldridge (2017) report that the harsh attitudes of teachers contributed to the dropout problem in public secondary schools in rural Punjab.

Machingambi (2012) identified boring lessons, the uncaring attitude of teachers, poor student-teacher relationships, the irrelevance of the curriculum to the job market, a lack of extracurricular activities at school, strict school policies on uniform, and suspension and expulsion as dropout-related factors in high schools in the Masvingo district of Zimbabwe. Mughal and Aldridge (2017) also found that an easy progression policy in early classes, the English-medium syllabus and overcrowded classes also caused dropout problems in rural Punjab.

Banerjee (2016) reviewed 771 studies, mainly published in the UK and US from 2005 to 2014, to establish the factors for poor academic performance of disadvantaged students in science and maths subjects. Apart from some individual and family factors, she identified that a lack of teachers' support, the school's organisational model, size, environment and adverse culture also contributed to poor academic performance. She further recognised that racial and ethnic discrimination from the school and peers negatively impacted the minority adolescents.

3.8 The Influence of Community Factors: School Councils and Dropout

Governments have adopted different strategies to improve service delivery in the education sector at local level. Among these strategies, the most common approach is school-based management (SBM) or decentralisation of the decision-making authority from the central government to the school level (Caldwell, 2005). The main purpose of SBM is to encourage parents and other community members to engage in school management and governance.

However, the patterns and strategies of SBM vary according to national policy objectives and social contexts. The degree of autonomy and where this is located establishes the dimension of devolution in any given setting (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009). Barrera-Osorio et al. (2009) classify school-based management models into four categories: administrative control (authority to school principal); professional control (decision-making authority to teachers); community control (authority rests with parents); and balanced-control SBM (authority is balanced between parents and teachers).

The current Pakistani National Educational Policy (NEP) 2009 identifies low levels of commitment and implementation as the main reasons for the poor performance of the education sector; what is outlined and prescribed in policy is not actually practiced at the point of service delivery. Poor governance, inefficient use and allocation of resources, and lack of effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms all mean that implementation is less effective. To fill the implementation gap, the NEP 2009 proposes community participation at school level (GoP, 2009).

Following the principles and directives set out in the NEP 2009, the Government of Punjab made it compulsory, through the Punjab Education Sector Reform Programme (PESRP), for all public schools in the province to form a school council consisting of parents, teachers and members of the local community. The objectives of these councils are to increase enrolment, prevent dropout, improve school infrastructure, monitor teachers' attendance at school, motivate parents to send out of school children to school, supervise the delivery of free textbooks and stipends, and prepare development plans (Government of Punjab, n.d.). At present, there is no empirical study available that evaluates the effectiveness of school councils in preventing pupil dropout in secondary schools in rural Punjab, Pakistan. This is another huge gap in the existing literature. We have little understanding of the role of local communities in addressing the dropout problem in remote rural areas of Pakistan.

Studies from other poor and low-income countries present mixed evidence on the role of local committees in preventing the dropout rate at school level. Russell (2009) examined 17 categories of decision-making in nineteen school-based models in different developing countries, including Pakistan. He identified the five most and least likely decision modes made by school committees and found that decisions about school maintenance were the most likely ones to be made and that setting goals and making policy were the least likely decision points. However, 11 decision-making modes focused specifically on monitoring students' attendance at school. Some models, like the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC), the Community-Managed Schools Programme (EDUCO) in El Salvador, the National Community-managed Program for Educational Development (PRONADE) in Guatemala, and Harambee (community self-help events) in Kenya, require school committees to make sure students are attending school. Nevertheless, there is mixed evidence regarding the efficiency of school committees in preventing school dropout.

Some studies have shown that school council members make positive contributions with respect to school maintenance, helping poor students, and arranging accommodation for teachers (Amevigbe et al., 2002; Baku & Agyman, 2002). Gertler and Rubio-codina (2007), for example, report that in rural Mexico, parents' participation in school committees ensures that there is a lesser financial burden placed on schools and that children attend school as a result of parent/council members maintaining close contact with teachers.

Some other studies also confirm that community participation helps promote school attendance, addresses dropout rates, improves students' performance and provides extra support to students (Amevigbe et al., 2002; Baku & Agyman, 2002; Pellini, 2005; Swift-Morgan, 2006). A number of studies have also shown that community participation results in positive outcomes in terms of staff retention and in addressing academic failure and pupil dropout rates, as well as continuance and completion rates at school level (DeStefano, Hartwell, Moore, & Benbow, 2006; Marshall, Mejía, & Aguilar, 2008; Nath, Sylva, & Grimes, 1999). Most of these studies show that school committees positively impact the school by creating greater accountability and decreasing teacher absenteeism and attrition (Brinkerhoff & Keener, 2003; Gropello & Marshall, 2005; King & Ozler, 2005; Salami & Kpamegan, 2002; Sawada & Ragatz, 2005).

However, some other studies present a slightly different picture of the efficacy of school committees; for example, Kremer, Moulin and Namunyu (2003) found that school committees in Kenya do not effectively prevent pupil dropout or academic failure, often failing to encourage continued enrolment. Ponce (2006) also showed that community participation did not help ensure school attendance in Ecuador. Findings from other studies have also revealed that local communities are less interested in pedagogical and personnel management in schools because they think these are issues beyond their capacity and resources (Chikoko, 2008; S.R. Khan, 2003; Swift-Morgan, 2006). It has also been shown that in certain social or cultural contexts, including rural Pakistan, politically influential people become members of school committees (GoP, 2009), but often have no time or interest in being involved in school development and management issues. F. Khan (2007) reported that 73 percent of members of school councils in the district of Sargodha, Punjab, were from high socioeconomic backgrounds. In such cases, members of school committees often become part of the problem by misusing their authority or only serving the interests of school management. Therefore, some studies conclude that school committees have a negative influence on accountability in schools (Gershberg, Meade, & Andersson, 2009; S.R. Khan, 2003; Pryor, 2005). The next

section reviews empirical studies that particularly focus on exploring teachers' and head teachers' perspectives on the issue of dropping out.

3.9 Perspectives of Teachers and Head Teachers on Dropping Out

There is a dearth of research investigating the dropout phenomenon at secondary schools in rural Pakistan, thus the literature review is largely based on studies conducted in other countries. In an international context, some empirical studies attempt to capture the dropout problem from schools through indirectly observing the behaviour of school staff members; others explore teachers' and head teachers' perspectives directly by asking questions and holding focus group discussions (Abuya et al., 2012; Al-Hroub, 2014; Bridgeland, DiIulio Jr, & Balfanz, 2009; Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007; Dakwa et al., 2014; Meyers & Houssemand, 2011; Munsaka, 2011; Nairz-Wirth & Feldmann, 2017; Seidu & Adzahlie-Mensah, 2010).

Evidence from this literature largely shows that the teachers and head teachers do not tend to believe that teaching practices and the school culture push some students to leave early; instead, they hold pupils, their parents, and other social factors responsible for children dropping out (Patterson, Hale, & Stessman, 2007; Seidu & Adzahlie-Mensah, 2010; Smyth & Hattam, 2002). For example, Bridgeland et al. (2009) explored the perspectives of teachers and principals on the high school dropout problem in the US through their nationwide survey and subsequent focus group discussions, and found that a majority of them upheld a common view that a lack of parental or familial involvement at home was a leading reason for students' dropping out; a few of them, however, held the school system, boredom, and the irrelevance of the curriculum, responsible for dropping out. Similarly, Nairz-Wirth and Feldmann (2017) conducted 60 semi-structured interviews with teachers from Austrian secondary schools to seek their views on the impact of teacher–student relationships on school dropout. The findings of their study also show that many teachers relate dropout to personal and family factors, whereas they have hardly spoken about the causes linked to the school structure, attitudes and behaviour.

Furthermore, it has been shown that students who come from disadvantaged and economically underprivileged backgrounds are often unable to meet the standards of an aggressive school culture that sets high disciplinary standards for them (Smyth & Hattam, 2002); as a result, young people often leave school early. Patterson et al. (2007) further argue that if a school "does not accept or respect the familial cultures of students and address the

effective needs of students, reform efforts are not likely to improve academic performance or increase graduation rates" (Patterson et al., 2007, p. 12).

Although teachers generally did not recognise their role in the dropout problem, Seidu and Adzahlie-Mensah (2010) observed that, along with other issues such as absenteeism, late arrival at school, punishing students with a cane, wasting teaching hours in gossip, and poor teaching practices, were all factors that contributed to the dropout problem in three rural Ghanaian schools. Seidu and Adzahlie-Mensah (2010) also reported that the teachers acknowledged that physical punishment was not a useful approach to keeping students in school because it had a negative effect on students' attendance. Some children stopped attending school because of fear of corporal punishment.

The quality of teachers is another important factor at school. Teachers of schools with fewer dropouts appear to be more professional in their appearance, attitude, supervision, and engagement with children, as compared to those schools that have a high dropout rate (Christle et al., 2007). The positive relationship between students and teachers potentially lowers the dropout rate, yet to a large extent the opportunity for building positive teacher-student relationships depends on the organisational and structural characteristics of schools (V. E. Lee & Burkam, 2003).

Dakwa et al. (2014) studied poverty-related causes for girls dropping out from school in rural Zimbabwe through teachers' and head teachers' perspectives. The researchers found that poverty and health problems such as HIV and AIDS were principle reasons for dropping out. Other contributing factors included: being placed with an inappropriate peer group, a negative attitude toward education, underage marriages, a poor attitude in and outside school, an unfriendly school environment, corporal punishment practices, and contradictions between formal schooling and religious beliefs. Although HIV and AIDS are not dropout risk factors in rural Pakistan, there is widespread fear of diseases such as dengue fever, which may influence young people's decisions about dropping out.

Some other empirical studies also captured the dropout problem through teachers' perspectives and reported: conflicts between school and home values; a desire to earn money over the cost of schooling (Stephens, 2000); high fees; poverty (Colclough et al., 2000; Stephens, 2000); child labour; low socioeconomic status; grade repetition; overcrowded classes; inadequate counselling services; early marriages; and the lack of parental involvement in schooling, all of which relate to early withdrawal (Abuya et al., 2013; Al-Hroub, 2014;

Bridgeland et al., 2009; Munsaka, 2011). Seidu and Adzahlie-Mensah (2010) reported that teachers considered students having to travel long distances to schools in rural Ghana to be another cause of dropout.

In some cultures, parents force their daughters into early marriages to receive financial benefits through dowry (Al-Hroub, 2014; Munsaka, 2011). Under such cultural practices the suitors pay large sums of money to the bride's parents at the time of the wedding. These financial gains sometimes pull girls out of school. Mughal and Aldridge (2017) report the perspectives of 22 secondary school head teachers (16 men and 6 women) on the problem of school dropouts from 16 rural districts of Punjab, Pakistan. The head teachers cited: poor academic backgrounds; an English medium syllabus; varied examination patterns at primary, elementary and secondary levels; automated progression policy in early classes; a high failure rate in class 9; demanding the teacher does non-teaching activities out of school; a large number of siblings that require looking after at home; early marriages; and the inability to afford transportation cost to schools a long distance away, as the main reasons for students dropping out in the remote rural areas of Punjab.

Children are the main actors who directly experience dropping out of school. The next section reviews the studies that investigate the dropout phenomenon through listening to the school dropouts themselves.

3.10   Perspectives of the Dropped Out Children on their Dropping Out

Dropping out of school not only casts socioeconomic impacts on dropouts but it also creates emotional distress and a loss of self-esteem (Kaplan, 1983). Tukundane, Zeelen, Minnaert and Kanyandago (2014) conducted 16 in-depth interviews with early school leavers aged 16 and 24 years in Uganda. They found that most of the participants viewed early schooling leaving as a "bad and traumatising experience which undermines their sense of self-worth" (Tukundane et al., 2014, p. 488).

The perspectives of the dropped out children are not the central issues in the existing literature on school dropout; this is more evident in the poor and developing countries. The voices of dropped out children from the public secondary schools are still unheard in rural Pakistan. The literature review on the perspectives of dropped out children is also based on a limited number of empirical studies conducted in other countries.

A number of studies attempted to seek the perspectives of school dropouts by asking them direct questions or holding focus group discussions (Bridgeland, DiIulio Jr, & Morison, 2006; T. Lee & Breen, 2007; Lessard et al., 2008; Mitchell, Del Monte, & Deneulin, 2018; Mokibelo, 2014; Ritchotte & Graefe, 2017; Saraiva, Pereira, & Zamith-Cruz, 2011; Tukundane et al., 2014; West, 2013; Zuilkowski, Samanhudi, & Indriana, 2017). The studies report various push out and pull out factors of dropping out. However, these empirical studies show that the impacts of pull out factors are stronger than the push out factors. Doll, Eslami and Walters (2013) also confirmed this observation when they compared and analysed the seven nationally representative studies in order to understand the reasons for dropping out through the dropouts' own perspectives in the US. They found that the influence of pull out factors and poor academic performance was more dominant in those studies.

The dropped out students largely related the reasons for their dropping out to the pull out factors, including family problems, having responsibilities at home, financial constraints, peer pressure, pregnancy or marriage, care of family members, personal health and behavioural issues, lack of parental support and involvement (Doll et al., 2013; Lessard et al., 2008; Mitchell et al., 2018; Mokibelo, 2014; Saraiva et al., 2011; Zuilkowski et al., 2017). In these studies, students frequently reported the pull out factor of financial problems. For example, Zuilkowski et al. (2017) interviewed 28 dropouts to investigate the reasons for secondary school dropout in Banten and Aceh, two provinces in Indonesia. They found that the high cost of schooling and the wish to relieve financial pressure on their families pulled many students out of school. Mitchell et al. (2018) had similar findings when they interviewed 20 dropouts aged 14 to 24 years in an informal settlement of the City of Buenos Aires, Argentina. They cited students' desire to care for their siblings and provide for the families as major pull out factors.

Moreover, Saraiva et al. (2011) conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 Portuguese male offenders aged between 19 to 49 years to examine their reasons for dropping out of school. They found that emotional and behavioural difficulties played a main role in their early withdrawal from school. They further discovered that grade repetition, absenteeism and poor academic achievements caused behavioural problems among students. Similarly, life turning points are dramatic events that caused anger, depression and emotional distress; sometimes family social and parental problems directly affect children and they drop out of school. This was corroborated by Lessard et al. (2008), who interviewed 80 French-Canadian Caucasians dropouts living in the province of Quebec and found that family turmoil in the form

of divorce, parental abuse, parental neglect and parental criminal activities pulled many children out of school. In their quantitative study, Parr and Bonitz (2015) used a nationally representative sample of 15,753 high school students to assess their family background, student behaviour and school-related beliefs in predicting high school dropout in the USA. They found that socioeconomic status, academic performance, parental involvement, and absenteeism were the most predictive indicators of high school dropout.

The qualitative empirical studies under review here also largely report that poor academic performance is a prominent reason for early withdrawal from school (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Lessard et al., 2008; Mitchell et al., 2018; Saraiva et al., 2011; Tukundane et al., 2014; West, 2013). There are many factors associated with poor academic performance, such as uninteresting classes, frequent absenteeism, peer pressure, failing in exams, lack of educational and family support, learning disabilities, disconnection with teachers, and a lack of academic stability (Banerjee, 2016; Bridgeland et al., 2006; Lessard et al., 2008; Ritchotte & Graefe, 2017; West, 2013; Zuilkowski et al., 2017).

In her systematic review of 771 studies published in the UK and the US from 2005 to 2014, Banerjee (2016) examined the factors relating to the poor academic performance of disadvantaged pupils studying science and maths in schools. She established some personal, family and school factors that were linked to poor academic performance. These include: the lack of pupils' positive attitudes towards school and learning; lack of role models in the low academic progression areas; lack of parental academic involvement; lack of support from school and teachers; lower maternal education, and family background.

The studies also reported through students' perspectives that some factors relating to school pushed them out. These factors include: boredom; a depressing and apathetic classroom environment; absenteeism; bullying and gossip; poor student–teacher relation-ships; and school contextual factors, such as organisational structure and the policies and practices in place (Banerjee, 2016; Bridgeland et al., 2006; Doll et al., 2013; T. Lee & Breen, 2007; Lessard et al., 2008; Ritchotte & Graefe, 2017; West, 2013). Mokibelo (2014) found that corporal punishment and the inability to speak the English language were the main reasons for dropping out from primary and junior secondary schools in the central district in Botswana when she conducted in-depth interviews with 20 dropped out students. Mughal, Aldridge and Monaghan (2018) also reported through the perspectives of 18 secondary school dropped out boys that the

English medium syllabus, poor teaching practices and unfavourable school practices push many pupils out of school in rural Punjab, Pakistan[5].

In contrast to these studies, Okey and Cusick (1995) stated another side of the story on dropping out. They interviewed a minimum of three, and in some case more than three, members of 12 Caucasian families whose children dropped out from smaller schools of Midwest districts in the USA. The purpose of this study was to examine the school perspective of dropping out. Parents, grandparents, relatives, dropouts and their friends participated in the interview process. The study showed that family dynamics were more important than socioeconomic status when it came to the educational background. It argued that a family history of poor educational performance and inherited behaviour had a greater influence in the subsequent schooling. It further argued that the problems of academic failures, conflicts with school staff and peers, suspension and expulsions were common among those students who had behavioural issues and a family history of poor school performance. Therefore, Okey and Cusick (1995) said that dropping out was not a problem but a blessing for such families.

3.11 Perspectives of the Parents of School Dropouts

Teachers and school staff generally blame poor parents for being uncaring, uninterested, and uncommitted towards their child's education and ignorant to the benefits of a good education (Boyle et al., 2002; Bridgeland et al., 2009; Mughal & Aldridge, 2017; Patterson et al., 2007; Seidu & Adzahlie-Mensah, 2010; Smyth & Hattam, 2002). However, this perception is not always true. For example, Boyle et al. (2002) noted in their comparative study that poor parents, although they had no experience of schooling themselves, perceived their child's education as a tool to escape poverty. Furthermore, they could judge the quality of education services being delivered to their children at local schools through certain key characteristics of the teachers. Bridgeland (2010) also indicated that regardless of income, race, ethnicity or school their child attends, parents recognise the importance of education.

Some studies captured parents' perspectives on the relationship between the school and the families, and the development and importance of teacher-student relationships (Connor, 2001; Krane & Klevan, 2018). Krane and Klevan (2018) held focus group interviews with 14 parents to examine their experiences of the importance of teacher-student relationships and

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[5] Mughal, A. W., Aldridge, J., & Monaghan, M. (In Press). Perspectives of dropped out children on their dropping out from public secondary schools in rural Pakistan. *International Journal of Educational Development.*

parental involvement in an upper secondary school in Norway. These studies reported positive impacts on students' performance of good relationships between teachers and parents. Liu (2004) conducted interviews with 30 families of dropout students (15 boys' families and 15 girls' families) at the junior secondary level to understand the reasons for dropping out through the dropouts' and their parents' perceptions in Weichang county, rural China. The dropouts and their parents provided various reasons for dropping out, such as being tired of schooling, financial constraints, expected future education at university, low job prospects after graduation, tough school life, a boring school environment, having dropped out friends, admiring youngsters who make money by working in the city, and the demands and persuasion by parents to quit schooling (Liu, 2004). Nevertheless, the perspectives of the parents on their children dropping out are far less documented in the extant literature. This is more evident in developing countries like Pakistan.

The review of the literature has provided the theory and concepts most relevant to this research. It is important to develop an understanding of the patterns and procedures of dropping out to conceptualise this phenomenon. Also, it is pertinent to determine the influencing factors that lead to the decision of dropping out. The next section conceptualises the influencing factors and processes of dropping out through the existing literature and establishes a theoretical framework for the study.

3.12   Processes of Dropping Out: Theoretical Framework for the Study

Most of the studies look at dropout as a process (See: Finn, 1989; Hunt, 2008; Rumberger, 1987). Rumberger (1987) highlights that dropout is a process of disengagement from school due to either social or economic reasons. Hunt ascertains dropping out should be "not presented as a distinct event, but rather a process where a range of supply-demand factors interact to influence schooling access" (Hunt, 2008, p. v). Sometimes the pressure of such factors is so strong that it makes a student unable to continue schooling. Similarly, Finn (1989) argues that dropout is a long-term disengagement process which does not happen in a single day or a school year; the reasons for this disengagement develops over a long period of time. In contrast, Stearns and Gellinie have a different opinion, contending that "the concept of a dropout process is inaccurate, as students of different gender and ethnic groups are affected by different push and pull factors at various ages and to varying extents" (Stearns & Glennie, 2006, pp. 54–55).

However, this study has conceptualised dropout as a process by following the positions of Hunt (2008) and Finn (1989). The study argues that the decision of dropping out of school is not influenced by a single big event, but rather it is an outcome of a continuing process that develops gradually over a long period of time. Moreover, the decision of dropping out is the final outcome of several interacting factors and not just one.

The theories of push out and pull out on the dropout problem and the concept of children's rights give a solid underpinning to the theoretical framework for this study. It is evident in the literature review that various individual and family characteristics and ongoing household financial pressures pull secondary school pupils out of school. Similarly, the literature review shows that lack of human and physical facilities, quality of learning and teaching and some adverse school policies and practices within school push children out of school. Therefore, the study has established pull out and push out theoretical frameworks to understand the processes and examine the reasons for dropping out that prevail inside and outside school.

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature relating to the issue of dropping out from formal schooling. It found that the lessons from the past international agreements on children's rights and education, such as the 1990 World Conference on Education for All, the 2000 Dakar World Education Forum, and the 2000 Millennium Development Goals, urged world leaders to curb the dropout problem to meet the future targets of primary and secondary schooling committed through Sustainable Development Goals.

The available literature on school dropout in Pakistan is limited. The existing studies on this issue are mostly conducted by foreign researchers and widely used household survey data to draw conclusions on school access and household characteristics and school dropout (Alderman, Orazem, & Paterno, 2001; Behrman et al., 1997, 2008; Bilquees & Saqib, 2004; Burney & Irfan, 1991; Hazarika, 2001; Hazarika & Bedi, 2003; Kermal & Ahmed, 2002; S. R Khan, Siddiqui, & Hussain, 1987; Lloyd et al., 2009; Sawada, 1997; Sawada & Lokshin, 2001, 2009). For this study, however, the literature review was largely based on studies conducted in other developing countries.

The available literature on school dropout in Pakistan, although very limited, mostly investigated the dropout problem at primary level and with quantitative approaches; a

qualitative examination, particularly at secondary level, is largely missing. Therefore, it is important to study this phenomenon considering the perspectives of school dropouts, their parents, and teachers. A qualitative perspective of the dropout problem at secondary level will further enhance the existing knowledge on this issue. This will also provide a substantial theoretical contribution to the existing theories of school dropout.

Generally, the qualitative studies on school dropout are limited to one or two particular communities or geographical areas. They investigate the dropout problem within certain communal contexts or locations. The samples of such studies are also limited to between two and five schools maximum (Abuya et al., 2013; Al-Hroub, 2014; Ananga, 2011; Dakwa et al., 2014; Liu, 2004; Munsaka, 2011; Seidu & Adzahlie-Mensah, 2010). They usually obtain secondary data on dropout through regional or national surveys and then locate a particular number of dropouts in a chosen geographical area for interviews or observation. However, there is a possibility that the chosen research location may not represent the dropout trends prevailed at regional or national levels. Therefore, it will be more beneficial to collect dropout data directly from schools and chase the dropouts from the same schools to particularise the reasons for their dropping out at the point of service delivery. This methodology will offer a better contextual understanding of the dropout phenomenon.

Furthermore, the review of the literature shows that the previous qualitative studies tend to recruit dropped out children of different ages and various grades. Although this approach offers a general understanding of the problem, it makes it more difficult to comprehend the phenomenon for particular grades and age groups. For example, Liu (2004) examines the whole cycle of the 9-year compulsory education while investigating the reasons for dropping out through human perspectives. Similarly, Ananga (2011) included 18 children aged 7–17 years to explore the process of dropping out from basic schooling in Ghana. The reasons for a 7-year-old child dropping out of school are very much different than those of a 17-year-old adolescent. Nevertheless, the policy measures to prevent dropping out from school are certainly different for various grades and age groups. The reasons for dropping out from primary or elementary classes are different to those from secondary classes. Therefore, it is pertinent to examine the problem considering age groups and grades for better policy and practices.

Likewise, it is useful to combine the perspectives of teachers, head teachers, community members of local school councils, parents and dropped out children themselves to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the dropout phenomenon at school level. This

combination is also helpful in identifying similarities and dissimilarities between their perspectives. Overall, the previous qualitative studies pay more attention to detailing the reasons for dropping out as given by the teachers, parents and school dropouts themselves. However, less attention has been paid to finding out the solution to the problem through their perspectives. Moreover, the existing literature largely established the causal factors through quantitative estimation and longitudinal studies; the qualitative aspects of the dropout process are less documented. A detailed account of the individual stories of the dropped out children, their parents, teachers and head teachers are noticeably missing in poor and developing countries. This study addresses all the aforementioned gaps in the existing literature.

The existing literature generally depicts children leaving school early in a very negative light (Dekkers & Claassen, 2001). Nevertheless, the term 'dropout' has a negative value, implying that the children themselves have chosen not to attend, or have 'dropped out' intentionally; however, it may have not been their choice, and if it was they may have had very good reasons for doing so. Notwithstanding that dropping out from school has various negative individual and social consequences (Rumberger, 2011), the circumstances leading to the decision to drop out need more academic attention to understand the nature of dropping out.

Furthermore, the existing literature acknowledges the involvement of the local community in educational development at a local level; however, the perspectives of school councillors on the issue of dropping out have not been explored. This is more evident in rural Pakistan, where perspectives of the secondary school dropped out children, their parents, teachers and community members of the local school councils are yet to be explored. This study, therefore, marks one of the first attempts to probe the issue of dropping out from the rural public secondary schools and find the solution to it through the perspectives of the said participants.

The chapter has concluded that dropping out was a process of learning disengagement that ended up with early withdrawal from school. Furthermore, this withdrawal was an outcome of various push out and pull out determining factors. The themes of children's rights to education and pull out and push out theories underpinned the theoretical framework for the study. The next chapter discusses the process of the research, detailing the research methodology and choice of methods to collect and analyse data. It also rationalises the epistemological and ontological considerations that underpin the study. Finally, the ethical

issues and cultural barriers in accessing the dropped out girls in remote rural areas are discussed.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Methods

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodological issues of the study and clarifies the ontological and epistemological positions in researching dropout and sets the rationale for choosing a qualitative approach. It also discusses the research design, including methodology, and the data collection procedures. The problems of accessing the official data on school dropout rates have also been considered. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the difficulties and problems in accessing school dropouts, particularly females aged 14 to 18 living under strict family protection in a patriarchal rural society. The issues of ethics and access are also discussed in the chapter. It finally details the manner in which data are interpreted, and the findings are analysed and reported.

4.2 Philosophical Positions in Researching Dropout: Ontology and Epistemology

The main objective of conducting a research study is to seek knowledge or to know the reality. Ontology is concerned with the nature of 'reality' or 'being'; whereas epistemology focuses on what acceptable knowledge is (Hughes, 1990). As Blaikie (1993, pp. 6–7) explains:

> …ontology refers to the claims or assumptions that a particular approach to social enquiry makes about the nature of social reality—claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other. […] epistemology refers to the claims or assumptions made about the ways in which it is possible to gain knowledge of this reality, whatever it is understood to be; claims about how what exists may be known.

Philosophers have divided opinions on the nature of knowledge and its authentic source. There are two fundamental notions that establish the relationship between science and philosophy, known as 'masterbuilder' and 'underlabourer' (Benton & Craib, 2011, p. 1). The view of the masterbuilder maintains that philosophy can provide certain knowledge about humans and the existing world through rational arguments rather than religious beliefs or emotional responses; thus, they are known as 'rationalists'. They believe that mathematical reasoning is more reliable than experience while drawing conclusions and claiming something

as knowledge. This view of philosophy is sometimes called 'metaphysics'. "In metaphysics, philosophers try to give an account of the universe, the world and everything in it" (Benton & Craib, 2011, p. 1). On the other hand, the view of the underlabourer stresses that "knowledge can come only from practical experience, observation and systematic experimentation" (Benton & Craib, p.1); believing in the sensory evidence of knowledge based on experience. The followers of this theory of knowledge are called 'empiricists'. The empiricist's view is embraced in the natural and social sciences and it inspired experimental sciences in the 17th and 18th centuries. Later, Auguste Comte, a French philosopher considered to be the founder of sociology, introduced 'positivist' philosophy. Positivism not only accepts the empiricism view of the natural sciences but also argues that the scientific methods of empiricists can equally be applied to the study of human mental and social life to establish a reliable source of knowledge (Benton & Craib, 2011).

Positivists hold the view that the world exists as an objective entity and a researcher is insensitive to it. A researcher is separated and unbiased to this reality of the world; they have no influence on the observed object and their only job is to describe and analyse it (Porta & Keating, 2008). Criticism of positivism highlights that in natural sciences the laws of nature are the subject matter, whereas in social sciences humans are the subject matter. Human social life is fundamentally different from the laws of nature, so they cannot be studied by the same rules proposed by positivism. Furthermore, social scientists as humans are not separated from their object of study. Dilthey, a notable hermeneutic philosopher, maintained that the positivist philosophy lacked in its understanding of human phenomena and is only useful when studying natural objects (Hughes, 1990).

The interpretivist approach stresses the subjective meaning of social reality. It aims to discover and interpret the meanings individuals give to their actions. The ontological position of interpretivism is that both the objective and the subjective relation of social reality exist naturally. This reality is somewhat knowable, depending on human subjectivity. The relationship between the researcher and the researched is not separate. Interpretivist epistemology aims at understanding the subjective knowledge (Porta & Keeting, 2008). Thus, the job of a social researcher is to interpret social phenomena, events and processes attributed to human lives and how the humans, as social actors, themselves interpret them. Porta and Keeting (2008) highlight that "The world can be understood […] as a series of interpretations that people within society give of their position; the social scientist, in turn, interprets these interpretations" (Porta & Keeting, 2008, p.25). Furthermore, in the view of the constructivist,

learning is a constructive process and knowledge is developed through a personal interpretation of experience. The constructivist philosophy maintains that "all we know of the world are human interpretations of our experience of the world" (Hughes, 1990).

A child dropping out from school is a universal social reality, which is particularly pervasive in poor and economically less developed countries, such as Pakistan. The main purpose of this research is to understand how students, teachers, school councillors, and parents interpret this reality in accordance with their own lived experiences. This study uses an interpretivist philosophy: subjective meaning is at the core of knowledge. As a researcher, I am not separate from the objects of study; they are human beings like me.

The aim of interpretive research is to understand the meanings human beings attribute to their behaviour, actions, motives, and the external world (Porta & Keeting, 2008). This study aims to investigate dropout behaviour among secondary school students, which includes examining the motives behind their decisions for dropping out and how they, their teachers, school councillors and parents perceive it. According to interpretivists, social reality can be constructed by using the meanings, values and lived experiences of the social actors (Hughes, 1990). Thus, in researching dropouts, the ontological position of this study is that social reality exists and can be reached with human subjectivity. The relationship between the researcher and the objects of study is natural. The epistemological position of the research is that the nature of knowledge gained through researching dropouts is subjective. Knowledge obtained through interpretivism is contextual.

4.3 Research Approaches

The choice of a research approach depends upon epistemological and ontological positions of a study (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative approaches hold interpretivist and constructionist epistemology and ontology beliefs respectively (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, a qualitative approach is adopted in this research to understand the reasons children have for dropping out of school from a human perspective. Children aged 14 to 18 are also among the participants of the study. The constructivist view is that the nature of the young person is subjective and cannot be measured objectively (Greig et al., 2013).

Humanistic psychology, for instance, begins with a view of the child as their own psychologist, creating meaning for themselves out of their experiences and interactions. When a child encounters a problem, the belief is that the child should be enabled to solve the problem

on their own. Interpretivist sociology encourages entering the child's world and meanings to get their perspective from the inside out (Greig et al., 2013, p.72).

Hunt (2008) argues that "the existing literature largely focuses on identifying push and pull factors with respect to children and young people dropping out from school, but that the processes of dropping out, the accounts of the children, their families and teachers, in addition to their social contexts and the competing demands on them, are largely absent" (Hunt, 2008, p.5). This is particularly evident with reference to Pakistan and secondary school dropouts.

The phenomenon of dropping out at secondary level has never been addressed from the perspectives of students, teachers, school councillors and parents in Pakistan. Greig et al. (2013) view qualitative research as being more suitable for studies focusing on children and young people as "a single comment from a child's perspective [can] convey much more meaning about the impact of research than a whole array of figures" (Greig et al., 2013, p.174). Therefore, in- depth investigation based on stakeholders' perspectives on dropout can contribute to policy and intervention implementation.

One of the core objectives of this research is to understand the reasons for dropping out through listening to the children's experiences, which could be different from the opinions of their teachers and parents (Lloyd-Smith & Tarr, 2000). It is also evident that children's experiences "are often under-represented in our models for understanding social phenomena [… and that] qualitative research represents an excellent venue for enhancing their participation in knowledge building and in theory development" (Mishna, Antle, & Regehr, 2004, p. 464).

Thus, considering the philosophical positions and nature of questions, the qualitative approach fits for the purpose of this study. This will also explore new aspects of reality by directly listening to the participants. This new contribution to the existing literature on dropout phenomenon is invaluable for policy implications and practice in Pakistan.

4.3.1 Case Study: A Strategy of Inquiry

A case study is "a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real context using multiple evidences" (Robson, 2002, p. 46). It can be descriptive, exploratory, or explanatory and often focuses on processes and outcomes. A case can be about anything; for example, a child, a teacher, a programme, a school or all schools in a given locality (Stake, 1995), a group of people (Hays,

2004), a community, an organisation, a household, an event (Becker & Bryman, 2012), the implementation of a policy (Hays, 2004; Bryman & Becker, 2012), or many other issues.

Dropping out from public school is a contemporary phenomenon across Pakistan but it is more severe in the rural areas. The purpose of this study is to investigate why the dropout rate is so high at secondary level, and how it can be prevented according to the views of dropouts, teachers, school councillors and parents. This requires the close examination of the issue of dropping out. Case study research should "involve the close examination of people, topics, issues, or programs" (Hays, 2004, p.218). As the researcher, I had no control over the behaviour of the participants. Case study researchers embark on their research "expecting to uncover new and unusual interactions, events, explanations, interpretations, and cause-and-effect connections" (Hays, 2004, p.218). I started my fieldwork with an open mind to embrace all unwonted divergence of attitudes and occurrence of events.

The qualitative research adopts a naturalistic approach and seeks to understand a phenomenon in a context-specific setting (Bryman, 2016). The current study was undertaken in a natural setting; the researcher physically visited the schools and the participants in their 'real-world'. Most of the interviews with the participants were conducted at their workplaces.

The dropout data were for a specific time period, from 2011-12 and 2012-13. The children who dropped out in the two years before the study and did not return to school or failed to pass their secondary school examinations were included in the study; thus, the data was time specific. Similarly, the dropout phenomenon was studied in a specific locality.

I envisaged my case study to be both embedded and multiple. The phenomenon of school dropouts is itself a case. It is a social phenomenon which is specific in time and place. The geographical location of the study is another case. The individual experiences of dropout children, teachers, parents and school councillors present a case at a particularistic level. With these factors combined, the multiple case studies are created.

It is important to note that the case study approach is not free from criticism. Two fundamental criticisms of case studies are their non-generalisability and their non-replicability. In response to this criticism, Stake argues that "the real business of case study is particularisation, not generalisation" (Stake, 1995, p.8). The findings of the study belong to particular contexts and are thus difficult to generalise to the whole population. However, it has been argued that generalisation can still be achieved through multiple studies focusing on the same phenomenon (Bryman, 2016; Hays, 2005). Bryman (2016) proposes three possible

solutions to the case study generalisation problem: first, studying multiple cases; second, the case should be studied by more than one researcher; and third, the case should be typical to many societies and situations. The purpose of this study is not to be able to generalise or extrapolate the findings; this research aims to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the dropout phenomenon at the grassroots- level. It also records and presents the perspectives of school councillors, parents, students, and teachers. This collaborative perspective of the issue has given a holistic picture of dropping out (Bryman, 2016).

4.4 Introduction of the Research Location

The dropout rate at secondary level is pervasive across the province of Punjab, and Jhelum was the only district of Punjab where the dropout rate for children aged 14-16 was the same as it was at national rural level (14.5 percent) in 2013. Thus, during the research, the district of Jhelum showed a perfect depiction of rural Pakistan to study the phenomenon of school dropout from secondary education at grassroots-level, as discussed in Chapter Two. Other reasons for selecting Jhelum included first, the fact that the district had not been hit by a natural disaster in recent years, whereas the southern Punjab districts were badly hit by floods in 2012 and 2014 (BBC, 2014; UNICEF, 2012). It was also relatively stable economically, socially, and in terms of education. Second, its economy was a mixture of agriculture, cement and chemical factories, and government jobs[6]. Third, the secondary school dropout in the district was 14.5 percent, whereas almost half of the other districts in Punjab were showing a rate of between 10-16 percent; therefore, it offered a good representation of rural Pakistan.

In the districts of Rawalpindi and Chakwal, the secondary dropout rates were 4.5 percent and 7.4 percent respectively (ASER, 2013). If these two districts were used as case studies, it could have been hard to locate dropped out children to participate in the study because of the low numbers. Furthermore, these districts would not reflect other districts with high dropout rates. Districts in Southern Punjab were facing abnormal conditions due to floods, which would not only affect the results, but also made the fieldwork more difficult to carry out. Therefore, the district of Jhelum was a rational and logical choice for the location of the

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[6] https://jhelum.punjab.gov.pk/district_profile

research during the research process. The next section presents the geographical location of district Jhelum in Pakistan.

Figure 4.1 Map of Pakistan

Source: http://www.surveyofpakistan.gov.pk/
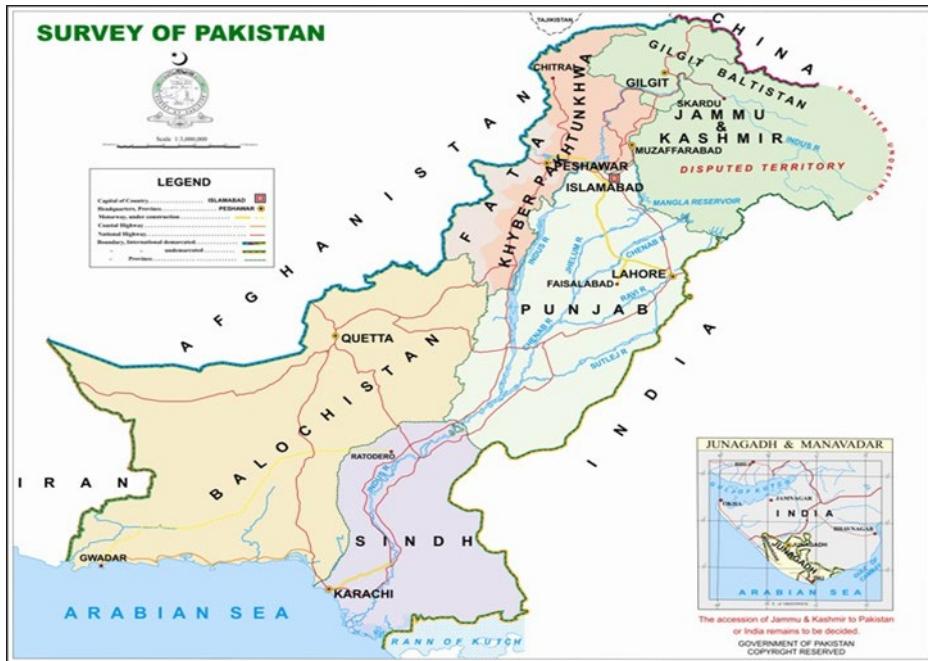
Figure 4.2 District Map of Punjab

Source: http://schoolportal.punjab.gov.pk

- *Jhelum is shaded in the sky-blue colour*

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Table 4.1 below shows the trends of school enrolment and out of school children in the Jhelum district.

Table 4.1 Percentage of School Enrolment and Out of School Children in the Jhelum District

Children	State	Non-state Providers			Out of school children		
Age group	Govt. schools	Private schools	Madrasah	Others	Never enrolled	Dropout	Total
6-10	62.2	28.7	0.6	0.2	7.0	1.3	100
11-13	73.7	19.1	0.9	0.0	3.9	2.4	100
14-16	**65.2**	**16.1**	**0.3**	**0.3**	**3.5**	**14.5**	**100**
6-16	66.3	22.6	0.6	0.2	5.2	5.1	100
Total	89.7				10.3		100
By type	73.9	25.2	0.7	0.2			

Source: Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)-Pakistan (Provincial, district directory) 2013, p. 272.

In the district of Jhelum, 10.3 percent of children aged 6-16 were out of school; the number of never-enrolled and dropped out children was almost the same. The majority of children (73.9 percent) were studying in governmental schools. Most students who dropped out do so in secondary education (14.5 percent); in this way, the district reflected the national rural trends of secondary school dropout at this level.

According to the provincial government[7], the total population of the district is 204,792 (male 601,964 and female 620,636). The overall literacy rate is 79 percent (male 86 percent and female 72 percent). The district is divided into four subdivisions, namely Jhelum, Sohawa, Pind Dadan Khan, and Dina. The subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan is considered less developed than Jhelum, which covers the cantonment area with a military garrison, and Sohawa and Dina, which are situated across the main Grand Trunk (GT) road that links Lahore and Islamabad, the provincial and federal capitals. The subdivision Pind Dadan Khan is 50 miles away from the GT road and stretches across the River Jhelum and the Salt Mountains. Most of its population lives either on the banks of the river or in its foothills. The second largest salt mine in the world is Khewra, which was discovered in 320 BC by Alexander the Great's army

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[7] https://jhelum.punjab.gov.pk/

(Williams, 2013). This salt mine is situated in the subdivision Pind Dadan Khan. Along with this salt mine, an Imperial Chemical Industry (ICI) and two large cement factories are also located in this subdivision, providing many jobs for local people. However, agricultural and governmental jobs are the main occupations for people living in this subdivision. The economy of this subdivision is a mixture of industrial, agricultural and governmental jobs.

4.5 Research Design and Methods

The research process was started by collecting data on school dropout. In 2012-13, the subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan had 36 secondary schools (18 for boys and 18 for girls). It also had two higher secondary schools for boys and in addition to classes 9 and 10, they also offered extra years for classes 11 and 12. I sent a form to these schools with an introductory covering letter and requested them to provide details of dropped out children for the last two academic years. At this initial stage in the research, only two schools responded to the request. I kept chasing the schools but did not succeed in meeting my objectives. The schools were reluctant to provide the required information.

After the initial strategy of collecting statistics on dropping out from schools failed, the researcher attempted to access the required data through the Executive District Officer (EDO) for Education in Jhelum. Again, this office did not cooperate in providing the desired data. As a third strategy, the researcher sought help via personal contacts. A renowned ex-parliamentarian, along with a retired principal of a college, visited the EDO education office in Jhelum; with this third-party intervention, then the EDO agreed to make official arrangements to gather statistics on dropout from the public secondary schools situated in the subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan. The office staff of the EDO officially collected the required dropout data from schools and handed it to the facilitator, the ex-parliamentarian, who then posted it to me in the UK. Thus, personal contacts and word of mouth were useful tools to allow me to meet the objectives for accessing the dropout statistics and details of dropped out children. Out of 38 schools, 33 filed the required dropout records. Five schools (three for boys and two for girls) did not provide dropout data, even after the intervention of the District Education Authority.

4.5.1   The Criteria for Selecting Schools for Research

The initial criterion for selecting schools was based on dropout rates. Ten schools (five for boys and five for girls) which had comparatively high dropout rates in the area were chosen

to investigate the reasons for this. Similarly, ten other schools were chosen (five for boys and five for girls) which had relatively low dropout rates. The purpose of this strategy was to meet one of the study objectives of understanding why some schools had high and some others had low dropout rates - while they were located in the same subdivision. Thus, primarily 20 schools were mapped for the sample.

However, when I visited some schools I realised that the dropout rate was much higher than was officially reported. Because of the strict non-deregistration official policy, the schools kept the names of absentee children on the register for a long time, even though they knew the students would not return to school. It was difficult to estimate accurately the number of dropped out children in total, while head teachers admitted the fact that the data was officially accurate, but practically inaccurate. They were not willing to readjust or provide more precise figures. They insisted that the absentee pupils were not recorded as dropped out until they were unable to appear in the annual board exams. The official figures on the number of dropouts from secondary classes during 2011-12 and 2012-13 were presenting an imprecise description of the phenomenon in the subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan. Consequently, I had to revisit this strategy of selecting schools for the study. Although the statistics on dropping out were inconsistent, I was not sure which school had a high or low dropout rate in reality. Therefore, I did not pursue the objective of comparing reasons for high and low dropout rates among the schools.

Another objective of the study was to understand the drop-in process and investigate the reasons why and how some children came back to school after dropping out and others did not. Although some schools filed data on a small number of dropped-in students, this was also at odds with their own non-deregistration policy. This study categorised dropped-ins as those who were previously officially declared as dropped out by their school, but they re-enrolled to the same or any other formal school after some time. However, despite a long period of absence, absentee pupils were not marked as dropped out at schools. The drop-in process starts after the dropping out occurs. The non-deregistration policy of absentee pupils does not coincide with the definition of drop-in students. Thus, the drop-in process was ambiguous. For this reason, the objective of understanding the determining factors of the drop-in process was also excluded from the study.

Considering the above inconsistencies in reporting and recording dropout statistics by schools, the definition of dropouts was revisited during the fieldwork. The children who

remained out of school for the whole academic year and did not sit the annual exams were considered to be dropouts. Until their attendance in the annual board exams they were just named as absentees. This study focused and approached only those pupils who had either been officially declared 'dropped outs', after they failed to appear, or appeared but failed, in secondary school exams.

Finally, 18 schools (10 for boys and 8 for girls) were chosen for physical visiting on the criteria of their locations. Again, the criteria for selecting schools was revisited during the fieldwork; it was based on the locality of schools rather than their number of school dropouts. The 18 secondary schools included in the final sample were located in the remote rural areas.

4.5.2 Fieldwork Process

The fieldwork was completed in two phases. The first lasted from October 2015 to January 2016. The second phase took place between April 2016 and October 2016. In total, there was approximately 11 months of field work. Torrential rains, thick fog and severe cold weather made it difficult to continue fieldwork in the first phase. Some schools were located in the hilly areas, surrounded by a scattered population, and were difficult to negotiate on foot or by car in bad weather. Similarly, heavy rains also disrupted the fieldwork in the second phase. However, despite these challenges, I walked long distances on foot through unpaved and muddy passages to access dropped out children and their parents in the extremely remote areas.

4.5.3 Accessing Dropped Out Children and their Parents

The male head teachers helped in contacting the dropped out children and their parents as they were residents of the same areas and knew them and their families personally. However, the known dropped out children worked at different places in nearby towns; some watched over grazing cattle in the deep hilly areas or along the riverbank, some other known dropouts were labouring on trucks and other passenger vehicles. It was the same situation with their fathers, and I had to visit these distant places repeatedly to catch up with them. Likewise, I had to trace some dropouts and their parents who worked loading lorries, vans and buses, who had no fixed routine and remained on the move, having to negotiate access to them at bus stations, loading points and goods transport offices. However, it was easy to access those school dropouts who worked at fixed places in the neighbouring towns.

The purposive sampling technique was employed to access dropped out children, teachers, school councillors and parents. It was ascertained that the participants were relevant to the proposed research questions (Bryman, 2016). In the beginning, the participants were sampled using the schools' statistics on dropouts. I made early contact with dropped out children and their parents through the local school staff. After visiting some dropped out children, I also applied the snowball sampling technique to access further dropouts. The initial participants helped me to locate similar cases in the areas I visited, and I negotiated access to them through their friends.

4.5.4 Data Collection Techniques

The study has used a variety of data. The study aimed at investigating the lived experiences of the participants and the reasons for holding a particular view on a social phenomenon. Therefore, focus group and face-to-face interview techniques were considered for the research. As the participants resided in different areas, it was difficult to gather them in one place for a focus group discussion. Dropping out was a very personal issue and the participants might feel uncomfortable discussing their individual problems in front of others. Furthermore, the focus group technique is not suitable to probe into individual stories of the school dropouts, which is largely missing in the extant literature (Hunt, 2008). The choice was, therefore, to use a face-to-face individual interview technique to meet the objectives of the study.

Direct observation and document analysis were two other methods included in data collection. Interviews with male and female head teachers and teachers were conducted at schools during working hours. Interviews with dropped out children and their parents took place in a location chosen and agreed by the participants themselves.

This provided the researcher with an opportunity to directly observe the school environment, such as overcrowded classes, and a lack of human and physical facilities. Similarly, most of the interviews with dropped out children and their fathers took place at their workplaces. Again, the researcher observed and experienced the natural settings in which they were living and working. This direct observation validated some reasons for their dropping out, as reported by the participants. For example, if a pupil reported that he dropped out to give financial support to his family, it was clear that he was engaged in paid labour after dropping out. Similarly, if an interview took place at the home of a dropped out pupil, I witnessed that his whole family was living in a small house and the setting of it was not conducive to study.

I also analysed Minutes of the meetings of the six selected school councils for the last twelve months to understand the schools' policies and procedures for addressing the dropout problem. This document analysis technique proved useful in validating and comparing the claims made by schools in addressing the issue of dropping out at school level.

In qualitative studies, it is a common practice to employ multiple sources of data like interviews, direct observations and document analysis (Creswell, 2009). This triangulation of multiple methods and data sources offered a grounded perspective of the dropout phenomenon at grassroots-level.

4.6 Participants

Primary data were collected through in-depth individual and group interviews with 103 participants comprising 18 head teachers, 41 teachers, 18 school dropouts, 14 fathers of school dropouts, and 12 community members of school councils. Table 4.2 shows details of the participants, types and places of the interviews.

Table 4.2 Details of the Participants and Types and Places of Interviews

Participants	Number	Interview type	Recorded/ unrecorded	Interview Location
Male Head teacher	10	Individual	Recorded	School
Male teachers	20	Group (2 participants from each school)	Recorded	School
Female Head teachers	8	Group (with presence of at least two other female teachers)	Unrecorded	School
Female teachers	21	Group (with the presence of the headmistress and at least one female teacher)	Unrecorded	School
Dropouts (boys only)	18	Individual	Recorded	Multiple places
Fathers of dropouts	14	Individual	9 recorded and 5 unrecorded	Multiple places
Community members of school councils	12	Individual	Recorded	Multiple places
Total	103			

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with individuals and groups. The detail of the interview process will be discussed next.

4.7 Semi-Structured Interviews

Considering the research objectives, the researcher prepared a semi-structured interview guide for the fieldwork (see: Appendix-A). The proposed interview guide was open-ended and led to additional questions. It allowed the researcher to engage the interviewees with further discussion after asking the opening questions (Bryman, 2016).

4.7.1 Interviews with Male Teachers and Head Teachers

The interview process started with the teachers and head teachers. From each school, along with the head teacher, two senior teachers who had been teaching secondary classes for more than ten years were also requested for interview. There were total 30 (10 head teachers and 20 teachers) interviewees from the ten selected secondary schools for boys. The head teachers were interviewed individually in their school offices. Two senior teachers from each school were interviewed together in a separate, quiet room at the school. All the interviews with the teachers and heads were negotiated and conducted during school time and were tape recorded. The duration of the interviews with the male teachers and head teachers lasted between 60 to 90 minutes.

4.7.2 Interviews with Female Teachers and Head Teachers

The female teachers and headmistresses were reluctant to participate in an individual interview alone in a school room due to cultural sensitivities. All the headmistresses were interviewed in their offices and always in the presence of other staff - at least two other female teachers on each occasion. Thus, the interviews with the headmistresses and female teachers were undertaken in a group at each school. From the chosen eight girls' schools, 29 females (8 headmistresses and 21 teachers) participated in the interviews, which were held during school time. The duration of the interviews lasted, on average, about 90 minutes.

4.7.3 Interviews with Parents of School Dropouts

Fourteen fathers of the secondary school dropped out children were interviewed to understand their perspective of the problem; I could not recruit any mothers of dropped out pupils because of cultural sensitivities. The interviews with the fathers of school dropouts were held at different places. The fathers were not very expressive in their thoughts and perspectives on the issue of dropping out; they offered short answers to the research questions and would not elaborate more on their views. None of them had completed secondary education and they

all belonged to a low socioeconomic class of society. They were doing labour works at local level or were engaged with their own small-scale agriculture businesses. Some of them were not able to read and write; I had to read aloud the participants' information sheet and consent form to them in their own language. The duration of the interview with them was about 30 to 40 minutes on average.

4.7.4 Interviews with Community Members of School Councils

It is a prescribed responsibility of the community members of the local school councils to help prevent pupil dropout. To explore the perspectives of the local people on the issue of dropping out, six school councils (three from boys' schools and three from girls' schools) were included in the study. From the selected school councils, 12 community members (two from each school council) were interviewed individually. The interviews with them lasted for 40 to 60 minutes. They all possessed average socioeconomic status and lived locally.

The head teachers acted as facilitators to enable access to the community members of the school councils. Due to social and cultural constraints, it was not possible for the male researcher to approach female members of the girls' school councils on his own. Therefore, the researcher asked the headmistresses who participated in the study to invite female council members to their schools for an interview in a public setting, with others present. However, none of the female community council members was willing to be interviewed. Thus, out of the eight girls' secondary schools included in the sample, three schools that had male school council members were included in the study. Some girls' secondary schools had all male council members because of the lack of female participation in school affairs at local level.

4.7.5 Interviews with Dropped Out Children

Until the 1990s, the perspectives of children and young people were largely missing in qualitative research because of the dominance of experimental methods in developmental psychology and the long-held assumption that children are not able to or entitled to have their own perspectives (Alderson & Morrow, 2004; Greig et al., 2013; Hendrick, 2000; Malcolm Hill, 2005; Masson, 2004; Mishna et al., 2004). Either the children were not considered competent to express their views or they were dependent on their parents' or teachers' consent to participate in a research study. The researchers rarely asked the children themselves to participate in a study (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Masson, 2004; Tisdall, Davis, & Gallagher, 2009; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008).

Recently, the paradigm has shifted towards involving children in research and valuing them as capable participants who can give their perspectives on issues that affect them (Alderson & Morrow, 2004; Christensen & James, 2008; Mishna et al., 2004; Prout & James, 2014). Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 also gives children the right to express their opinions on the issues and decisions that may affect them (Taylor, 2000); hearing the "voices of young people themselves about their educational experiences is overdue" (Crozier & Tracy, 2000, p. 174). More recent research with children and young people recognises the social construct of childhood and that children can be considered both dependent and autonomous (in different contexts/settings); the 'new' sociology of childhood considers children as active citizens with important contributions to make. For example, Greig et al. (2013) contend:

> All our attitudes, perceptions and beliefs about children and adolescents are – like our attitudes – socially constructed. That is, those realities we accept as established knowledge about children and young people, how they think, feel and behave, are not actually objective realities; rather they are a construction of the machinery of human meaning making.
>
> (Greig et al., 2013, p. 51)

The existing literature on research with children presents two extremes: children are "just the same or entirely different from adults" (Punch, 2002, p. 322). Punch (2002) further argues that the perception about the status of children directs data collection methods. The concept of childhood, as sociological theories endorse, is socially constructed. It is constituted by specific cultural and structural components of a society rather than its biological composition (Prout & James, 2014). However, child development models are socially and culturally specific (Woodhead, 2009) and cultures across the world have their own meaning of childhood and adolescence (Greig et al., 2013).

The concepts of childhood and adolescence in one region of the world may not necessarily be the same elsewhere. Therefore, the researcher must be open to the use of methods that are better suited to children, particularly their "level of understanding, knowledge, interest, and particular location in the social world" (Greene & Hill, 2005, p. 8). Childhood has different stages ranging from infant to adolescence; each stage needs to be treated differently. Age is considered to be a fundamental criterion to distinguish infants, young children, teenagers

and adolescents (Greene & Hill, 2005; Hendrick, 2000; Scott, 2008). Scott (2008) establishes that a child of 11 has the ability to express its perceptions and deal with open-ended questions.

This study adopted the definition of a childhood established by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as being up to 18 years of age (see Chapter One). In this research, 18 school dropouts from secondary classes were individually interviewed to understand their perspectives of the issue under investigation. The individual interview technique offers the opportunity for an interviewee to express the reasons "for holding a particular view" (Bryman, 2016, p. 502). The age range of the school dropouts included in the study was 14-18 years.

I found the school dropouts fully capable of expressing their perspectives on the issue of dropping out and reflecting on their own experience. Some interviews with them were held at their workplaces, such as shops and bus stands. However, I realised that the shop owners interrupted the interview process. To assure the accuracy of data, I had to change the strategy of interviewing such children at their workplaces and I therefore negotiated meetings with them during their free time and in a quiet public place or at their homes.

Although Pakistan is a signatory of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and declares its constitutional responsibility to provide compulsory schooling to children up to age of 16, child labour is common across the country. This means that a different approach is needed when considering children and young people being able to contribute to research independently and without their parents' consent, but with their own consent across different cultures.

I noted that often the dropped out children were more confident, responsive, and expressive than their parents and in some cases, even than their teachers. It was further revealed that two of them were married and living independent lives. This implies that the social construction of childhood for boys in a patriarchal society such as rural Pakistan is based on cultural structures rather than biological approaches. Thus, I treated all children as adults while interviewing them.

For all interviews, the researcher followed the guidelines suggested by Bryman (2016), such as: ordering and altering the questions for an easy flow of information; using language relevant to the interviewees; asking general information about the participants to know their gender, age and experience; becoming familiar with interview settings; being prepared for questions interviewees may ask during or after the interview; negotiating the interview in a

quiet place; and possessing a good quality recording device. The interviews with the school dropouts lasted between 40 minutes to one hour.

4.8 Ethical and Cultural Barriers in Accessing Dropped Out Rural Girls

The first phase of data collection failed to generate any evidence about school dropout among girls because I was unable to recruit any women to the study for interview. This was entirely due to ethical and cultural barriers that prevented me from gaining access to the dropped out girls. Although data on the numbers of dropout girls were received from the relevant schools in Pind Dadan Khan, cultural barriers prevented me from pursuing individual cases and contacting the girls' families in order to seek permission for their daughters to participate in the research.

One of the first problems I encountered during this initial phase of the fieldwork was that rural culture in this remote location did not allow an 'outsider' to say the name of a young woman publicly. These barriers were anticipated prior to the research starting and were assumed to be addressed by asking female teachers to mediate with a view to access to families. Female teachers and headmistresses were in a better position than an 'outsider' to negotiate meetings with dropped-out girls and their parents because they had developed a good level of trust with local families and communities. They were also officially responsible for setting up school councils and involving parents in school affairs.

However, the female teachers and head teachers interviewed for the study said that while they had done everything to persuade some of the girls and their parents to re-enrol in school, their efforts yielded no results. Similarly, in the dropout study, they were unable to mediate access to families by accompanying the researcher to visit dropped out girls and/or their parents at their homes. According to the teachers, one of the reasons for this was that many parents were irritated by their frequent visits and often shut the door on them, refusing access or to speak to them. Thus, it was not possible for me to gain access to the dropped out girls or find out anything about their lives or what had happened to them after dropping out, even with the help of female teachers.

A further problem was that even if I had been able to trace the girls and make direct contact with their parents, I was informed (in the main by headmistresses) that it was unlikely that parents would grant permission for their daughters to be interviewed because of strict Purda (veil) traditions, and in some instances because of the absence of male family members

at home. During this initial phase of the fieldwork, a number of female teachers also warned me not to seek consent from parents or other family members of dropped out girls to interview them, as a meeting between a male 'outsider' and a local female would not be considered culturally acceptable in such remote rural areas.

A further reason why some parents did not wish to disclose or discuss why their daughters had dropped out of secondary school was because families believed that girls, once they started puberty, should be protected and that personal and private matters relating to their daughters should not be discussed with others. Girls in rural areas are considered a family honour and mentioning their names or desiring to meet them could potentially 'damage' their honour and even, potentially, endanger their lives, the female teachers further warned me.

In which case, it was decided that schools were the only safe and protected public places where interviews with girls who lived in these remote areas could take place, with the help of the female teachers. These teachers were asked to invite the dropped out girls to their schools so that they could be interviewed in the more 'reassuring' environment of the school with others present. However, this approach still required permission from parents to allow adult girls under the age of 18 to see an outsider at school for an interview. The female teachers were reluctant to invite the dropped out girls to the school without informing their parents. They feared that the parents would not allow a one-on-one meeting of their girls with an 'outsider', even within the safe school environment. They further said that the families in the remote rural areas did not accept any form of social interaction of their girls with outsiders. In both the first and second phases of the fieldwork, a number of female teachers promised to talk to the parents and their dropped out daughters regarding the proposed interview, but these conversations never took place.

I was also warned by one of the teachers not to pursue his research on dropped out girls in the interests of my own personal safety. The parents would not respond well to being asked for permission to approach their daughters to take part in interviews. While ethical protocols and the guidance in research involving 'vulnerable' groups and sensitive subjects focusing, rightly, on protecting the lives and interests of participants, the safety of researchers must also be a primary consideration. In this instance, I had to withdraw from pursuing this aspect of the research further by ceasing to try to access these 'hidden' dropped out girls directly.

The objective of the second phase of the fieldwork was then to identify and recruit intermediaries onto the project; these included Lady Health Visitors (LHVs) and female

Community Mobilisers (CMs) of the National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) who were working in the same area. The role of LHVs is to advise about family planning and also to work with pregnant women. The CMs run female-led groups at village level and aim to advance girls' and women's socioeconomic status. A set of questions was designed for the intermediaries to use during interviews with girls at their homes in order to understand their reasons for them permanently dropping out of school. The objective was to include the perspectives of the dropped out girls using a socially and culturally acceptable method (and one that would, hopefully, overcome cultural and ethical barriers). Both the LHV and CM intermediaries frequently visited the houses in their designated areas and had direct interaction with females in families.

The strategy of seeking the perspectives of the dropped out girls through LHVs and CMs of the NRSP was, however, unsuccessful for a number of reasons. Firstly, many of the LHVs working in the area did not have the knowledge or skills, nor in some cases the required level of education themselves, to understand and discuss the issue of school dropout at secondary level. Secondly, they were working under the District Health Department and were unable to conduct interviews or surveys without seeking formal permission from the relevant authorities (CMs also had to obtain permission to undertake interviews from their managers, which was a complicated process and one that involved reference to protocols outside local jurisdictions).

Likewise, obtaining permission from the parents of the dropped out girls for them to participate in interviews was also problematic, even though confidentiality and anonymity were assured. Some parents did not want their daughters' stories to be heard by other people, even female health and community workers, as the female head teachers reported. The main barrier, then, was families' ongoing refusal to discuss their daughters' lives or - where they were still living at home and were accounted for - to allow them to talk to strangers (male or female) about their own lives and experiences, and thus denying them a voice in the project. As a result of these cultural and ethical barriers, I completely withdrew from seeking the perspectives of the dropped out girls.

4.9 Data Analysis

A researcher needs a framework which can guide him/her through the analysis of data. Qualitative researchers adopt an inductive data analysis strategy, focus on participants' views, interpret the meaning of seeing, hearing and understanding, and develop a holistic picture of

the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research uses five general strategies for data analysis, namely: analytic induction; grounded theory; coding, thematic analysis; and narrative analysis (Bryman, 2016). Each strategy has its own usefulness depending on the nature of the study and the objectives of the research. Considering the research objectives, this study adopts a thematic analysis strategy to develop theoretical understanding of the data. All data were organised according to the core themes. Information on themes was illustrated in abstract form and an inductive process was employed to establish "a comprehensive set of themes" (Creswell, 2014, p.176), guided by the theoretical framework as applied in the literature review to study the dropout phenomenon (see Chapter Three). These themes emerged from the literature.

Key themes were constructed from the interview texts through thematic analysis of the views of teachers, head teachers, school councillors, and school dropouts and their fathers, on the issue of dropping out. Furthermore, central and subthemes were constructed by reading the transcripts back and forth for the digitally unrecorded interviews. The emerging themes were linked to the literature; they largely support the theoretical framework of the study. However, some other themes emerged that were not found in the existing studies on dropout. The new findings extended the pull out and push out dropout theories.

It is to be noted that the female teachers and head teachers did not permit their conversations to be recorded; thus, data from their interviews were noted in a diary and then analysed manually. For this to happen, summaries of their responses had to be written and then arranged into categories and themes. However, it was assured by considering the research questions and objectives of the study that the themes were significant, relevant and had implications to the research investigation (Bryman, 2016). Finally, the main points of the transcripts were translated into English. For recorded interviews, I used NVivo, Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software to generate codes and form them into separate themes.

4.10 Ethical Considerations

Full ethical clearance was granted to the project via Loughborough University's Ethical Committee and also from the head teachers at all the schools included in the study. All ethical considerations prescribed by the Loughbrough University Ethical Committee such as confidentiality, anonymity, consent and storage of data were strictly followed during the fieldwork (See Appendices B and C for further information).

4.10.1 Seeking Informed Consent from Students, Parents and Teachers

I gave the Information Sheet and Informed Consent Forms to all respondents. Although these papers were in English, I translated them into Urdu because all participants needed written information about the project. I also read all the forms clearly and loudly in the participants' own language so that they could understand the meaning. In addition, I briefed them about the nature of the research and usage of data. Before the interviews, I obtained the signed informed consent forms, translated into their own language so they knew what they were signing.

4.10.2 Recording Interview Data

I asked permission from the participants for the interviews to be recorded. Most of the male participants, including the teachers and head teachers, were happy for the recorded interviews to take place; they believed that dropping out was a big social issue which needed to be addressed. However, some other male participants had never been interviewed before and therefore were unaware of interview protocols, use of data and even the meaning of a research study. They agreed to recorded interviews after I briefed them about the objectives of the research, usage, storage, and confidentiality of data.

Nevertheless, the female teachers and headmistresses did not permit a recorded interview to take place, which I had anticipated prior to the fieldwork. Before starting the fieldwork for this research, I conducted a study on the issue of dropping out from public secondary schools in 16 rural districts of Punjab where secondary school dropout rate was 20 percent[8]. I used telephone interview methods to collect primary data from the male and female head teachers; none of the female head teachers allowed me to record her interview over the phone. However, I was mentally prepared for it. I always kept a diary with me during the fieldwork and noted the female teachers' and head teachers' responses manually.

It was not socially or culturally acceptable to record a woman's voice during the fieldwork. Similarly, it was not acceptable to take a photo of the female teachers and the head teachers. I was advised by the local facilitators not to carry a camera and take photos during the fieldwork to protect my reputation as a researcher. The local people might take it negatively especially when I was frequently visiting the girls' schools in their areas. It was necessary for

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[8] Mughal, A. W., & Aldridge, J. (2017). Head Teachers' Perspectives on School Drop-Out in Secondary Schools in Rural Punjab, Pakistan. *Educational Studies*, 53(4), 359-376.

me to respect the local culture as well as protect my own safety during the fieldwork. To protect and respect the privacy of the participants, the real names of the respondents have been changed (pseudonyms are used) to hide their identities.

4.11 Authenticity and Reliability of Data: Reflections on Research Process

This study has provided me with an opportunity to reflect on the challenges and opportunities I faced as a researcher. During the research process, the reliability of the contents of this study was my priority as I was mindful that the voices of the secondary school dropouts, their parents, teachers and community members of school councils located in the remote rural areas were yet to be heard. As a researcher, it was my academic and ethical responsibility to report their perspectives with authenticity, accuracy, and respect. Another purpose of this reflection was to know if the purposes of the current study have been met or not.

All the interviews were conducted in the preferred locations of the participants, where they were relaxed and free to speak their minds, which was necessary for the validity of the study. The interviews with teachers at schools, at the workplaces of the dropouts and their fathers validated the data in many ways. For example, when teachers identified a lack of physical facilities at school, I observed many children sitting on the ground. In the second phase of the fieldwork, the data were presented to the teachers and heads of school to confirm the authenticity and reliability of findings.

Of the 18 dropouts, 17 were found to be employed after dropping out; this validated their claims that they dropped out to contribute to the household income. The low socioeconomic status of the dropouts was evident as they were found to be engaged in unskilled work; such field observations strengthened the data's reliability.

Analysis of the Minutes of the school councils' monthly meetings validated the perspectives of non-school members of councils and some teachers who reported that the issue of dropouts was never discussed during the meetings of school councils. Similarly, the process of formation and functioning of school councils was validated by the community members of school councils. Thus, the trustworthiness, authenticity, and reliability of the research was ensured by applying different methods of data collection. These included interviews, field observations, and document analysis to study a single social phenomenon, of school dropouts. This multivariate approach also gave a grounded perspective on school dropout.

Collecting data on numbers and the details of dropouts directly from schools was a big challenge. In the initial stage, schools were reluctant to provide the requested details and the Executive District Education Officer was unresponsive. It took many months to find a way to approach him, but finally, I utilised an influential political contact who helpfully intervened, and the District Education Department agreed to provide the required data from the sample schools. Without my political contact, I would have not been able to collect the required data for this project.

While female head teachers were only interviewed at their offices during school time and always in the presence of other staff - at least two other female teachers on each occasion – interviews with adult women, even in a public place, were still considered unacceptable in some cases. When I asked one of the female head teachers why she was reluctant to be interviewed alone in her office, she simply replied that this was to save her social reputation and to avoid being considered 'scandalous' by her colleagues and local people. This particular headmistress said she was already under investigation locally for talking with a male head teacher alone in her office on two separate occasions. Considering these cultural sensitivities, I did not carry a camera to take photos during the fieldwork. It was essential for me to maintain good social reputation to continue fieldwork in the remote rural areas.

Interviews with teachers and the head teachers were conducted in Urdu, while the regional language (Punjabi) was used when interviewing dropped out children and the parents. Initially, I transcribed all the interviews into Urdu. I gave the relative transcripts to the teachers and the head teachers for their verification and confirmation of the facts. In this way, I authenticated and validated the interview transcripts in the second phase of the fieldwork. It is important to note that the male and female teachers and the head teachers added some new details to the transcripts. The same procedure was repeated with the community members of the school councils. The transcribed interviews were given to them for the authenticity and validity of the contents. They did not include any new details to the interview transcripts. However, this was not possible with the dropped out children and their fathers. Either the fathers of the dropouts were unable to read and write, or it was difficult to locate them again. Similarly, it was difficult to chase the dropped out pupils again and request them to authenticate and validate the contents of the transcribed interviews. Overall, the research has successfully met its main objective of seeking perspectives of male and female teachers, school councillors, school dropouts and their fathers on the issue of dropping out from the public secondary schools in the research areas.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter detailed the philosophical positions and research methodology adopted for the study. It also stated the research methods to collect data, as well as the tools for data processing and analysis. It particularly focused on the issues related to researching children perspectives and social construction of childhood. The ethical barriers when accessing the females in the remote rural areas were also discussed in the chapter.

The application of the chosen methodology was applied in the next chapter. The perspectives of the male and female teachers, head teachers and community members of the school councils are also reported. The significant themes were found through the participants' perspectives and document analysis of the school councils' Minutes of monthly meeting. The themes were linked to the existing studies.

Chapter 5: Reasons for Dropping Out: Perspectives of Teachers, Head Teachers and Community Members of School Councils

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data on total enrolment, dropping out and dropping-in during the academic years 2011-12 and 2012-13, as recorded by the public secondary schools in the subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan, in the district of Jhelum. First, it analyses the problem of dropping out in the given subdivision. Second, it reports the perspectives of the male and female teachers and the head teachers on the issue of dropping out. Third, it examines the issues related to governance of school councils at village level. Finally, it reports the perspectives of the non-school members of school councils in preventing the dropping out at a local level.

5.2 The Problem of Dropping Out from Public Secondary Schools in the Subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan, Jhelum

The secondary school dropouts in Pind Dadan Khan were described as those pupils who completely stopped attending class 9 or 10, had no intention to go back to school, had not appeared in the annual board exams (or appeared but failed), and did not obtain their secondary school certificate by the age of 16.

In 2012-13, the Pind Dadan Khan subdivision had 36 secondary schools (18 for boys and 18 for girls). It had two higher secondary schools for boys and, in addition to classes 9 and 10, they also offered classes 11 and 12. From these 38 schools, data was collected on the numbers of dropped out children from classes 9 and 10 for the academic years 2011-12 and 2012-13. These data were gathered with the help of the Executive District Education Officer (see Chapter Four). Out of these schools, 33 schools (15 for girls and 18 for boys) filed the required dropout data. Table 5.1 shows the trends of dropping out in this subdivision.

Table 5.1 Dropping Out and Return to School Trends in Public Secondary Schools in the Subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan during Academic Years 2011-12 & 2012-13

Classes / Year	Total enrolment	No. of dropouts	Dropping out %*	No. return to schools	Return to school %**
Class 9 2011-12	3596	461	12.82	78	16.92
Class 10 2012-13	3037	383	12.61	72	18.80
Overall	6633	844	12.72	150	17.75

Source: Field data

*Dropping out percentage = number of total dropouts/total enrolments × 100

**Return to school percentage = number of total returns to school/total dropouts × 100

The total secondary school enrolment for both boys and girls was 6,633 during the academic years 2011-12 and 2012-13 in the subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan, Jhelum. Out of this total enrolment, 844 children dropped out of school before completing their secondary schooling. According to the official records of the schools, the total dropout rate at secondary level was 12.72 percent in the research area during 2011-12 and 2012-13; less than the national and district levels. The national rural secondary school dropout rate was 14.5 percent in Pakistan and it was the same at district level in Jhelum (ASER, 2013).

The data were officially reported by the public secondary schools located in the subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the actual rate of dropout was much higher than filed by the schools. Long-term absentees were not recorded as dropouts in the official records despite the teachers knowing they would never return to school; this was because of the strict non-deregistration public policy. The government takes punitive measures against schools with a higher dropout rate, which includes punishing the head teachers by demoting and transferring them and curtailing their annual increments (Mughal & Aldridge, 2017).

The schools recorded some dropped-in students, although they had never recorded these as having dropped out in the past; they were actually long-term absentee pupils who had returned to school during the year. The teachers and heads teachers claimed that they had returned to school because of their efforts, such as motivation and providing them with financial support from their own pockets and so on. Table 5.2 shows trends of dropping out for boys from the public secondary schools in the research area.

Table 5.2 Dropping Out and Return to School Trends for Boys in Public Secondary Schools in the Subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan during Academic Years 2011-12 & 2012-13

Classes / Year	Total enrolment	No. of dropouts	Dropping out %*	No. who return to school	Return to school %**
Class 9 2011-12	2261	393	17.38	77	19.59
Class 10 2012-13	1789	348	19.45	56	16.09
Overall	4050	741	18.30	133	17.95

Source: Field data

*Dropping out percentage = number of total dropouts/total enrolments × 100

**Return to school percentage = number of total returns to school pupils/total dropouts × 100

Table 5.2 above shows the rate of dropout and return to school for boys in public secondary schools in the research area. According to the given data, the public secondary schools in the subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan faced the same dropout problem as other rural areas in Pakistan. During the period 2011-12 and 2012-13, the total enrolment of boys in classes 9 and 10 was 4,050. Of this, 17.38 percent and 19.45 percent dropped out from classes 9 and 10 respectively; the overall dropout rate from secondary classes for boys was 18.30 percent. The secondary school dropout rate for boys in the subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan was higher than at the district and national levels.

Furthermore, the return to school rate was higher in class 9 compared to class 10. Out of the total dropouts, the overall return to school rates for males was 17.95 percent. The reported data further showed that almost 80 percent of dropped out males from class 9 and 84 percent from class 10 never returned to school during academic years 2011-12 and 2012-13 in the subdivision Pind Dadan Khan. Table 5.3 shows the dropping out and return to school trends for girls in the public secondary schools in the subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan during the academic years 2011-12 and 2012-13.

Table 5.3 Dropping Out and Return to School Trends for Girls in Public Secondary Schools in the Subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan during Academic Years 2011-12 & 2012-13

Classes / Year	Total enrolment	No. of dropouts	Dropping out %*	No. of return to schools	Return to school %**
Class 9 2011-12	1335	68	5.09	1	1.47
Class 10 2012-13	1248	35	2.80	16	45.71
Overall	2583	103	4.0	17	16.50

Source: Field data

*Dropping out percentage = number of total dropouts/total enrolments × 100

**Return to school percentage = number of total returns to school pupils/total dropouts × 100

Table 5.3 shows the secondary school dropout and re-enrolment trends for girls in Pind Dadan Khan, Jhelum. The total enrolment of girls in classes 9 and 10 was 2,583 during the academic years 2011-12 and 2012-13, of which 5.09 percent of girls dropped out from class 9 and 2.8 percent from class 10. Overall, the secondary school dropout rate for girls was 4 percent, whereas this rate was 18.3 percent for boys during the same period. With the provision that the data is imprecise, this finding indicates that girls are more likely to complete secondary schooling in this subdivision. This further implies that girls have better chances of completing secondary education in the remote rural areas because they are not exposed to the local job markets due to pressure of cultural norms and traditions. Usually, they remain within the house and find enough time to study and complete homework.

The data also show that the return to school rate for dropped out girls was higher in class 10 and lower in class 9, compared to the boys' return to school rate in both classes. It was clear that almost 98.5 percent of the girls did not return to school when they dropped out of class 9. However, the return to school rate for girls in class 10 was 45.71 percent, which meant that almost 46 percent of the girls returned to school after dropping out of class 10, provided the schools had given accurate statistics.

It further shows that the tendency of return to school for girls was higher in class 10. There could be many possible reasons for this trend; for example, some girls may find secondary classes more difficult, get married, cannot afford travel costs or simply they fail class 9 and lose interest in their studies. On the other hand, progression to class 10 may encourage girls to complete their secondary education. Furthermore, some girls and their families may be able to control the reasons for dropping out in the short term and return to school to finish their secondary school certificate. Sometimes, the parents and the girls themselves want to complete

secondary schooling in order to find better suitors for their marriages. There may be some other drivers to completing secondary schooling, such as a desire to seek college education, pursue a dream career or wish for better job prospects and so on.

The male and female teachers and heads of schools reported various reasons for dropping out from the public secondary schools in the subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan, district Jhelum. These are discussed in the next section.

5.3 Reasons for Dropping Out: Perspectives of the Male and Female Teachers and Head Teachers

A total of 59 teachers and heads of schools, 30 males and 29 females, gave their perspectives on the issue of dropping out from secondary classes. They reported several pull out and push out and policy-related factors which caused secondary level boys and girls to drop out from school.

5.4 Role of Pull Out Factors and the Process of Dropping Out

The male and female teachers and head teachers reported some significant pull out factors and process of dropping out.

5.4.1 Individuals and Family Characteristics of Pupils

As discussed in Chapter Three, the main factors associated with the dropout phenomenon are individual characteristics such as performance, behaviour, attitude and background (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000; Rumberger & Lim, 2008). Similarly, issues such as the family structure, socioeconomic status, and household wealth play a significant role in schooling decisions (Abuya et al., 2013; Al-Hroub, 2014; Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Bridgeland, 2010; Chugh, 2011; Dakwa et al., 2014; Huisman & Smits, 2009; Moyi, 2012; Munsaka, 2011; Stephens, 2000; Yi et al., 2012). This study also confirms these findings through the perspectives of male and female teachers and heads of schools. However, it further emerged that the overall educational environment that a child receives in early classes determines his prospects of future progress.

The teachers reported that a large number of children admitted to secondary classes came from poorly-managed public primary and elementary schools in remote villages. The secondary schools had no formal admissions policy or entry test systems in place; they follow the 'open for all' policy and do not refuse admission on grounds of prior academic performance,

family socioeconomic status, house distance, ethnicity, or language. This is why the government schools in Pakistan have lower segregation by poverty than private schools because they admit pupils from mixed backgrounds (Siddiqui, 2017b). Nevertheless, the open admission policy in government schools leads to higher rates of failure; therefore, Siddiqui argues that their pupils have greater segregation by performance as compared to pupils in private schools.

The children who completed their early schooling in poor quality public schools often had not developed the study skills necessary for secondary education. Frequently, these children failed to keep up with other pupils, fell behind in lessons, and then dropped out of school.

The teachers also reported that the absence of a supportive educational environment at home discouraged some children from continuing schooling; they did not receive any motivation or educational support from family members. They argued that poor families often lived in small houses where usually the whole family slept in one room; there was no one at home who could help the school-going children with their homework, and they could not afford private tuition. Thus, the overall domestic environment was not conducive to studying. This affected the pupils' progress at school and consequently they drop out. As Siddiqui highlighted:

> Chronic poverty and lack of public services such as electricity connections, health centres, transport and housing facilities are associated with children's academic performance. Children living in urban areas have the advantage of public services which is somehow relevant to their performance levels. (Siddiqui, 2017b, p. 14)

Some female head teachers identified that family disputes and domestic violence is common in the remote villages, which affected secondary pupils who dropped out of school; the impact on children of witnessing parental violence affects their educational progress. These children "have to remain in the situation and be traumatically and repeatedly victimized" (Pingley, 2017, p. 33). Parental quarrels sometimes turn into bitter feuds between two families. When the children observe frequent violence within the family, they get stressed. The evidence from across the globe shows the negative effects on children of witnessing or experiencing domestic violence and abuse directly (Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008; Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg, & Zwi, 2002).

5.4.2   Desire to Seek Religious Education

It is generally argued that a child withdraws from formal schooling under the influence of poor performance, behaviour, or family background (Jordan et al., 1996; Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Watt & Roessingh, 1994). Sometimes, however, parents and children have other priorities than continuing formal schooling. For example, in this study, the male and female teachers reported that after elementary schooling (classes 1 to 8), some parents and the children themselves opted for religious education. Almost all the schools reported that some students withdrew from secondary classes, even though they could afford formal education, and joined Madrasahs (religious schools). This study noted that the influence of religious education on dropout was stronger among boys compared to girls. Thus, the drive for religious education pulls some children out of formal schools regardless of their socioeconomic status, individual or family characteristics. There are various reasons for opting for a religious education. The following are the possible reasons for preferring religious education over formal schooling as argued by teachers and head teachers.

5.4.2.1   Free Boarding Education

Madrasahs, which are funded by local, national and international donors, provide free food, clothes, accommodation and a monthly stipend. They offer economic survival to poor children from small villages (Blanchard, 2008; Hefner, 2007; Singer, 2001). Singer reports that "some Madrassahs provide food and clothes, and even pay parents to send their children, further increasing their enticement" (Slinger, 2001, p.2). The teachers said that these free religious boarding schools attract the children living in absolute poverty in small, remote villages. Madrasahs do not have direct or indirect costs of schooling like the formal schooling; furthermore, they also provide free food and accommodation. The Pakistan Education for All (EFL) review report 2015 also endorses that "the main beneficiaries of Madrassa education are poor, needy and deserving children of less-privileged urban settlements, rural and remote areas of the country" (GoP, 2014, p. 6).

5.4.2.2   Immense Influence of Religion

The male secondary school teachers largely reported that some parents and their children were under the extreme influence of religious beliefs and found spiritual satisfaction in Islamic education; they thought that formal schooling could be beneficial in this world, but not the next. They had a self-proclaimed duty of serving '*Deen*' (religion) and spreading the

message of Islam across the world. This is further evidenced in other studies such as Cockcroft et al. (2009) and Dakwa et al. (2014). Cockcroft et al. (2009) examined enrolment choices for children aged 5-9 in Pakistan using 53,960 representative households and 853 focus groups of parents. They confirmed that parents sent their children to Madrasahs because of: a preference for religious education; poverty; easy accessibility; and the non-availability of public and low-cost private schools. They further evidenced that most of the parents in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wanted their children to get a religious education. They highlight that this desire does not necessarily stem from poverty or the non-availability of public schools.

Similarly, Dakwa et al. (2014) studied the poverty-related causes for girls dropping out of school in rural Zimbabwe from the teachers' and head teachers' perspectives. They confirmed that contradictions between formal schooling and religious beliefs also caused some children to quit schooling. Cockcroft et al. (2009) and Dakwa et al. (2014) observed that parents and children who opted for religious education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan and in rural Zimbabwe perceived the benefits of religious education more than the formal schooling.

5.4.2.3   Immediate Financial Benefits

A Madrasah education has financial benefits and ensures speedy employment. The students of Madrasahs, usually known as '*Qari'*, provide home tuition to wealthy children to teach them how to recite the holy Quran in a pure Arabic accent. People from the local communities frequently invite them in a group to recite the holy Quran at their homes and business places for *Khair-o-Barkat*, an act of seeking God's assistance for success and against adverse effects; this is a paid service. People also call on them to perform rituals at social events and religious ceremonies. They become Imams of mosques during or soon after finishing their Madrasah education without going through any formal recruitment process. Again, this is a monthly paid job which yields other financial benefits, such as providing private Quranic tuition and services to some social ceremonies.

5.4.2.4   Desire to Attain Social Privilege

Society is strictly divided into a rigid caste system in rural Pakistan; it is almost impossible for people from the lower castes to earn high social status as they are virtually invisible in the power structure. They can, however, earn respect and enjoy a certain social position by seeking some sort of religious authority. Usually, a large segment of the Madrasah population is socially and economically disadvantaged, and a command of religious knowledge

gives them a sense of respect and authority in society. Some of the teachers said that some children join a Madrasah just to overcome their social exclusion and earn respect in the community.

5.4.2.5 Comparability of Education Degrees

Some Madrasahs are affiliated with the religious exam boards such as Tanzeem Ul Madaris Ahle Sunnat Pakistan.[9] Madrasahs and mosques are categorised by their specific Islamic thoughts. Different schools of thought have their own examination boards and Madrasahs are attached to them accordingly. Academic certificates issued by these religious examination boards are comparable with certain formal education degrees. For example, level *Aama* is equal to the secondary school certificate, level *Khasa* to intermediate, level *Alia* to a B.A., and level *Almia* to M.A.[10] This comparability also attracts some parents and their children to attend Madrasahs. Madrasahs that provide free education, food, accommodation and a comparable degree to formal schooling are more attractive to the disadvantaged communities (Blanchard, 2008). Furthermore, Siddiqui (2017a) shows that the choice of a school (government, private, Madrasah) is largely associated with the parental socioeconomic status in Pakistan. She analysed the association between parental education and school choice for their children by using a large-scale ASER survey data for the years 2013 and 2014. She asserted that the government schools, Madrasahs, and non-formal schools had higher percentages of children whose parents were uneducated.

In contrast, this study learnt through the perspectives of teachers and head teachers that poverty was not the only reason for shifting from formal schooling to religious schools. This finding disproves a popular notion that Madrasahs are the choice of the disadvantaged children as evidenced in studies such as Blanchard (2008), GoP, (2014), Hefner (2007), Siddiqui, (2017 a) and Singer (2001). Hefner identifies that "the inability of poor Pakistanis to get access to affordable education" is one of several factors of rising Madrasahs in Pakistan (Hefner, 2007, p. 1). Similarly, Siddiqui argues that "Madrasahs should not be […] chosen for the children by disadvantaged parents. It should rather be a choice against the state-maintained schools or private schools" (Siddiqui, 2017a, pp. 8-9).

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[9] For further detail about Tanzeem Ul Madaris Ahle Sunnat Pakistan, http://tanzeemulmadaris.com/
[10] http://jamia-ul-uloom.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=59&Itemid=76

However, this study evidenced that Madrasahs are not always the choice of poor and disadvantaged parents. Previous studies have ignored the religious, cultural and financial drivers of a Madrasah education in Pakistan. Without receiving a religious education, the underprivileged class may not have been able to earn the respect and social representation in the traditional power structure. This study confirms through teachers' and head teachers' perspectives that some children join Madrasahs to earn social respect and claim religious authority in society, despite being able to afford formal schooling. They deliver sermons to big crowds in mosques and address religious gatherings on special occasions. People seek their guidance on religious affairs. These types of duties give them a sense of social inclusion and improved self-esteem.

Similarly, a self-proclaimed duty of spreading Islamic teachings and bringing social reforms through religion is an additional strong driver to join Madrasahs. Thus, a desire to seek religious education is not necessarily linked to poverty and the inability to afford formal education; it also has some other associated social, cultural and financial factors. Furthermore, it is not always true that only uneducated parents send their children to traditional religion schools.

5.4.3 Pupils' and Parents' Lack of Interest in Schooling

The teachers largely reported a lack of pupil's personal interest in studies and detailed many causes for it. For example, some students were not very positive about schooling and its expected outcomes as they did not feel that completing secondary education could improve their social or economic lives and this pessimism pulled them out of school; they started work or got involved in other economic activities during school time and paid less attention to their homework.

However, a poor educational background and the demand to contribute to the household income appeared to be strong factors behind them losing interest in their studies and consequently dropping out of school. The reasons for losing interest in studies are different at secondary level to at primary level. At the early stage of schooling, children are too young to perform household responsibilities, which they do at the later stage of schooling. Primary schools are usually located within walking distance of their homes, so they can easily have their lunch at home. Thus, the direct and indirect cost of schooling is far lower at primary than secondary school.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the previous studies largely confirmed that parental interest, education level and occupation played an important role in children's schooling (Amadi et al., 2013; Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Gibbs & Heaton, 2014; Huisman & Smits, 2009; Jeynes, 2007; Micklewright et al., 1990; No et al., 2012; Sawada & Lokshin, 2001). Some studies evidenced that a lack of interest from parents in their children's schooling further encouraged the habitual absentee pupils to miss their lessons frequently and eventually to drop out of school (Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Jeynes, 2007). This study also supports these findings, as almost all the teachers and heads of schools asserted that a lack of parental interest in their child's education was another cause for them dropping out of public secondary schools in the subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan, Jhelum.

This implies that the parents who do not show interest are less able to foresee any future benefits of schooling for their children. The teachers further reported that when they contacted such parents to discuss their children's progress or absenteeism, they did not show any interest in it. The majority of fathers of dropped out children were either sheep and cattle herders, lorry drivers, or seasonal labourers; it was difficult for teachers to approach them physically, because they were frequently in transit. Secondly, when they were contacted via phones or through different mediatory and conciliatory channels, they showed little or no interest in their children's schooling, the teachers further argued.

The teachers also stated that cultural barriers were an additional problem when contacting the mothers of the dropped out children, in the event of their fathers being unapproachable. Rural culture does not allow a male teacher to visit the mother of the dropped out children at their homes in the absence of male family members. The female teachers also recorded similar concerns when visiting girls' fathers or inviting them to school.

The teachers linked the pupils' and their parents' lack of interest in schooling with many factors, such as: pressures of domestic responsibilities; the absence of an educational environment at home; financial constraints; work commitments, and sometimes a family feud. The teachers appeared to blame the parents for not taking an interest in their children's schooling. However, there are clearly many reasons for parents not taking interest in children's education, including low income, low socio-economic status, and work pressures. The socioeconomic gap between the teachers and the relatively poor parents also limits parental participation in the school affairs of their children (Joshi, 2014). Furthermore, the existing literature on school dropout has devoted less attention to exploring the reasons for lack of

interest of parents in their children's schooling. It may be that parents face a number of problems and stressors that mean they are not able to be inspiring. Parents do need to encourage their children in their schooling, but this is not always possible, especially if they are struggling financially and in other ways.

5.4.4 Household Poverty

The teachers and heads of schools identified poverty as a common factor for dropping out at secondary level in the subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan. However, they focused primarily on income poverty of the dropped out children. According to the Human Development Report 2014, 26.46 percent of the population of Pakistan is living in severe poverty (UN, 2014) and the families are less able to bear the direct and indirect costs of schooling. Both male and female teachers largely argued that although the government had exempted disadvantaged children from paying monthly tuition fees of Rs.20 ($0.20) and provided them with free text-books, that help was not enough for them to complete secondary schooling until the indirect schooling costs, such as exam fees and travelling costs, are compensated by the government.

Also, the Human Development Report 2014 indicated that the portion of population living under $1.25 a day is 21.04 percent and the share of working poor who are earning less than $2 on a daily basis is 57 percent in Pakistan. This further supports the claims made by teachers that most of the poor students were unable to afford registration and the exam fee of the examination boards. The district of Jhelum comes under the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) in Rawal Pindi. Like other boards in Punjab, the BISE Rawal Pindi holds class 9 and 10 exams separately and on an annual basis. The board charges a Rs.1000 registration fee as well as an examination fee of Rs. 650 for science and 600 for arts subjects respectively. If a student fails in any subject, they have to pay Rs.400 again to re-sit each failed subject, along with the examination fee (Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Rawalpindi, n.d.). There are seven subjects in each class, and if a poor pupil fails in two or three subjects in any exam and cannot afford to pay the re-examination fee, they would then have to drop out of education.

Muhammad, a secondary school teacher, further affirmed this and gave me a list of six class 9 pupils who stopped coming to school just because they could not afford the board examination fees. I was able to access and speak to two of those dropped out pupils, who confirmed to me that they had quit school because they were unable to pay the examination board fees, this will be discussed in Chapter Six. Furthermore, the female teachers and head

teachers reported that the parents' inability to afford transportation costs badly affected the girls' endeavours to complete their secondary schooling. However, the male teachers did not report this problem.

The researcher observed that many boys ride a bicycle and, in some cases, also carry their friends to get to school, whereas not a single girl was ever seen riding a bicycle in the whole subdivision. It is evident that the rural girls live under strict cultural constraints; they do not enjoy as much liberty or social opportunities as their male peers. This restricted liberty also limits their educational opportunities.

Zafar, a head teacher of a secondary school, particularly emphasised the element of 'shame-of-poverty' among the pupils in the secondary classes. He claimed that he had personally known some children who quit just because they felt ashamed and inadequate when they lacked the proper clothing or necessities for school. He further argued that when the destitute children from surrounding villages came to a town to join a secondary school, they felt humiliated for not having pocket money for lunch or being able to dress properly. They usually avoided social events at school and stayed home to avoid public embarrassment. This social exclusion and pressure of the shame of poverty ultimately pulled them out of school.

This evidence is corroborated by Walker et al. (2013) who studied the psycho-social dimensions of the poverty of shame in six countries, including Pakistan. They concluded that:

> The prevalence of feelings of shame associated with poverty arose from the respondents' inability to achieve their own aspirations, their failure to fulfil social expectations being placed upon them, and the sense of being judged a failure by others, assessments often couched in relation to capabilities and always in relation to a lack of resources. This finding is consistent with Sen's assertion that shame lies at the 'irreducible absolutist core' of the idea of poverty (Walker et al., 2013, p. 230).

The financial inability to afford better medical facilities is directly linked to poverty, which was endorsed by the teachers and the head teachers. The female teachers reported this more frequently compared to the male teachers, which implies that more secondary school girls face health and medical issues than the boys at the same level; or, boys feel ashamed to reveal their stories of poverty and medical problems at school.

The female teachers and head teachers stated that some girls did not have access to adequate sanitary products, which meant they would not attend school when they were

menstruating. Both male and female teachers agreed that few students could afford the proper medical treatment when they got sick, whereas the majority relied on traditional methods at home or they went to a spiritual healer to cure their diseases. Long-term illnesses and missing formal treatments resulted in some children being unable to continue schooling. Shaheen, a head teacher of a secondary school for girls reported:

> Last year, one of my students in class 10 had a problem of feverishness. Her parents were poor and could not afford medical treatment. They took her to a so-called spiritual healer called a *'Pir Sahib'* living in a nearby village. He told them that their daughter was under the influence of evil spirits. He struck her repeatedly around the head with a heavy object to eliminate the effects of the evil spirits. This continued for many months. Whenever she had a fever, her parents took to the *Pir Sahib* who brutally beat her. Eventually, the girl became a psychological patient and left the school for good.

Malnutrition is another outcome of poverty. The teachers identified that the majority of the poor boys and girls suffered from malnutrition. Malnutrition badly affects children's performance at school (Jamison, 1986), and the underperforming students inevitably drop out of school. In this study, the teachers also reported that anaemia and weak eyesight were two common problems among poor children with malnutrition, which affected their learning abilities and educational performance. They further said that the destitute children were much alike in physique; they were lower in height and weight as compared to the wealthy children.

A recent report from the World Food Programme (WFP) showed that the malnutrition of mothers or babies causes the death of more than 1.77 million children under the age of five every year in Pakistan (World Food Programme (WFP), 2017). The widespread problem of malnutrition always puts children at risk of underperforming and undermines their mental and physical growth. Being malnourished is a personal health problem but the underlying causes are structural and systemic, such as poverty and low income.

5.4.5 Local Labour Market Opportunities

According to standard human capital theory (Becker, 1994) schooling decisions are typically determined by opportunity cost and rate of returns of education. This theory further argues that local labour market conditions play a significant role in estimating the opportunity cost of schooling and the rate of return to education.

The teachers of boys' schools located near the cement and chemical factories corroborated that the easy availability of industrial labour in the area was a reason for dropping out. They reported that the deprived pupils in the secondary classes usually work in the local factories during their holidays and sometimes during school time. Some teachers argued that the children of destitute families felt more attracted to making money in the factories, and less to studying at school. Some other teachers argued that the poor pupils worked in the local factories to contribute to the household income to meet the living expenses. They feel that going to school will not yield any immediate financial benefits, so they opt to skip lessons and commence paid labour. The teachers further argued that the secondary school boys worked in local factories by compulsion of bad family circumstances. However, they were all agreed that such pupils lagged behind in studies and would ultimately drop out of school. Qadeer, a senior secondary teacher, said:

> The widespread unemployment among the educated youth discourages the in-school children to complete the secondary schooling. They think that they will be unemployed same as the other adults who have completed secondary education but could not find a job. The pupils and their parents have negative views of the future after completing education. They think that completion of secondary schooling will not provide them with financial security or better job prospects.

Qadeer further reported that when the dropped out children or their parents were consulted, they pointed to some boys in the village who completed secondary schooling but were working as labourers in the local factories; therefore, they were getting no extra financial gain from secondary schooling and they preferred to start working as early as possible. When there was a shortage of labour in those factories, they offered more wages and incentives to attract the new workforce - which were usually the poor children from the secondary classes. The female teachers reported similar stories about some poor girls' labouring in the agriculture sector.

5.4.6 Pressures of Domestic Responsibilities

The teachers largely reported that breeding cattle and selling milk were the main sources of economy in the remote rural areas. Some children of poor families cannot attend school regularly because of the pressure on them to help out at home with various jobs. Khalid, a secondary school teacher narrated a story of one of his pupils from class 9:

Ahmed is my class 9 student. When he finishes school, he goes to the fields with his father to cut crops for herds of their domestic animals. On his return, he helps him in scything crops as fodder for cattle. His father milks the buffaloes. Ahmed loads drums of milk on the back of his bicycle and goes to different shops and houses in nearby towns to sell it. He returns home in the late evening.

Other teachers also reported similar stories, and there are dozens of secondary school pupils like Ahmed who have the same daily routine. The female teachers also stated that some girls in the secondary classes were busy with household chores who also helped their parents with feeding cattle, cooking, washing, and caring for younger siblings. Performing domestic responsibilities and assisting parents on farms is a common phenomenon in a rural society. Other studies have shown that girls who are doing an excessive amount of work at home, and boys in the fields, will drop out of school (Abuya et al., 2012; Colclough et al., 2000; Cole & Bojang, 2002).

5.4.7 A Large Number of Siblings

Another notable debate in the existing literature regarding school dropout is the number of siblings and its impact on school completion rates (see Chapter Three). Chapter Three noted that a large number of empirical studies reported that birth order, family size, number of siblings, and students' desire, need to care for the siblings, and providing for the families are the major pull out factors of dropping out (Doll et al., 2013; Hou, 2011; Huisman & Smits, 2009; Lessard et al., 2008; Mitchell et al., 2018; Mokibelo, 2014; Mughal & Aldridge, 2017; Mukherjee & Das, 2008; Sathar & Lloyd, 1994; Yi et al., 2012; Zuilkowski et al., 2017).

As this research could not recruit any dropped out girls, the impact of siblings on their secondary schooling was not directly studied. Nevertheless, the female teachers largely reported that the need to care for siblings caused some secondary school girls to drop out.

Nosheen, a senior secondary school teacher, highlighted the cultural aspect of gender role divisions in domestic responsibilities. She said:

It is always the girls who look after the siblings at home when their parents are employed to reap the harvest. They perform all the motherly duties at home. There is also a cultural aspect of excessively engaging girls in household chores. A mother wants to train her daughters in cooking, washing and cleaning with the thinking that they will have to do the same at their husband's house. The joint family system is a common

characteristic of a rural life where women are demanded to perform all household duties. It is considered below men's dignity and masculinity if he does the cooking, cleaning or washing at home. A marriage proposal for a girl is conditional to her ability to manage household chores. Therefore, girls show more interest in learning daily domestic chores, and less in schooling.

This is confirmed by Bhalotra (2007), who also argues that poverty does not necessarily compel girls to work in rural Pakistan. It is a cultural practice of a traditional rural society where men demand that the women work at home and on farms.

5.4.8 Trends of Early Marriages

Early marriages are common in rural areas of Pakistan. Almost all of the teachers from the girls' schools reported girls' early marriages as a reason for dropping out from secondary classes. They asserted that 10-15 percent of the girls get married during secondary class years. Arranging early marriages for girls is quite common in a rural setup, a practice which is immensely influenced by culture, customs and religion. The report by UNICEF's State of the World's Children 2016 estimates that around 21 percent of girls are married before the age of 18 in Pakistan. The female teachers further reported that the girls who got married during secondary classes never returned to school.

The trend of early marriage has also been consistently cited by other studies as a reason for dropping out of school (Abuya et al., 2013; Al-Hroub, 2014; Bridgeland, 2010; Munsaka, 2011). However, the cultural contexts of early marriages of girls in rural Punjab are somewhat different from those reported by Munsaka (2011) in Zambia, or Al-Hroub (2014) in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, where parents are tempted by financial gains from bridegrooms. On the contrary, the female teachers reported that parents in the research area offered a dowry to the suitors of their daughters. The custom of dowry also increased financial pressure on the poor families. In addition, the female teachers said that most of the parents arranged early marriages for their daughters for religious reasons, believing that once the girls reach the age of puberty, they must get married. There are numerous cultural and religious aspects associated with the trends of early marriages in the remote rural areas of Pakistan.

Arranged and forced marriage traditions also affect some secondary school girls. Rural Pakistan is divided into a caste system where land, wealth, religion and political status are the main symbols of social stratification. Marrying out of caste is socially unacceptable and parents do not usually allow their children to marry into a different caste. Some parents are strict and

even prefer their children to marry within their family; marrying cousins is preferred and encouraged in rural areas of Pakistan for many reasons.

In inter-cousin marriages, the most powerful inducements are ownership of lands and a strong belief in the caste system. The girls receive their share of land upon marriage, but most landowners do not want to transfer their land by marrying their daughters to men outside the family, particularly as ownership of land determines social status in rural areas. Thus, there is a strong desire for arranged, inter-family marriages. Similarly, belonging to certain privileged castes enhances families' social standing and pride. Jameela, a seconday school teacher, said:

> My marriage proposal with my first cousin was finalised when I was just three days old and I eventually married him. If a woman opposes such decisions, she is often physically abused or threatened by her own family. In a traditional rural culture, dishonouring commitments or breaking a promise brings social shame. Many parents force their daughters to marry against their will for the sake of social standing and honouring the commitments made when they were born.

5.4.9 Migration

Migration to big cities was another reason for dropping out which was consistently reportedly by the male and female teachers. They argued that small villages lack basic facilities, particularly in education and health services. The migration of rich and middle-class families was propelled by better facilities, whereas the poor were attracted by the job opportunities in the big cities. When low income families migrate to big cities, their extra earning is consumed by their urban life and they have less to spend on their children's schooling. The teachers further asserted that some families relied on seasonal labour in the agricultural and brick-kiln industries and kept migrating from one place to another. This constant migration interrupts children's schooling; consequently, they drop out of school. This evidence is consistent with the Sabates et al. (2011) study on school dropout in some developing countries. They identified that permanent and temporary migration of parents caused their children to drop out from school.

Another widely reported reason for dropping out of secondary classes was a strong trend of going abroad for labour, particularly to Middle-Eastern countries. Some secondary pupils from disadvantaged families wished to become truck drivers and work in Middle-Eastern countries. The teachers reported successful stories of some uneducated poor people of the area who were skilled in the truck driving profession and went abroad to earn good money.

This is a highly-paid profession in Arab countries. Such success stories pulled many poor secondary school pupils out of school in small villages in the subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan.

5.5 Poor Academic Performance and Failure in Class 9

All the schools reported that poor academic performance during secondary classes and the subsequent failure in class 9 were major reasons for dropping out. In Pakistan, classes 9 and 10's exams are separately conducted by the authorised secondary boards, and most of the students leave school after failing in class 9. The province of Punjab has nine exams boards for intermediate and secondary education: Rawalpindi, Lahore, Multan, Sargodha, Gujranwala, Faisalabad, Bahawalpur, D. G. Khan, and Sahiwal (Mughal & Aldridge, 2017). The high failure rate is recognised by Punjab's largest examination board, the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE), Gujranwala (BISE-Gujranwala, 2016). Table 4.5 presents an overview of the annual results of class 9 examinations in the last five years at BISE Gujranwala.

Table 5.4 Class 9 Annual Examination Result at a Glance for Five Years at BISE Gujranwala

Year	Applied	Appeared	Passed	Percentage
2012	225031	221023	88649	40.11
2013	213547	207883	79200	38.09
2014	243128	240088	87334	36.38
2015	252548	248537	100857	40.58
2016	244454	240105	129670	54.01

Source: BISE Gujranwala, 2016

Table 4.5 shows that 45.99 percent students in 2016, 59.42 percent in 2015, 63.62 percent in 2014, 61.91 percent in 2013 and 59.89 percent in 2012 respectively, failed in class 9 annual examinations at BISE Gujranwala. This is an indication that most of class 9 pupils are not able to complete the secondary school certificate, and consequently drop out.

The teachers further reported that the students who failed in class 9 were not allowed to re-sit in the same class: they were forced to join class 10 and to re-sit the failed subjects of class 9 along with the class 10 annual exams. These students, who already had weak academic backgrounds, could not cope with both class 9 and 10 subjects together, and thus often dropped out of school. Besides the pull out and push out factors, it has also been largely argued that when a student does not show adequate progress, they become disinterested in their studies or fail to pass an exam and drop out of school (Watt & Roessingh, 1994). This evidence of poor academic achievement and subsequent withdrawal from school is consistent with the previous

research (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Lessard et al., 2008; Mitchell et al., 2018; Parr & Bonitz, 2015; Saraiva et al., 2011; Tukundane et al., 2014; West, 2013).

5.6 Role of Push Out Factors and Process of Dropping Out

The male and female teachers and head teachers also reported some factors of dropping out linked with school.

5.6.1 Location of a School

With respect to the supply side, a large number of studies documented that having to travel a long distance to school was a dominant factor of dropping out in rural areas (Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Bilquees & Saqib, 2004; Chugh, 2011; Holmes, 2003; Sathar & Lloyd, 1994; Sawada & Lokshin, 2001; Seidu & Adzahlie-Mensah, 2010). Secondary schools are usually located in a big village or town away from the distant and scattered populaces. For many pupils, the long commute makes school inaccessible and too expensive for them to attend. In urban areas, where most secondary schools are located, the "means of transportation are generally well developed [… and the environment] is more conducive to long walks or rides to schools; this factor is less likely to influence the decision to drop out" (Bilquees & Saqib, 2004, p. 15).

In this study, the female teachers and head teachers corroborated this and reported that along with the inability to afford transportation to the long-distance schools, the girls' parents did not allow them to walk long distances alone because of cultural constraints and fears for their safety. In a typical rural culture, a girl is usually escorted by a male family member when she leaves the house; without male accompaniment, her safety is at risk. For example, Maqsood, a headmistress of a secondary school reported:

> In the last year, a servant of the local landlord grabbed a girl of class 9 and dragged her to nearby bushes to rape her when she was walking to school early one morning. Fortunately, some other girls who were also walking to school saw this incident from a distance and uttered a loud cry. The molester ran away before he committed his heinous crime of raping an innocent girl.

Another headmistress reported that some boys used to gather at deserted places and would bother school-going girls. She had to approach the police to overcome this problem. Therefore, some parents felt it was unsafe sending their daughters to a distant school on foot and they did not have enough money to pay for their transportation. Eventually, some girls

stopped attending schooling. It is a responsibility of the government to extend the supply of secondary schools with easy access for girls or provide them with safe and free transportation facilities in the remote rural areas.

5.6.2 Lack of Facilities at School

The male and female head teachers consistently cited a shortage of secondary school teachers, overcrowded classes, insufficient classrooms, and a lack of physical facilities as reasons for pupils dropping out. For example, one headmistress said that she had 70 students in each secondary class, and another head had 450 secondary students and only five teachers for them. They also reported that they did not have enough rooms to accommodate all the students and the pupils had to sit on the ground in the open air. The male head teachers also showed similar views on overcrowded classes. All the interviews with male and female teachers and head teachers were conducted during school time, so when I visited the secondary schools in the research area I witnessed the overcrowded classes; in some cases, male and female pupils were sitting on the ground even in the severe cold weather.

Noureen, a female head teacher, complained about the lack of physical facilities in the following words:

> We have been teaching science subjects like Physics, Biology and Chemistry since 1993 but do not have a science laboratory in school. The science students always miss the practical work, which is a compulsory part of the secondary school examination.

Similarly, ten boys' secondary schools (out of a total of 18) reported that they were accommodating 65-70 students in each class. They further argued that each lesson ran for 45 minutes and it was not possible to take the register at each lesson, check homework and teach a new lesson during this short period, which ultimately affected the quality of the education. Because of the poor quality of the education, the pupils could not do well in their exams and failed, heightening the dropout rate. This finding is consistent with some other studies (Abuya et al., 2013; Al-Hroub, 2014; Bridgeland, 2010; Mughal & Aldridge, 2017; Munsaka, 2011).

Both male and female teachers reported that the shortage of science and English teachers was another problem at secondary level. The subject specialists rarely stayed at schools located in remote rural areas, preferring to teach in big cities where they also often run their own private tuition centres in the evenings, or provide home tuition to the children of wealthy families. Thus, because of the lack of adequately qualified staff, the head teachers

argued that the teachers from the primary and elementary sections taught the secondary classes and were less able to fulfil the learning needs of the secondary students. As a result, the students failed the board exams and did not come back to school to repeat the year under the same unqualified teachers (Mughal & Aldridge, 2017).

Overcrowded classes are common in schools across rural Pakistan where the pupil classroom ratio (PCR) is commonly used as an indicator to measure the quality of education provision. This ratio was 49 pupils per 1 teacher in secondary classes in Punjab in 2014-15 (GoP, 2017). However, the PCR is often higher in remote rural areas because teachers from urban areas are less willing to move to small villages to teach; almost all the head teachers reported this problem and some of them said that the PCR in their schools was as high as 70:1. Shortage of classroom space was another problem reported and was associated with higher PCR. In 2014-15, 607 primary, 499 middle and 177 high schools were functioning without appropriate premises in rural Pakistan (Gop, 2017).

5.7 Role of Adverse Official Policies and Process of Dropping Out

The male and female teachers and head teachers also identified the impact of some adverse official policies and processes of dropping out.

5.7.1 English Medium Syllabus

The English medium syllabus was another factor associated with failure in classes 9 and 10. The female and male teachers and heads of schools largely agreed that students at risk of underperforming could not cope with books written in English and thus often dropped out of school. Inconsistent government policies on the medium of education were also criticised by the head teachers during interviews; for example, five years ago, the government introduced a policy across Punjab to teach maths and science subjects in English, even at primary level, but it did not increase the English proficiency or scientific literacy of the pupils. The government has recently changed this policy and now from classes 1 to 3, all subjects are being taught in Urdu. The male and female teachers and heads of schools were of the view that the English medium syllabus did not meet the social, cultural, and domestic environment of the children, and this was a further reason given for children dropping out of school.

The male head teachers further reported that the government had provided science and maths books in English, as it had decreed that science subjects should be taught in English at

secondary level. However, staff members and students were not prepared to teach or learn in English, and the introduction of an English syllabus caused many pupils to drop out.

This new official policy did not match with the local culture and domestic learning environment. Although the government recruited some fresh graduates to meet the English teaching requirements in schools, there were insufficient to cover all the classes. Rural students speak regional languages and it is often difficult for them to learn, even in their national language (Urdu); English presents an additional challenge.

This finding is consistent with some other studies, such as Mokibelo (2014), who found that inability to speak the English language was a main reason for dropping out from primary and junior secondary schools in the central district in Botswana, and Mughal and Aldridge (2017), who reported through the perspectives of the head teachers that the English medium syllabus was pushing many pupils out of school in rural Punjab, Pakistan.

The teachers in this study further reported that the pupils had a choice in board exams to take the paper either in Urdu or English, but the government had provided free books to secondary students only in English, so there was a clear distinction between policy and practice. The academically poor students who wanted to study syllabus books in Urdu were at a disadvantage, they further said.

5.7.2 Varied Examination Patterns

Almost all the head teachers were critical of the different examination systems at primary, elementary, and secondary levels. The Punjab Examination Commission (PEC) conducts exams for classes 5 (primary) and 8 (elementary), whereas divisional boards for intermediate and secondary education organize exams for secondary and higher secondary school certificates (Mughal & Aldridge, 2017). The teachers and the head teachers maintained that the PEC widely used objective-type questions in exams. Moreover, it promoted students who obtained an overall 20 percent mark, or even failed in two or three subjects, to the next level.

An examination system that consists of short answers badly affects students' reading and writing abilities and they cannot develop the necessary academic capability for a secondary level education. Some teachers also take the objective-type exam policy of PEC for granted and do not work sufficiently hard at teaching the students. The main purpose of this policy is

to retain the maximum number of children at school by reducing the fail rate. The teachers named the automated progression policy 'easy promotion policy'.

5.7.3   Automated Progression Policy

The government has introduced automated progression policy at school level to increase the rate of retention and discourage dropout. The Punjab Examination Commission (PEC) responsible for conducting primary and elementary exams also follow an automatic progression policy. Contrary to the primary and elementary examination policy, secondary school boards rely on a subjective examination system and observe a strict passing policy. At secondary level, it is compulsory for children to achieve a 33 percent mark in each subject to get a pass. If a student had not achieved advanced writing skills in their primary and elementary classes, they were less likely to be able to meet the requirements of the secondary exams. Thus, a soft promotion policy in the early classes, and the variations in the examination system, causes a large number of students to be unprepared for secondary education and thus to drop out.

5.7.4   Non-Deregistration Policy for Absentee Pupils

The head teachers also reported that under official pressure to produce good results and keep the failure rate at the lowest level, some schools intentionally encouraged students at risk of failure not to sit the board exams and instead to apply as a private candidate. The head teachers further stated that to overcome school tactics of discharging at-risk students in class 9, the government had imposed a non-deregistration policy in public schools. Under this policy, the school administration cannot deregister any student from class 9 or 10 unless they claim a discharge certificate from school on sound grounds.

The teachers and head teachers were of the view that this policy was adding to the dropout problem. The habitually absent pupils were not fearful of being discharged from school after their long absence from school; they frequently missed classes, did not complete their homework, and had no sense of accountability. These pupils could not be punished, fined or deregistered from school. The school administration could not take stern action against them and, as a result, they often failed the board exams and left school.

5.7.5   Imposing Non-Teaching Duties on Teachers

In addition to policies such as automated progression, the English medium syllabus, varied examination patterns and non-deregistration for long absentee pupils, the male and

female teachers and the head teachers also described the imposition of non-teaching duties on them. They reported that non-teaching duties imposed on teachers by the government were also contributing to the dropout problem.

To increase school enrolments, the government asks teachers to visit door-to-door to convince parents to send their children to school. This requirement meant that many teachers spent a great deal of their time on community motivation activities, collecting data on out of school children in the area and recording their field activities on a daily basis, rather than teaching in school. The head teachers further said that three different government departments continuously monitored school and staff progress, and if teachers could not meet the enrolment targets, their promotion and increments were stopped. Teachers' extra work (in communities, visiting parents, writing reports on field activities) often comes at the cost of their teaching activities and focus on in-school students; as a result, they are unable to complete the course.

The teachers and heads of schools largely reported that school staff also performed duties in board exams, general elections and censuses. The excessive engagement of teachers in non-teaching activities during school time meant they were less able to pay attention to their routine classes, which ultimately affects the students' performance and they drop out of school.

5.8   Role of Social and Community Factors and School Dropout

The teachers and head teachers also stated impacts of some social and community factors on school dropout.

5.8.1   Influence of Feudalism in Rural Areas

The male and female teachers equally identified that the negative impact of feudalism in rural areas was another reason for students to drop out. They gave different examples to support this argument; for example, Maryam, a headmistress, reported:

> One of our teachers at school belongs to a local feudal family. She uses some of her poor secondary students as housemaids on a regular basis during and after school time. These destitute girls miss their lessons at school and schoolwork at home. They also work for them in the agriculture sector; thus, they cannot concentrate on their studies, fail their exams, and drop out of school.

Maryam further argued that the parents of these girls also worked as servants at their landlords' houses. These landlords possessed all the economic and political powers, and no one

dares to speak against them, not even the local officials. Some male teachers also reported similar stories of engaging secondary school boys in unpaid labour in the agriculture sector by some teachers belonging to landlord families.

They further asserted that if a head teacher belonged to a lower socioeconomic sect of society, his upper-class subordinates rarely obey his orders. Maqbool, a secondary school teacher, recalled a past story of a head teacher of his school:

Jaffar was our head teacher. He had a lower social background. The teachers of upper class did not listen to him or obey his orders. Once he served an official notice to a teacher who was a habitual late-comer. The teacher belonged to an influential political family. He verbally abused the head teachers in front of other staff. After a few days, he managed to get him transferred to another area by using his social and political influence.

A large number of male and female teachers agreed that the strong feudal system was not only a hurdle in the educational development of the deprived rural areas, but it was also adding to the dropout problem. The children who work for local landlords during and after school time showed less progress in their education and eventually dropped out of school.

5.8.2 Ineffective Community Participation at School Level

The National Education Policy (NEP, 2009) established that lack of community participation at school level was a factor in pupils' poor performance across all levels of the education sector in rural Pakistan. The NEP also concluded that "most head teachers have no training in working with communities and are unprepared for capitalising on the potential of SMCs" (GoP, 2009, p.22). The policy proposes that all head teachers should be trained to work with local communities more effectively. When the head teachers in this study were asked if they had undergone any training in community mobilisation, all of them said 'No'. None of them had ever attended a course on capitalising community resources or channelling effective community involvement in school affairs.

The National Education Policy (2009) also recommends launching campaigns at local level to raise awareness in communities of their role in promoting children's education. Each of the head teachers was asked if they had launched any such campaign for this purpose; the response was negative across the entire schools' sample. None of the schools had formal procedures for selecting or approaching community members for school councils; rather, this

responsibility rested solely with head teachers. All the councils included in the study comprised a membership that had not changed for three years. The government of Punjab promotes community participation at school level to prevent dropping out and encouraging parents to send their dropped out children back to school (see Chapter Three). However, the evidence of this study shows that the process of community participation in school affairs is ineffective in the remote rural areas of Punjab.

5.9 School Council Policy

School councils usually consist of 10 to 17 members including parents, teachers and members of the local community. During discussions with the teachers it was revealed that school councils function under an administrative control model, as described by Barrera-Osorio et al. (2009). Under this school-based management model, the authority rests with the school principal. It was noted that a head teacher was always the chairperson of a school council. It was further revealed that no other member could become a council chair. Moreover, a member of school staff (generally a senior teacher) always acted as a general secretary to the council. It was further revealed that most of the community members of the school councils were close allies of the head teachers.

5.9.1 Process of Forming School Councils

When teachers and head teachers were asked how school councils were formed, they reported that it was the head teacher's responsibility to nominate notable people in local communities for membership. The head teachers selected members (from both within and out of school) based on their own personal judgment. When asked what criteria they followed to appoint a member for the school council, 85 percent responded that they selected members who they believed would not challenge their authority, decision-making, or unnecessarily intervene in school management. Only 15 percent of the heads of schools reported that they selected people who they believed might be useful for the advancement of the school and its pupils.

This evidence shows that the formation of school councils at the village level is not taken seriously by local educational authorities. The heads of schools have no formal training in promoting and enhancing social capital and working with local communities. The culture of shared interest, and particularly of schooling and education, was largely missing in the remote rural areas of Punjab. Bray (1996) argues that levels of cohesion and unity are not the same among all communities. Thus, government intervention becomes necessary to bring them

together and to generate awareness about what is involved in working as part of a community. However, government intervention was not evident in the formation of school councils in the rural areas under investigation. Therefore, the heads of schools maintained absolute authority in forming school councils in the absence of any governmental intervention.

5.9.2 Interest of Local People in School Affairs

Overall, head teachers were of the view that people in local communities particularly did not take an interest in school affairs because of higher illiteracy rates in these areas. They further argued that 'illiterate parents' did not have a sense of social responsibility, nor did they have the required academic, social, or economic capabilities to participate in school affairs. They further argued that sometimes when they attempted to invite local people to attend a social event at school or take part in other school affairs, they rarely attended.

The teachers reported different reasons for the lack of interest among local people in school affairs, which included the fact that head teachers took sole responsibility for the formation of school councils and information about them was not accessible to everyone in local communities. Typically, villagers living in remote rural communities had very little access to information about the role of a school council and its significance. Better off and influential local people, who could have exerted influence over the functioning of a school council, sent their children to high status private schools in nearby cities; therefore, they had no interest in local public schools.

According to the school staff, people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds often cannot afford the trade-off between work and the need to attend school meetings. They are also perceived as having less academic, social and economic knowledge and status in order to contribute to school affairs effectively. Thus, the head teachers restricted membership of school councils to people they knew and preferred, many of whom were inactive or had little interest in attending meetings.

The teachers further reported that because the formation of school councils was under the sole authority of the head teachers, people who were active, educated and had the necessary social status and skills in local communities were often not invited to become members of school councils. During interviews, one of the female teachers openly stated that the headmistresses selected only those members of school councils who would not challenge their decisions, particularly with respect to financial matters, including the spending of school funds. She said:

We select members for school councils with whom we feel comfortable to work. We have to take them on board in spending school funds. Some members are there to just find faults in school management. We do not like such type of people. They cannot understand our problems sitting outside of school. We know well what we need and what we do not need. It is compulsory for us to get our spending decision approved from members of school councils. Thus, we include only those people in school councils who do not challenge our spending decisions and do not become hurdle in dispensing school funds.

Moreover, the teachers reported that they often completed the monthly proceedings registers of the school councils themselves, in the absence of designated community members, in order to maintain an official record of proceedings to show to the relevant authorities and to justify the spending of school funds.

5.9.3 Role of School Councils in Addressing Pupil Dropout

The findings from this study suggest that preventing pupil dropout from rural schools in Pakistan is a challenge and is something that too often is beyond the reach of school councils. For example, they have little or no control over the provision of course textbooks, the implementation of a unanimous examination system across all education levels, or over the pressures brought to bear on teachers to participate in non-school related duties and activities.

The teachers and the head teachers were asked what procedures the school councils had in place to address the dropout problem. Significantly, none of the schools included in the study had any formal dropout prevention policy in place. They had no policies on how to make effective use of school councils or how to access and utilise the networks of relationships among people, known as 'social capital', at local level. However, neither did they have access to officially allocated funds or resources to address dropout risk and thus prevent children from dropping out of school.

I, being the researcher, analysed Minutes from the previous 12 months of school council meetings in each of the six selected schools. In most cases the Minutes consisted of just one page of notes, and in some cases less. Document analysis of these Minutes showed that most decisions made by school councils related to repairing or buying furniture and building maintenance. This finding is consistent with Russell (2009), who noted that the most likely decisions of school committees were related to school repairs and maintenance when he

examined 17 categories of decision-making in nineteen school-based models in different developing countries, including Pakistan.

It was further revealed that these spending decisions were made in the absence of non-school council members, who were only called in to school to sign the register or documents that confirmed their support for these decisions; head teachers required the signature of all council members in order to be able to withdraw or spend school funds. One of the male head teachers reported that school councils existed only on paper and they did not function practically. He further said that most of the head teachers preferred inactive partners from the local community to become members of school councils because they wanted sole responsibility for managing school development funds.

It was further revealed that each school was receiving 6 to 8 lakh rupees ($5700 to $7600) as development funds from the government on an annual basis. In Pakistan, the government charge Rs.20 ($0.20) tuition fee per month for each student. This is called the *Faroge-e-Taleem Fund* (Educational Development Fund). However, children from poor backgrounds are exempted from paying tuition fees. Heads of schools are authorised to use this fund for school development purposes, including for ensuring the welfare of students. During the interview, however, the head teachers reported that they mainly had to use the money for building maintenance and to spend on utilities and furniture and that there were insufficient funds to provide financial support to the dropped out children. Furthermore, schools were not allowed to offer cash assistance to children affected by poverty from this fund.

When the one male head teacher was asked why schools preferred inactive community members for school councils, he said that some head teachers did not want their school's spending decisions to be challenged or investigated by members of school councils and that some head teachers were engaged in financial malpractice. Some, he said, generated fake bills and withdrew money from school funds for their own personal use.

One of the female head teachers also made similar allegations during the interview, saying that one of the problems was that the district accounts office did not release school funds in advance; rather that head teachers were required to spend the money first and send invoices to claim this money back afterwards. She further reported that clerical staff in the district accounts office usually demanded 10 to 30 percent commission, or bribery, to clear the bills. She said that school head teachers faced two problems: first, they had to fund annual school

spending from their own pocket before they could claim this back from the district accounts office; second, they had to bribe the same office in order to be reimbursed.

Nonetheless, the document analysis of the monthly school council Minutes that formed part of the documentary and archival data collated for this study revealed that none of the documents included reference to pupil dropout and how to address this. However, during the interviews some heads of schools reported that they had occasionally discussed this issue in staff meetings, even though there was no written evidence of this in the Minutes to support this claim.

The male and female teachers and head teachers reported that they had personally helped out some of the disadvantaged students so that they could continue their schooling. One headmistress said that her school staff contributed Rs.200 ($2) each month from their salaries to help girls from economically disadvantaged families. Another headmistress said that she had paid the transport costs for some of the girls out of her own pocket so that they could attend school. The male teachers and head teachers gave similar accounts of personal altruism in order to support some of their most vulnerable poverty-stricken students. However, they were unable to help all dropped out children, and the researcher did not observe any practical role the school councils played in addressing dropout issues in the rural areas under study.

Finally, the respondents were asked about the effectiveness of school councils in preventing dropping out or bringing already dropped out children back to school. They largely reported that school councils were ineffective in preventing dropouts and in motivating parents to send their dropped out children back to school. The heads of schools stated that the reasons for children dropping out of school were beyond the reach of school councils and said that community members of school councils were less interested in school affairs and were not willing to comment about school dropout rates. The teachers and head teachers also said that they had no authority to compel the dropped out children to re-enrol after they had dropped out. The schools also did not receive any allocated official resources to compensate families in order to ensure children stayed in school or re-enrol when they had dropped out.

The head teachers further commented that they were under immense pressure from the government to prevent pupils from dropping out of school; sanctions for failing to do so included restricting promotions and increments, particularly in those schools which had high numbers of dropped out pupils.

Wajeeh, a secondary school head teacher said:

My promotion grade is due since long. The government had stopped my promotion as a senior head teacher of grade 18 as well as increments because of dropout rate and poor results. We have no legal authority to force the parents to send their dropped out children back to school or sit in board exams. This is why we do not de-register our pupils even we know they will not return to school. When long absentee pupils do not sit in board exams, we have to declare them as 'dropped out'. When dropout rate goes up, the government punishes the head teachers by stopping their further promotion and annual increments in salaries.

Where schools were able to encourage the re-enrolment of pupils, this process often took months and, in some cases, a whole year to bring dropped out children back to school because schools had to follow a lengthy non-deregistration government policy. The Punjab government has directed that schools cannot de-register any student until they formally report their withdrawal or requests a school discharge certificate that sets out formal reasons for this. Sometimes, however, the absentee pupils do not report back to schools for many months.

When teachers were asked if they received any official funding to prevent pupil dropout or in order to help children re-enrol in school, they reported that the government had not allocated any dedicated funds for this purpose and yet they put schools under 'immense pressure' to prevent dropout. The teachers further reported that when they approached dropped out children and their parents to discuss school attendance, poverty was an overriding concern. Families argued that they were fighting for survival, which was more important for them than their children attending school.

5.10   Perspectives of Community Members of School Councils

All the community members of the school councils who were interviewed said that they had been nominated for the role by head teachers, and 80 percent were unaware of their roles and responsibilities as school councillors. They reported that they were occasionally called to school and were asked to sign the register. They also said that if they had no time to attend school council meetings or visit the schools, head teachers sent them the register to sign at home; most said they were not aware of the pupil dropout issue and that head teachers had not discussed this issue with them. The perspectives of the community members validated the views expressed by the teachers in regard to the functioning of the school councils. For example, Toufail, a school councillor said:

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I do not know what roles and responsibilities of the school council are. Once the head teacher of our local high school told me that he had made me a member of school council. I have never been to any formal meeting.

Ishaq, another councillor said:

The head teacher is my close relative. He invited me to become a member of the local high school. I hardly go to school to attend a meeting or a social event. I am a busy person, running my own business. I have not time to take interest in school affairs.

Ghafoor, a retired army man who was member of school council said:

My nephew is a teacher at local high school. He recommended my name for school council. Sometime the head teacher invites me for a meeting. The school staff just brief me on their spending and further needs. They get my approval and signature to spend money. I always agree with them as I know that they are suffering with shortage of funds to run the school.

The National Education Policy 2009 and F. Khan (2007) establish that the local elites or people with high socioeconomic status usually become members of school councils at local level. Contrary to these findings, this study found that none of the school councillors belonged to the elite class; they all belonged to middle class families. Some of them are lower ranked retired government employees and some others are local shopkeepers with a reasonable socioeconomic status. However, they said that they had been nominated for the role by head teachers. It was further revealed that they had been the members of school councils for the last three years.

Out of 12, only three community members said that they usually attended school council meetings. Even so, all of them signed the proceedings registers but did not necessarily take part in decision-making. They further reported that head teachers mainly called them to meetings when they needed to spend money on school building maintenance or they needed donations to hold social functions at school. For example, Riaz commented:

I know one thing very well, whenever I get a message of school council meeting I think either they need donation from me or my signature to draw school funds. The agenda of the meetings is always about school maintenance or holding social functions.

On the dropout issue, most of them were of the view that pupils who had dropped out of school were 'academically weak' students who did not have sufficient learning ability to continue with their education. Some of them said they believed that poverty was 'just an excuse' for pupils dropping out of school and gave examples of some in-school children who belonged to poor families but were continuing their schooling. Some council members also blamed parents for having too little control over their children and for not being interested in their schooling. For example, Ghani named some dropped out children in the village whom he knew personally and said:

> They used to waste their time in playing after school. I never saw a book in their hands after school time. I never saw them doing a group study with other friends. Their parents had no control on their out of school activities. They were not interested in children's schooling.

When the non-school members of school councils were asked if they were fully aware of the total amount of school development funds, none of them expressed knowledge about these funds. When I told them that every secondary school was receiving six to eight lakh rupees annually from the government for school development funds. They all agreed that if such funds were used to address the needs of disadvantaged children from poor families then the pupil dropout rate could be significantly reduced. From the perspectives of the community members of school councils, it was clear that the head teachers did not fully reveal the information about the school development funds they had at their disposals.

Interviews with community members of school councils revealed a range of different views about the reasons for pupil dropout. Mainly, they blamed some teachers for not being sufficiently interested in teaching and for conducting their own businesses during and after school hours. They reported that some head teachers employed their students as labourers in their agriculture businesses, although many of the students were not paid for this work. This response of the community members of school councils was confirmed by some teachers who said that the feudalism was a problem in the remote rural areas.

Other school council members said some teachers did not prepare their lessons properly because of time spent on their business activities at home. They also mentioned some teachers who were running private tuition centres. However, some other school councillors were of the view that poverty caused some children to drop out from secondary school. Most of them subscribed to the view that, on its own, poverty would and should not prevent all children from

completing their education; rather, dropped out children, their parents and teachers were to blame for the dropout problem. They supported these claims by arguing that hundreds of other children completed their secondary education while living under similar straitened social and economic conditions.

Nevertheless, When I asked them if they had ever met a dropout pupil and listened to their individual problems and stories of dropping out, the response was in negative. None of the school councillors had ever met with a dropped out pupil with a view to help him in completing secondary education. They had a generalized view about the dropouts and non-dropouts who had similar socioeconomic conditions; they had not heard the dropouts' individual stories and were therefore unaware of the personal circumstances of the families with secondary school dropout children.

The study shows that the school councils as a whole are ineffective in addressing the issue of dropping out at local level in the remote rural areas like subdivision Pind Dadan Khan. This finding is consistent with some previous studies (Kremer et al., 2003; Ponce, 2006). Similarly, findings from other studies have also shown that local communities are less interested in school management, as they think it is beyond their capacity and resources (Chikoko, 2008; Swift-Morgan, 2006). Furthermore, the widely-held notion that there is a lack of interest among people in local communities to get involved in school affairs is not fully supported by the findings from this study. The actual problem lies in the criteria and methods used to identify 'suitable' council members which, according to the views of those who participated in the study, are often ad hoc and subjective. Currently, school councils in rural Punjab are less effective in their functioning, in preventing pupil dropout, and in returning dropped out children to school, as evidenced by this study.

5.11 Conclusion

The male and female teachers, heads of schools and community members of school councils have revealed a number of pull out, push out and policy-related factors of dropping out from public secondary schools in the remote rural areas of the district of Jhelum. The main pull out factors include: individual and family characteristics of pupils; desire to seek religious education; pupils' and parents' lack of interest in schooling; household poverty; pressures of domestic responsibilities; need to care for siblings; traditions of early marriages; migration; poor academic performance; and the influence of feudalism in the remote rural areas. The pressure of push out factors consists of: school locations; overcrowded classes; lack of

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educational and physical facilities within schools; shortage of teachers; teachers' lack of interest in teaching due to running their own private businesses.

Furthermore, the automated progression policy in early classes, induction of English medium syllabus, varied examination patterns at primary, elementary and secondary level, burdening teachers with nonteaching duties during school time, and the non-deregistration policy for long-term absentees were other policy-related factors of dropping out. According to the teachers, sometimes students take the non-deregistration policy for granted and frequently remain absent from school. This absence affects their studies and they drop out of school.

The poor standard of primary level teaching also resulted in low levels of pupil attendance at secondary school. Similarly, the pressures put on teachers at managerial level to take part in non-school related duties, such as census-related activities and elections, was also seen by teachers and head teachers as compromising the quality of education provision across all levels of education in rural areas. However, both the male and female teachers and head teachers did not relate push out factors to teaching practices or the individual behaviour of school staff. Another notable point was that they did not mention any innovative pedagogical methods to help underperforming pupils and preventing the high dropout rate from secondary classes.

The evidence in this chapter shows that a number of barriers prevent the effective implementation and performance of school councils, including: the head teachers' absolute authority to nominate members for school councils; a lack of public awareness regarding the significance of community participation and ownership of public institutions in remote rural areas; misuse and abuse of public funds; corruption in local schools and in district finance departments; lack of dropout prevention policies; and government investment in secondary education in Pakistan. This chapter evidenced that school councils in rural Punjab are currently less effective in their functioning to prevent pupil dropout and in bringing dropped out children back to school.

The proceeding chapter details the perspectives of 18 school dropouts from secondary classes to discuss how they themselves perceive the issue. The chapter will also map out the similarities and dissimilarities between the perspectives of school dropouts, their teachers, and the community members of local school councils.

Chapter 6: Reasons for Dropping Out: Perspectives of School Dropouts

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, male and female teachers, head teachers and community members of school councils conveyed their perspectives on the issue of dropping out. They linked various pull out, push out, community and policy related factors to children's dropping out from secondary classes. As discussed in Chapter Four, Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 gives children the right to express their opinions on the issues and decisions that may affect them (Taylor, 2000). Lloyd-Smith and Tarr (2000) argue that the meanings children give to their experiences are not necessarily the meanings their teachers and parents hold about them. Therefore, Taylor highlights that "giving children a voice in decision-making makes them visible and gives them a stake in that process, thereby reducing the chances of their wanting to sabotage it" (Taylor, 2000, p. 32).

This chapter reports the perspectives of 18 boys who dropped out from public secondary schools in Pind Dadan Khan, a district of Jhelum, during the academic years of 2011-12 and 2012-13. They were all aged under 18. Of the 18 respondents, 15 lived in the most remote rural areas which are sparsely populated and far from the main villages. As stated in the methodology chapter, I was unable to approach any secondary school dropped out girls for this study, due to the cultural constraints in the remote rural areas. Therefore, only the perspectives of dropped out boys were recorded during the fieldwork. Of these, 12 dropped out from class 9 and the other six from class 10; they were all schooled in public institutions from class 1 to secondary level and none of them had ever enrolled in a private English medium school or a Madrasah. The chapter reports the reasons for early withdrawal and processes around dropping out through listening to the individual stories of the boys who took part in the research.

6.2 Perspectives of the School Dropouts

Out of the 18 respondents, 11 reported that they dropped out because they were unable to meet the standards of secondary education. Among those 11, five said that they had failed in class 9 and so abandoned their education; another three stated that they progressed to class 10, despite failing some subjects in class 9, but could not pass the combined board examination.

A further three reported that they did not attend the board exams and discontinued schooling during the academic year; six said that they dropped out because of family financial problems and one of the school dropouts said that he dropped out of secondary classes to pursue a non-academic career.

The following sections discuss the impacts of different pull out, push out and policy-related factors of dropping out from secondary classes according to the children's own perspectives.

6.3 Role of Pull Out Factors and Process of Dropping Out

The dropped out pupils stated that several pull out factors caused them to drop out during their secondary classes.

6.3.1 Poverty

Dropping out of school is largely associated with household poverty. Arguably, the "dropout phenomenon is fundamentally rooted in the material and intangible conditions of poverty" (Kaplan & Luck, 1977, p. 45). In the previous chapter the male and female teachers, heads of schools and community members of school councils also confirmed that poverty pulled many secondary school children out of school. According to the dropped out pupils' own perspectives, household poverty pulled them out of school. The dropped out boys narrated their personal stories of poverty and their subsequent withdrawal from school, citing the processes of their dropping out and how some individual and family factors forced them to end their schooling during secondary classes.

6.3.2 Need to Contribute to Household Income

Of the 18 respondents, six stated that they dropped out because it was essential to contribute to the household income, otherwise they would not have survived. For example, Shabir, a class 9 dropout who was working on a tea stall stated:

My father is a street vendor who sells small household items on his bicycle. His income is not enough to meet family needs. We do not have a steady and regular source of income. I would notice that my mother was usually borrowing money from neighbours to pay the electricity bill and sometimes to buy food items for us. It was hard for me to continue schooling in such poor conditions. I was the eldest son and decided to leave school to earn money. I am earning Rs.5000 ($50) a month and giving it to my mother.

Mateen, a secondary school dropout, was grazing his cow at the foot of the mountains in a remote village as he told his story of dropping out:

> I dropped out of school because of our household poverty. My elder brother also dropped out from secondary education for the same reasons. Our parents are not able to afford our schooling cost. I am grazing this cow. We will sell it next year to earn some profit. This is our family business. We graze cattle for one year and sell them in the nearby urban markets.

Similarly, Akbar, another class 10 dropout who was working as a conductor with a local passenger van, stated:

> I have ever witnessed my parents in financial difficulties. My father had big debts on him. When I saw my family struggling for daily needs, I decided to withdraw from school and earn some money. I am earning Rs.9000 ($90) a month. I give this money to my mother to run the kitchen. Without my monetary contribution, it is not possible to meet monthly household expenses.

While travelling around the rural areas of the district of Jhelum during the fieldwork, the researcher observed that child labour was a common occurrence. Primary and elementary-aged children were also found to be working at tea stalls, local restaurants, brick kilns, vehicle repair shops, and in the vegetable markets.

This study's findings are consistent with previous empirical studies which reported that household poverty pulled many underprivileged pupils out of school (Abuya et al., 2013; Al-Hroub, 2014; Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Bridgeland, 2010; Chugh, 2011; Dakwa et al., 2014; Huisman & Smits, 2009; Hunt, 2008; Moyi, 2012; Munsaka, 2011; Stephens, 2000; Yi et al., 2012).

6.3.3   Parental Illness or Death and Loss of Family Income

Some previous studies on school dropout evidenced that parental death or illness limited family finances, which affected children's school attendance (Ananga, 2011; Case & Ardington, 2006; Kane, 2004; No & Hirakawa, 2012; Woldehanna & Hagos, 2015; Yi et al., 2012); the findings of this research are consistent with the past studies. The effect of parental illness or death is more severe in a country like Pakistan where the social security system is poor and fragile. Danish, a class 9 dropout, told his story of dropping out:

My father worked as a labourer with local masons. He borrowed some money from family members and friends to go to abroad for work. When he arrived in a Middle Eastern country, he fell ill and returned to Pakistan. He has been bed-bound since long due to his illness. We have no other family sources. People who loaned us money are demanding it back. I recently dropped out of class 9 to pay off my father's debt.

Abbas, a class 9 dropout who was working at a local bakery and sweet shop, narrated his story in the following way:

My father was a lorry driver and died in a road accident. We faced financial problems as our father was the main source of family income. I was in class 9 and had to leave school to earn money. I am earning Rs.9000 ($90) a month and contributing to the household income. This contribution is an absolute necessity for family survival.

Muzzafar, a class 10 dropout, narrated his story of dropping out in short words:

My father used to work in the local cement factory as a labourer. Now he is sick and cannot work anymore. I had no other option than to quit school and work to contribute to the family income.

Similarly, Asif dropped out from class 9; he was working as a bus conductor and earning Rs.8000 ($80) a month. He said:

My father passed away when I was in primary school. Our maternal uncle would give us financial support for schooling. But his own children have grown up now and he is not able to support us fully. I am already weak in studies and not able to complete secondary education. My mother remains sick and she is on regular medication. I cannot see my mother dying without taking medicines. I dropped out to work and buy medicines for my sick mother.

Asif further added to his story:

When my father was alive our economic conditions were not good. My father was not able to buy me new uniform and shoes for school. I used to wear my cousins' used uniforms and shoes. My family hardly met my educational needs at school. After the death of our father, we were totally depending on our relatives for daily needs. As the financial support from the relatives squeezed, I had to take responsibility being the eldest sibling.

This finding is consistent with some other studies; for example, No et al. (2012) reported that orphans in rural Cambodia are eight times more likely to drop out than children with living parents. Similarly, Senne (2014) maintained that orphans in rural Madagascar were 20 percent more likely to drop out of school, compared with children with living parents.

The stories of Danish, Abbas, Muzzafar and Asif clearly show that parental illness and death have a substantial emotional impact on children and families, the most immediate impact being on the children's school attendance. Parental death or illness causes loss of family income; this income constraint not only limits children's schooling opportunities but also often forces secondary pupils to drop out in order to work and contribute to the household income.

None of the children reported that their parents had ever taken out life or medical insurance. Danish and Muzzafar further stated that they bought medicines for their sick parents privately, and usually took them to nearby cities to see doctors, as local public health centres are lacking in doctors and medicines. These results suggest that when resources are scarce, parental death or illness puts extra financial pressure on poor families. This income shock affects school age children and often pulls them out of school and into child labour. Although secondary school children are more able to work in the local labour market than their younger siblings, they may often take on the burden of their family's financial problems and drop out of school in order to work.

This further implies that sudden income shocks affect secondary school children more than their siblings in primary classes, because the opportunity cost of a 15 year old secondary school child opting for school over the labour market is greater than that of a 10 year old primary school child. Similarly, corresponding social or family pressures on each to drop out would also vary accordingly.

It also implies that the public health and formal insurance systems are failing in rural Pakistan. If the public sector is unable to provide better health facilities in remote villages, it pushes rural people to go to the big cities, which not only increases treatment costs for the poor, but also puts an extra burden on the public health sector in urban areas. Danish and Muzzafar said during interview that they distrusted the basic public health services in the area due to the lack of doctors and medicines. Danish further reported that he took his mother to a private hospital for a medical check-up and bought prescribed medicines for her from his wages.

However, even when a family has adequate resources, parental illness or death will inevitably have a severe emotional impact on children and may affect their performance at

school, but this in itself does not necessarily limit their educational opportunities. This is evident from Ameer's story, a class 10 dropout who stated:

> My father was a retired Navy officer. He remained ill for long time after his retirement and eventually died when I was in class 7. I had four sisters. We had some agricultural land and handsome family savings in the bank. My father's illness or death did not impact our schooling. My sisters all completed their secondary education. I dropped out of class 10 because I was more interested in becoming a religious singer.

From Ameer's statement, it is clear that his father's illness and consequent death did not stop his four sisters completing their secondary schooling because the family had enough resources to cope with the income shock. The father's death may have impacted their performance at school, but it did not cause them to cease their studies for good. Ameer was interested in becoming a religious singer, but finance was not a problem for him in terms of his completing secondary education.

Similarly, Azmat, a class 9 dropout, stated that he was more interested in becoming a truck driver than in completing his schooling. However, his desire to become a truck driver was influenced by economic factors because, according to Azmat, this was a highly paid profession and he wanted to contribute to the household income. On the other hand, Ameer's wish to become a religious singer was not designed to meet family financial needs; rather he aspired to this as a future career. Thus, his decision to dropout was optional.

The findings here further suggest that the education system in Pakistan has only one goal: to complete secondary education. The child who wishes to pursue a vocational career would not be supported. Some children see greater advantages in pursuing a career, in becoming a singer or truck driver, for example, than completing secondary school; hence they drop out of school.

6.3.4 Family Size and Structure - Large Number of Siblings

Having a large number of siblings was a common phenomenon in families in the remote rural areas of the district of Jhelum. Of the 18 dropped out boys, 12 had more than five and four had more than three siblings; two were only children. They all reported that some of their siblings and, in a few cases, all of them, had completed secondary schooling. However, seven of them also reported that they had one or two siblings who had previously dropped out of school.

The respondents who had more than five siblings reported financial hardship in their families because there were too many mouths to feed and extra money was urgently needed. For example, Abbas, a class 9 dropout, further added to his story of dropping out and said that he had eight siblings and that his father had died the previous year. His elder brother had completed secondary schooling and was serving in the army, but his income was not enough to meet family needs. Abbas was the second male child in the family and he took the responsibility for contributing to the household income and dropped out of school in order to work full-time. In Abbas' case, his father's death and the large number of siblings were the main factors that pulled him out of school. This is consistent with findings from other studies that argue that family size significantly impacts school dropout rates and increases the chances of child labour (Hu, 2012; Mukherjee & Das, 2008; Siddhu, 2011; Yi et al., 2012). Abbas further reported that he had two elder sisters, but they did not work because of cultural barriers. In this case, it is evident that in a large family, when cultural constraints prevent girls from going out to work, boys may have to drop out of school to supplement the family's income.

It is important to note that the children who said they dropped out because of large family size had more sisters than brothers. While reporting their families' financial hardships, they noted the pressure of providing Jahez (dowry) to arrange an honourable marriage for their sisters. Jahez is a cultural practice in rural Punjab where a bride brings ornaments, clothes, furniture and all the other common household items to her husband when they marry.

This study shows that the number of older sisters adds to the family's financial stress when they reach marrying age. The financial pressure on families of providing a dowry for daughters often means the younger brothers are forced to drop out of school, particularly when they are of secondary school age. This evidence contradicts Sawada and Lokshin's household survey study in Pakistan (2001), finding that the number of older sisters enhanced the schooling opportunities for their primary school aged younger siblings, because they shared the domestic labour. At secondary level, they found that the number of older brothers increased the schooling prospects for the younger siblings compared with the number of older sisters in a family. This study furthers Sawada and Lokshin's findings and shows that when older sisters face cultural barriers in going out to work in a rural setting, it is often the younger brothers who take on the financial burdens of a large family. They often drop out of secondary classes to earn money for the family, as is evidenced in Sajid's (a class 10 dropout) account:

I have six siblings, two brothers and four sisters. My three sisters have reached to marriage age. I am the fourth child in my family. I got one brother and two sisters older than me. My elder brother, who was the main contributor to family income, got married recently and started living separately. My father is an old man and works at a local kiln. His income is not enough to buy dowry for the daughters. I quit school and started working to contribute to family income to arrange wedding for my sisters.

These experiences are not exclusive to the girls; sometimes boys also get married at the same age. In this study, Bilal, a class 10 dropout, and currently working at petrol station, reported:

I am the only child of my parents. They wanted me to get married soon. I got married when I was in class 9. I have a baby boy now. I could not keep balance in married life and studies at school.

He further said that it was a common cultural practice in remote villages that if the only child in a family was a boy, he usually got married in his teenage years. This is because the parents are in a hurry to celebrate their only son's wedding ceremony; they think that they may die without seeing their son getting married. The mothers also want to assuage their loneliness at home by arranging a bride for their sons. Moreover, a bride brings an extra helping hand for the household chores and on farms. The need for domestic labour also pushes some parents to arrange early marriages for their only sons.

6.3.5 Domestic Responsibilities and Out of School Activities

Students' extracurricular activities show their interest in education and determine their performance in the classroom. The devotion of time to study and complete homework after school indicates a student's interest in schooling. When the respondents were asked about their out of school activities during their elementary and secondary classes, five of them stated that they used to help their families with cattle grazing and on farms. For example, Azhar, a class 9 dropout, said:

Agriculture is the main source of our family income. After I finished school, I went to the fields to bring fodder for the cattle. It was included in my daily domestic duties to prepare fodder and water the cattle in the evening. During my summer holidays, I helped my parents in harvesting.

The other four dropped out boys talked about similar experiences of helping their families in cutting crops, feeding cattle, milking buffaloes and selling milk to the nearby local

markets. Their stories were similar to Azhar's. Although they stated that they would do their homework in the evening, it appeared that most of their time after school was taken up by performing domestic duties.

The other dropped out boys stated that they used to play cricket and other local games with their friends after they finished school. They further reported that they did not have any particular domestic responsibilities after school and in the summer holidays. They all belonged to non-agricultural families and were free from the kind of household duties children like Azhar had to complete. They maintained that some other factors, like playing with friends all the time, not doing schoolwork at home, and the absence of study support out of school, all contributed to their poor educational backgrounds. Thus, a variety of factors may affect the learning process at school and outside school and contribute to the poor educational background of learners. When such pupils enter class 9, they are less able to show progress and as a result may drop out.

6.3.6   Personal Attitudes and Interests

Children's own interests in schooling and attitudes towards learning play a major role in their educational achievements. In this study, some dropped out boys openly admitted that they were less interested in their secondary school studies, adding that they had not studied hard enough in early classes because they were more interested in other hobbies. Abdullah, a class 10 dropout, said:

> I was passionate about breeding hunting dogs during my primary and elementary classes. I usually went to hunt rabbits with my dogs and missed classes at school. I had less interest in study and more in rabbit hunting.

Jabbar, a class 9 dropout, said:

> My high school was in a nearby town. I usually skipped my classes and roamed across town. I was fond of watching Indian movies. I spent my school time in watching free movies at the local tea stalls and hotels.

It is clear from the perspectives of Abdullah and Jabbar that when pupils are more interested in outside school activities, they pay less attention to their studies. It further shows that pupils' excessive involvement in non-academic hobbies and interests can predict their dropping out of school.

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6.3.7 Parental Education Level and Lack of Family Support in Learning

Thirteen respondents reported that their family members did not help them with their homework. They said that their parents and siblings had little or no schooling, and that in some cases, because their parents were working in big cities they were not able to extend study support at home. Family support for learning is another contributory factor that shapes children's ability to learn. When the respondents were asked about family support with their schooling, they reported that they had little or no assistance with their school work at home. For example, Raza, who dropped out from class 9, stated:

> When I entered class 9, I found science subjects difficult. I could not afford private tuition like some other students. None of my family members were educated enough to help me study.

It is evident in this study that the absence of a supportive educational environment at home discourages children from continuing schooling. As discussed in Chapter Three, a large number of studies saw the parental education level as a strong predictor in completing children's school education (Andrabi, Das, & Khwaja, 2008; Bilquees & Saqib, 2004; Gibbs & Heaton, 2014; Hazarika, 2001; Holmes, 2003; No & Hirakawa, 2012; Sathar & Lloyd, 1994; Smits & Huisman, 2013; Yi et al., 2012).

In this study, 15 school dropouts stated that their fathers had completed their primary schooling and 13 said that their mothers had no formal education. None of the respondents reported that their mother had completed their secondary education. Only three of them had fathers who had received secondary education schooling. Furthermore, only five said that their mothers had completed primary school education. Children with mothers with primary education and fathers with secondary education were also found to have dropped out. Similarly, children with siblings who had completed secondary education were also found to have dropped out. This finding is consistent with the Sawada and Lokshin (2001) study that states that parental education is insignificant in relation to dropout rates from secondary schools.

6.3.8 Poor Educational Background

In this study, of the 18 respondents, 11 reported that they dropped out of secondary classes because of their previous poor schooling. When they were asked to give reasons for their poor educational background, some argued that they had not studied very well during their primary and elementary education; others blamed the teachers and argued that they had

not been taught properly during their early classes. Nevertheless, none of them reported any efforts or resistance to overcome their poor academic background. They accepted their poor educational background as if it was an innate individual characteristic.

There could be many reasons for a child's disinterest in schooling in early classes. For example: poor pedagogical skills in the classroom; a lack of appropriate facilities at school; a lack of extra-curricular and sport activities; a high pupil-to-teacher ratio; a lack of teachers; a socio-culturally incompatible syllabus; and some ineffective public policies which may negatively impact children's ability to concentrate in class (Mughal & Aldridge, 2017). Similarly, Machingambi (2012) evidenced that: boring lessons; an uncaring attitude of teachers; poor student-teacher relationships; an irrelevant curriculum to the job market; a lack of extracurricular activities at school; and school policies on uniform, suspension and expulsion, caused disinterest in schooling and then led to dropping out in the Masvingo district of Zimbabwe. The male and female teachers reported that the pupils with poor educational background did not show progress and failed in class 9. This failure led them to drop out.

6.3.9 Failure in Class 9

The dropped out pupils largely reported that failing in class 9 was also a barrier to progress through secondary classes. Out of the 18 school dropouts who took part in this study, eight failed in class 9. These boys reported that when they failed in class 9, they were not allowed to re-sit in the same class; they had to join class 10. They were then required to re-sit the subjects they had failed in class 9 whilst also taking the class 10 annual examinations. These students, who already had weak academic backgrounds, could not cope with studying both class 9 and 10 subjects together, and thus often dropped out of school. For example, Akbar, who failed in the combined board examination of class 9 and class 10, said:

> I failed in four subjects in class 9 but I was forced to sit in class 10 rather than repeating it. It was difficult for me to prepare the failed subjects of class 9 and study the new subjects of class 10. Consequently, I again failed the board exam and never returned to school.

Anees, another dropout who failed in classes 9 and 10, stated that the syllabus in secondary school classes was too difficult for him. Bilal also reported that he failed five subjects out of eight in class 9, and again four subjects in the combined examination. Akbar, Anees, and Bilal dropped out of school after failing in the secondary education board exams in classes 9 and 10. It is evident here that children with poor educational backgrounds are less

able to progress in secondary classes, which further implies that they may need some extra time to adjust to the curriculum at secondary level. The respondents mostly complained about the difficult syllabus, the inability to pay board examination fees, and the pressure of the combined examination.

The findings of this study imply that retaining underperforming students in the same class, rather than progressing them to the next class, may help them with their academic difficulties. Eight of the respondents reported that they found secondary classes difficult; three stated that progression to class 10 despite having failed some subjects in class 9, further affected their performance. Thus, promoting low-achieving pupils from class 9 to class 10 may cause some to drop out of secondary education.

The existing literature on school dropout has given less attention to the benefits of retention. This is further evidenced by Jimerson (2001), who reviewed research published between 1990 and 1999 to examine the effectiveness of grade retention on academic achievement and socio-emotional adjustment and concluded:

> Studies examining the efficacy of grade retention on academic achievement and socio-emotional adjustment that have been published during the past decade report results that are consistent with the converging evidence and conclusions of research from earlier in the century that fail to demonstrate that grade retention provides greater benefits to students with academic or adjustment difficulties than does promotion to the next grade. (Jimerson, 1999, p. 434)

Ahmed and Mihiretie (2015) also found that the automatic promotion practices (that is, progressing students to the next level regardless of whether they pass or fail) in Ethiopian primary schools affected academic performances at the next level, leading to pupil dropout. Furthermore, Mughal and Aldridge (2017) argue, "auto promotion policy may help to keep more children in school, but it increases the dropout rate at secondary level" (Mughal & Aldridge, 2017, p.373). The current research also found that retaining class 9 failures in the same class may help them to complete secondary education.

6.4 Role of Push Out Factors and Process of Dropping Out

Apart from pull out factors, some dropped out pupils also reported school-related factors of their dropping out from secondary education.

6.4.1   Poor Quality Teaching

The dropped out boys who blamed teachers for their poor schooling background were of the view that their English and science teachers were not proficient as teachers. For example, Azhar, a class 9 dropout, reported:

> When our elementary English teacher delivered lessons to us, he always held the English syllabus book in one hand and its translation in the other. He would read one English sentence from the course book and looked for its translation from the helping book. He was not able to explain English lessons without looking at the helping book. He looked like reading news rather than teaching the class.

Similarly, Abass, a class 9 dropout stated:

> Our science teacher in elementary classes was not able to explain some scientific terminologies. We just used to learn our science lessons by heart without understanding them. Our teachers remained busy in gossiping with each other at school and gave less attention to teaching.

Some other dropped out boys recalled similar experiences regarding teaching quality during primary and elementary classes and complained about the poor quality of teaching at public schools in the remote rural areas. To confirm these perspectives of the dropped out children, Mughal and Aldridge (2017) reported that in some rural areas of Punjab, Pakistan, in the event of a shortage of secondary level teachers, primary teachers also teach elementary and secondary classes. They further reported that the head teachers largely complained about the shortage of subject specialists at secondary schools in the remote rural areas, which is because the qualified teachers prefer to work in cities because of better health, education and transportation facilities in the urban areas than the countryside. In Chapter Five, some of the head teachers corroborated this.

The findings of this study suggest that the poor quality of teaching in early classes has a negative impact on secondary schooling. However, UNICEF (2000) emphasises that it is not only the quality of teaching, but also the overall quality of education at the early stages, that helps children to progress and complete their secondary schooling. According to UNICEF (2000, pp.5–19), a good education is linked to the quality indicators for learning (good health and nutrition; early childhood psycho-social development experiences; regular attendance for

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learning and family support for learning). Similarly, a good quality learning environment includes decent school facilities; class size; peaceful, safe environments, especially for girls; teachers' behaviour that affects the quality of the learning environment; effective school discipline policies; and inclusive environments. Furthermore, quality content consists of a student-centred, non-discriminatory, standards-based curriculum structure and quality teaching practices include: professional learning for teachers; teacher competence and school efficiency; ongoing professional development; teachers' beliefs that all students can learn; teachers' working conditions; administrative support and leadership; and the languages schools use for instruction. It is evident that these quality indicators are significantly lacking in schools and in general education in rural Pakistan.

6.4.2 Long Distance Schools

During the fieldwork phase, I observed that primary schools were usually located within or near to small villages, thereby minimising travel costs for primary school aged children. It was understood that fathers did not mind walking a reasonable distance for their primary school aged daughters, but they appeared to be reluctant to do the same for their teenage daughters who were in elementary and secondary school. However, middle and high schools were further away from the small villages. This implies that gender and age are important factors in determining whether children, particularly girls, are able to access schools in rural areas. A primary school girl is usually between 5 to 10 years old and parents are less worried if she walks to a nearby school. However, parents are more sensitive about their elementary and secondary school girls (11 to 16 years old) if they have to walk or travel long distances in order to get to school in a remote rural area.

This study found that fathers would not allow their daughters to walk long distances to secondary schools and preferred them to be accompanied either by an adult male member of the family or to travel by a safe van. Where such transport is not available it is more likely that girls of secondary school age will drop out of school.

In addition, many parents have to bear the transportation costs in order to send their elementary and secondary school aged girls to distant schools. This may be the one implication for Holmes' findings, that maintain that distance does not affect primary schooling, but only for middle and high school attendance for both sexes in rural Pakistan (Holmes, 2003). The shortage of secondary schools in the remote rural areas and an inability to afford schooling costs also limits the educational opportunities for children from poor families. When parents

who have limited resources and income are not able to afford the travel costs of schooling, their children are more likely to drop out of school. For example, Mateen said:

> My secondary school was 4km far from my locality. The daily travel cost was Rs.40. I needed minimum Rs.20 for lunch. I needed Rs.60 every day to go to school. My family could not afford it. Sometimes, I walked 8km daily to and from school. I remained hungry for the whole day because I did not have money to eat something during the break. I could not face this situation for long and decided to quit schooling.

The male teachers and head teachers did not report that school distance was a problem for secondary school boys. However, Mateen's story contradicts this, showing that when a school is far from the child's home, the cost of buying lunch and the travelling costs are often too much for the students of poor families and they may have to drop out as a result.

6.4.3   Practices of Rote Learning and Memorization

When the dropped out boys were further asked to reflect on their learning experiences at school, they reported that they relied on rote learning and memorisation practices, both in the classroom and in exams; even science lessons were learned by heart and without understanding them. One class 10 dropout recounted his story of learning practices thus:

> We used to memorise all lessons by our hearts and narrated them to our teachers. The teachers looked at books while we narrated the learnt lessons. They wanted us to give an account of the lesson words by words. They appreciated those students who showed good memory skills and underestimated those could not speak the whole lesson by heart.

In regard to exams, another class 10 dropout added that students totally relied on their memory skills while they took exams, and the pupils with good memories got high grades. From the perspective of the dropped out boys, it was evident that learning occurred in their respective schools by memorisation, without proper understanding or reflection. Analytic and critical thinking skills are not developed in children, as the whole learning process is based on rote learning and memorisation, as evidenced in this study. However, none of the male and female teachers reported that rote learning and memorisation practices were a problem in schools.

6.4.4   Bullying from Class Teachers

Four of the respondents also complained about bullying from teachers in the event of poor academic performance, saying that although corporal punishment was banned, bullying from the class teachers was still a widespread phenomenon in public schools. They said that teachers from the privileged class looked down on poor pupils and openly insulted them in school, taunting them and making fun of their poor academic performance in front of their classmates. They gave funny names to the students who failed to memorise their lessons or showed no progress in quarterly internal exams. One dropout from class 9 recalled his experience at school in the following words:

> I was weak in English. I was not good in memorising my English lessons. When I failed to narrate the whole lesson by heart, my teacher would make a fun of me. He called me 'ghadha' (an ass) in front of the whole class. He called some other students similar names. He used different humiliating words for students like me.

This finding of verbal abuse from a teacher is consistent with Liu (2004), who evidenced that verbal abuse by teachers discouraged students and led them to drop out in rural China. Mughal and Aldridge (2017) also reported that the harsh attitude of teachers contributed to the dropout problem in the public secondary schools in rural Punjab. Furthermore, Banerjee (2016) also evidenced that racial and ethnic discrimination from school and peers had negative impacts on the minority adolescents in the UK and the USA.

The other dropped out boys also confirmed that, rather than helping in studies or putting extra effort into teaching, some teachers made pupils feel incapable of completing their secondary education. They also made their parents believe that their children were not able to pass secondary school examinations and encouraged the parents of students with low or slow progress to end their studies and put them to work. The dropped out pupils further reported that constant bullying from class teachers caused some of their classmates to drop out. Avilés et al. (1999) showed similar findings that low expectations of teachers, the hostile attitude of school counsellors, and alienation and discrimination in school settings facilitated dropping out in a high school in Minnesota, USA.

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6.5 Role of Public Policies and Process of Dropping Out

Along with pull out and push out factors, the secondary school dropped out pupils also reported that some ineffective school and public policies were reasons for their dropping out.

6.5.1 Ineffective School and Public Policies

Sometimes ineffective policies and practices at local and national level contribute to poor academic performance and subsequent dropout. For example, Mughal and Aldridge reported through the perspectives of the head teachers in rural Punjab:

> …the government policies of introducing an English-medium syllabus, using teachers as community motivators during school time, putting teachers under unnecessary monitoring, demanding needless paperwork, linking promotion and increments with school results, and introducing capricious examination systems, not permitting class 9 failures to repeat the same class, are all contributing to the dropout problem at secondary level in rural Punjab.   (Mughal & Aldridge, 2017: p. 373)

Similar themes are stated by Rahmat, a class 10 dropout. He said:

> I lost my interest in studies during primary classes as I know that I would get progressed regardless of if I worked hard or not. I had no fear of failing. I had no fear of teachers. The teachers did not teach us very well because they knew that they would promote everyone to the next class regardless whether they pass or fail.

This study also evidenced, through the dropped out pupils themselves, that the English medium syllabus at secondary level was causing them to dropout from school. The dropped out boys recalled similar experiences of English language difficulty and the automated progression policy in early classes. It was further revealed that the government of Punjab had stopped corporal punishment and introduced a non-deregistration policy for absentee pupils at public schools. The research observed that each school had a billboard with the advertising campaign, 'Mar Nahi – Payar', meaning 'No corporal punishment but love'.

Three of the dropped out boys said that they intentionally remained absent from the school for a long period of time on many occasions because they knew that they would not be deregistered from the class or punished for it. Thus, while such policies may help the government to keep the maximum number of students on the register, they are contributing to

poor educational outcomes for children and their subsequent dropping out from secondary classes.

Regardless of the reasons for their dropping out, 17 of the 18 respondents were found to be involved in paid work after they dropped out of school. Four became cattle herders, and 10 were working with local masons, on tea stalls, at brick kilns, or on trucks and other passenger vehicles; one was working at a petrol station in a nearby town, and another was a sales assistant at a local bakery. Danish, whose father's borrowing and sickness meant that Danish dropped out of class 9, was working at a local barber's shop for Rs.30 ($0.30) per day.

The findings of this study further imply that secondary school dropped out children do not have the necessary qualifications or skills to engage in work that is not low skilled and low paid. It is evident that children who have dropped out of school have less education, training and skills compared to their peers who have completed school; therefore, they have fewer job opportunities in the labour market (Brekke, 2014).

Finally, for the pull out factors of dropping out, the perspectives of the male and female teachers and heads of schools are very similar to those stated by the dropped out boys themselves. However, for push out factors, a big discrepancy is evident between the views of school staff and the dropped out pupils. The school dropouts largely blame poor teaching quality, bullying from class teachers, rote learning practices and the lack of teachers' interest in teaching. Meanwhile, along with some pull out factors and policy-related factors, the teachers and heads of school mostly held school dropouts and their parents responsible for dropping out from secondary classes. This finding is consistent with previous studies that show that the teachers and head teachers generally do not accept that teaching practices and the school culture push some children out of school (Bridgeland et al., 2009; Patterson et al., 2007; Seidu & Adzahlie-Mensah, 2010; Smyth & Hattam, 2002).

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has accounted the perspectives of the secondary school boys on their dropping out. They stated various pull out factors of dropping out, such as: household poverty; parental illness or death; loss of family income; a large number of siblings; pressure of domestic responsibilities; personal attitudes and non-academic interests; lack of family support in learning; and poor schooling in early classes and subsequent failure in class 9. Push out factors are: poor quality teaching; school location; practices of rote learning and memorization and

bullying from class teachers. The policy related factors associated with dropping out are: automated progression in early classes; the English-medium syllabus; and the non-deregistration policy for absentee pupils.

Concerning the pull out factors of dropping out, the perspectives of the school staff and the dropped out pupils are almost similar. However, they have differences over the push out factors. The dropped out children are critical of poor teaching practices and bullying by class teachers, whereas the teachers and the head teachers argue that the long-distance schools, shortage of secondary school teachers, overcrowded classes, inadequate classrooms and lack of physical facilities are the main push out factors of dropping out. In contrast, the community members of school councils directly hold teachers responsible for not being sufficiently interested in teaching. They are of the view that some teachers do not prepare their lessons properly because they were more interested in managing their personal businesses during school time.

Apart from the reasons for dropping out, the chapter also found different types of dropouts, identifying three types. The first were the compulsive dropouts, who dropped out of secondary classes to meet urgent family financial needs, where it had become compulsory for them to drop out of school and earn money for their family. Having to make a choice between school continuance and family survival they opted to quit schooling and strive for the poverty-stricken family. The second were optional dropouts who dropped out to pursue a non-academic career despite being able to continue their schooling. The third was the passive dropout, who accepted their poor academic background as an inborn individual characteristic and acknowledged that they had not studied sufficiently hard in the early classes. They did not mention personal effort, such as peer support or attending supplementary tuition, to improve their academic performance.

It is pertinent to understand the perspectives of the families of the school dropouts on the issue of their children dropping out from secondary education. The next chapter reports the perceptions of the 14 fathers of the secondary school dropped out boys. It also maps out the similarities and differences between the perspectives of teachers, heads of schools, community members of school councils, the dropped out boys, and their fathers.

Chapter 7: Reasons for Dropping Out: Perspectives of the Fathers of School Dropouts

7.1 Introduction

In Chapter Five, the male and female teachers, head teachers and non-school members of school councils held parents of the dropped out pupils responsible for not taking an interest in their children's schooling and having less control of their out of school activities. They further argued that parental education level and lack of family support in learning caused some children to drop out of school. In Chapter Six, the dropped out pupils expressed themselves by narrating their individual stories of dropping out. They stated various pull out, push out and policy-related factors for their dropping out, such as: poverty; large family size; domestic responsibilities; parental illness or death and loss of family income; need to provide a dowry for adult sisters; poor quality teaching; long commutes to schools; practices of rote learning and memorisation at school; bullying from class teachers; failure in class 9; teachers' lack of interest in teaching; easy progression policy in early classes; and the English medium syllabus.

Chapter Seven reports the experiences and perceptions of fathers whose sons did not complete their secondary school education. Again, this study could not access any mothers of school dropouts because of cultural constraints in the research area. Therefore, only fathers of the secondary school dropped out pupils were approached for individual interviews. The chapter also compares the similarities and differences between the perceptions of dropped out pupils, their fathers and teachers on the issue of dropping out.

A high level of parental involvement in schooling is required to improve the children's educational outcomes and is seen as a key to academic success (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Jeynes, 2005). Hornby and Lafaele (2011) categorise parental involvement as being either home-based or school-based. In home-based involvement, parents help their children do their homework, and actively discuss their education with them. In school-based involvement, parents meet with teachers, participate in school activities, and respond to concerns raised by their child's teachers. However, some responsibilities, such as students' attendance and behaviour, shift from the parents as their children move to higher levels of education; this is shown below in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1 Relative Responsibility Share of Parents and Students for Attendance, Effort and Behaviour Over Education Level
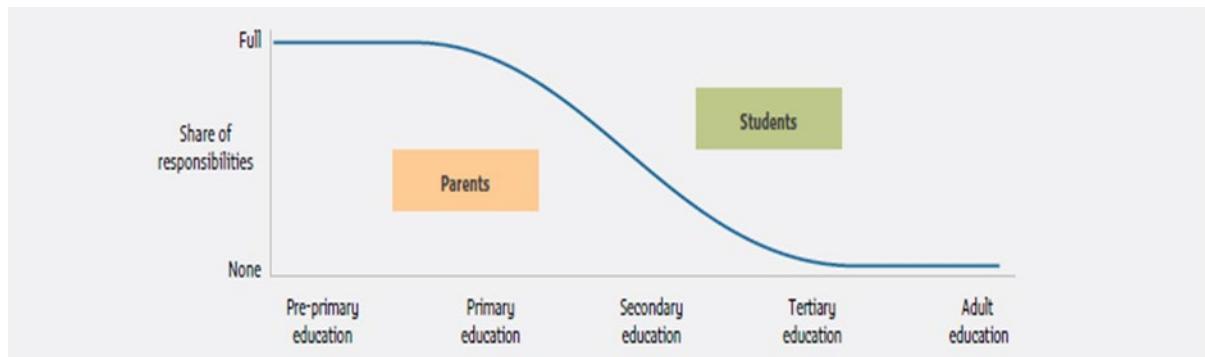
Source: UN Education Report 2017-18, p. 8

Figure 7.1 shows that the parental share of responsibilities reduces as their children move to secondary education.

Hornby and Laffele (2011) also present a model of the factors which act as a barrier to parental involvement, stating that a number of individual, parent and family factors, child factors, parent-teacher factors, and societal factors act as barriers to parental involvement in their children's schooling (see Figure 7.2 below).

Figure 7.2 Model of factors acting as barriers to Parental involvement (PI)

Individual parent and family factors	Child factors
• Parents' beliefs about PI • Perceptions of invitations for PI • Current life contexts • Class, ethnicity, and gender	• Age • Learning difficulties and disabilities • Gifts and talents • Behavioural problems
Parent-teachers factors	Societal factors
• Differing goals and agendas • Differing attitudes • Differing language used	• Historical and demographics • Political • Economics

Source: Hornby & Laffele (2011)

In this study, teachers and head teachers mainly held the parents responsible for not taking an interest in their children's education and getting involved in school affairs (see Chapter Five). The dropped out boys also affirmed that they had not had any study support in home-based or school-based learning activities from their parents. They further reported that

the parents were not able to give study support as they were either less educated or not educated at all (see Chapter Six). While parents with little or no education may not be able to provide study support to their secondary school aged children, they could still get involved in school affairs through joining village school councils. By joining school councils, they may be able to monitor their child's attendance and educational progress as well as monitoring the teachers. Furthermore, they may be able to check on some push out factors of dropping out, such as poor-quality teaching and bullying from class teachers, as stated by the dropped out boys. However, as discussed in Chapter Five, the head teachers nominated members of school councils themselves. This finding was further validated in this chapter, as none of the fathers was a member of a local school council.

The Pakistan National Educational Policy 2009 identifies poor governance, inefficient use and allocation of resources, and a lack of effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms as major problems at school level. It is generally assumed that parental engagement could address these problems. Gertler and Rubio-codina (2007), for example, report that in rural Mexico, parents' participation on school committees ensures that there is a lower financial burden placed on schools and that children attend school as a result of parent council members maintaining close contact with teachers.

A total of 14 fathers were interviewed to discuss their views on why their child had dropped out of secondary school. Of these, nine were the fathers of boys who participated in this study. Again, it is important to note that none of the fathers were members of a school council; they were totally unaware of the existence of any school council, its functions or role at local level.

I approached these fathers for an interview at their work places. They belonged to a societal class that has low socioeconomic status in society; none of them were employed in a technical profession. They all lived locally working either at kilns, with masons, driving local vans or running their own small-scale agricultural businesses. Although less able to discuss the dropping out phenomenon in detail, the fathers reported the following pull-out, push-out and fall-out factors of dropping out of their children from secondary classes.

7.2 Role of Pull Out Factors and Process of Dropping Out

The fathers of the dropouts identified poverty and poor academic performance as main pull out factors of their children's dropping out of school.

7.2.1 Family Poverty

From the fathers' perspectives, family poverty was the main pull out factor for dropping out. Of the 14 fathers, six clearly stated that they were not able to meet family needs without the help of their secondary school boys; they had to drop out of school to contribute to household income. Teachers, head teachers, and some dropped out boys also cited family poverty as a reason for dropping out (see Chapters Five and Six). The fathers who engaged in seasonal labour and relied on daily wages were more likely to cite family poverty. For example, Munir, the father of a class 10 dropped out boy, said:

> I work at a local kiln on daily wages. When there is a rainy season, kilns are closed, and I go unemployed. I borrow money from the kiln owner and buy necessities on credit from local shops. If I, or any of my family members get sick, we buy medicines on credit from local chemists. When I work after the rainy season, a proportion of my wages goes to creditors. It becomes difficult for me to feed family from my disposable personal income. Therefore, my children have to work to contribute to family income. My eldest son has permanently dropped out of school and works with me at the kiln.

Shabir dropped out from class 9 to work at a local tea stall; his father was a street vendor (see Chapter Six). He told a story similar to Munir's. Muzzafar, a class 10 dropout reported that his sick father asked him to drop out of school. His father also recalled similar experiences of financial hardships and his inability to pay board examination fees.

Three other fathers reported that their livelihoods were based on small and family-based agricultural businesses; they needed their sons' helping hands in feeding cattle and in the fields. For example, Bashir, the father of a class 9 dropout, said:

> Although I am multitasking, I am unable do all things all alone. I cannot hire a labourer. My children have to help me on the farm. My eldest son dropped out last year from class 9 to help in our agricultural business.

Mukhtar, a father of a class 9 school dropout said:

> I work with local masons on daily wages. I earn Rs.300 ($30) a day and there is no surety of work for the whole month. I have three daughters and two sons. Two of my daughters and one son go to school. My parents also live with me. They are totally dependent on me. I have to feed eight people, including my wife. This is hard for me. This is why my eldest son dropped out of class 9 and now working as a bus conductor.

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Kabeer, a father of class 9 dropout said:

> I am a lorry driver. I leave the house early in the morning and come back late at night. I have three children, one daughter and two sons. My two unmarried sisters and parents also live with me. I have to feed all of them. My monthly income is not enough to run the kitchen. My son has left school and works in a restaurant in a nearby city to contribute to family income.

UNESCO (2018) also confirms the evidence from this study, that when "a poor household's income suddenly drops, the family may respond by withdrawing a boy from secondary school so that he can earn money" (UNESCO, 2018, p.5). It is also evident from some studies that household poverty pushes children towards child labour in rural Pakistan (Bhalotra, 2007; Ray, 2000). However, such findings are largely based on quantitative survey data, which do not include the perspectives of the households on this issue. Based on the fathers' accounts, this study found that dropping out occurred when household income was not enough to meet basic needs, and the children's financial contributions became an absolute necessity for family survival. Additionally, none of the fathers reported that their daughters were working to contribute to family income. It is evident that in a typical patriarchal rural society, as in case of this study, boys bore the pressure of family financial stress and dropped out of school to earn money.

Furthermore, it is clear from the fathers' narratives that a large family and a culture of dependency prevail in rural areas of Pakistan. For example, Mukhtar said that he was providing for his parents along with his children. Similarly, Kabeer stated that he was also providing for his two unmarried sisters as well as his parents. When there are fewer earning hands and more dependants in a family, it increases financial pressure. Family hardships and financial distress make it difficult for secondary school boys to continue their schooling. The findings of this study were further evidenced by Jordan et al. (1994), who found family needs and financial worries to be pull out factors of dropping out among Hispanic and African American grade eight students in the USA.

The findings of this study are also consistent with a large number of other empirical studies that show a positive relationship between parental socioeconomic status, household poverty and dropping out of school (Abuya et al., 2013; Al-Hroub, 2014; Ampiah & Adu-Yeboah, 2009; Bridgeland, 2010; Chugh, 2011; Dakwa et al., 2014; Huisman & Smits, 2009; Hunt, 2008; Moyi, 2010; Munsaka, 2011; Stephens, 2000; Yi et al., 2012).

7.2.2 Poor Academic Performance

A large number of studies show that poor academic achievements contribute to school dropout (Fortin, Marcotte, Diallo, Potvin, & Royer, 2013; Hardre & Reeve, 2003; Lan & Lanthier, 2003; Parr & Bonitz, 2015). Poor academic performance is an indicator that a student is not showing adequate progress in studies and is uncertain about completion of the intended level of schooling (Watt & Roessingh, 1994). It is evident that the low expectations of parents and teachers, and students' own lack of self-determination, serve as clear indicators for dropping out. For example, Hardre and Reeve (2003) tested a motivational model on 483 students at public high schools in four different Iowa school districts in the US to explain how rural pupils decide on their persistence against dropping out. They identified that, apart from school performance, perceived self-determination and perceived competence also acted as strong predictors of dropping out. Lan and Lanthier (2003) added that the students who experienced poor academic achievement in previous grades also had a low perception of their academic abilities in upper grades. If such students did not have extra study support, they dropped out of school. In addition, household social and economic factors greatly impact on children's academic success (Siddiqui & Gorard, 2017).

In this study, another notable pull out factor of dropping out that the fathers reported was their boys' poor academic performance at school. This finding is fully consistent with previous research. However, the prior studies generally measured poor academic achievement through quantitative longitudinal data analysis (Hardre & Reeve, 2003; Parr & Bonitz, 2015; Watt & Roessingh, 1994). The fathers' perspectives on their children's poor academic performance at secondary schools located in the remote rural areas are largely missing in existing literature.

The fathers of the dropped out children were divided in their opinions on their children's poor academic performance in studies. Some fathers, particularly those whose sons failed in class 9, held their sons responsible and said that their boys were naturally weak in studies. They argued that it was a waste of time and resources sending them to school as it was clear that they were not going to pass their secondary school exams. They perceived that their sons lacked the cognitive abilities necessary to pass secondary school exams. For example, Mushtaq said:

> My son completely failed in class 9 board exams. He told me that the syllabus was difficult for him. I knew that he could not pass the secondary school certificate. Rather

than forcing him to continue, I sent him to a local barber shop to learn this occupation. He has become a skilled barber after one year. Now, he is running his own barber shop and earning good money.

Similarly, another father said:

My son was weak in studies. The teachers told me that he was not showing progress in secondary classes. I sent him to a private tuition centre to improve performance. Despite this, he failed in class 9 and eventually stopped going to school. I did not force him to continue because I knew that he was not able to pass board exam.

7.3 Role of Push Out Factors and Process of Dropping Out

The fathers also identified that the teachers' lack of interest in teaching at school and their engagement in private tutoring after school time caused their children to drop out of school.

7.3.1 Teachers' Lack of Interest in Teaching and Provision of Private Tutoring

Out of the 14 fathers, eight reported that some teachers did not take an interest in teaching students at schools, arguing that this was because they ran their own private tuition centres during out of school hours. They taught less at school and encouraged their pupils to attend their own tuition centres. They also reported that some teachers have second jobs, such as running their own shops or agricultural work; they carry out their business activities during school time, neglecting their teaching duties.

Receiving private tuition in academic subjects is a common trend globally (Bray, 1999; Bray, Zhan, Lykins, Wang, & Kwo, 2014; Dang, 2007; Jayachandran, 2014; Nath, 2008). Trends of private tuition are also widespread in Pakistan. The ASER report 2017 shows that 7 percent of children in government schools, and 27 percent in private schools, receive paid tuition in Pakistan. It further shows that the trend of receiving paid tuition in classes 9 and 10 is higher as compared to other classes. It has been estimated that 33.3 percent of pupils in class 9, and 31.5 percent in class 10 of private schools attend paid tuition, whereas this rate for the students in government schools is 11.6 percent for class 9 and 12.4 percent for class 10 in Pakistan (ASER-Pakistan, 2017a).

A variety of factors can affect pupils' academic performance, and one of these is the teachers' lack of interest in teaching. In this study, 13 of the 18 dropped out boys stated that they dropped out from secondary school because of their poor schooling in early classes (see Chapter Six). Among other factors, the financial inability to pay for private tuition was also noted as a reason for dropping out. For example, Raza, who dropped out in class 9, mentioned his inability to afford private tuition for additional help with his studies. He reported that his science teacher at school gave more attention to those pupils who went to his private tuition centre after school hours.

The perspectives of the fathers concerning the perceived lack of interest of some teachers in teaching at school corroborate the dropped out pupils' statements. However, none of the teachers or head teachers had reported that teachers' engagement in private tutoring or other business activities were a problem at school. The head teachers reported that the government had asked teachers not to undertake their personal business during school time or offer private tuition to their own pupils during out of school hours. However, teachers are free to do any business after school hours. The teachers and the head teachers had not officially confirmed that they were providing private tuition to their own pupils; nevertheless, it was evident that some teachers were running their private tuition centres and academies in the area, as confirmed by some of the parents and dropped out boys. The fathers of some dropped out boys directly blamed the school and the teachers for not teaching their children well. The fathers of Bilal, Tahir, Anees and Muzaffar had similar responses to their sons dropping out from secondary classes; these pupils first failed in classes 9 and 10. Bilal's father said:

> My son completed 10 years at school. He was a regular student. I was always monitoring his attendance in classes. He never failed to turn up to class 8. It was the duty of school and teachers to teach him well in secondary classes. My job was to send him school every day and I did it.

The fathers of Tahir and Anees added:

> We do labour work and hardly meet the living and school expenses of our children. We cannot afford costly private tuition of the same teachers who are responsible to teach our children at school. Why they are getting salaries from the government if we have to pay them to teach our children privately.

Muzaffar's father added:

I have been sick for a long time. My child failed first in class 9 and then in 10. We did not have the money to pay his exam board fees again. I wished that my boy completed secondary education. I sent him school for ten years. It was teachers' job to help him study and makes him successful.

The fathers maintained that they had sent their boys to school for ten years and had fulfilled their parental role; they were of the view that their responsibility was to ensure their children went to school. It was understood from their educational level that they were not able to help with homework. They stated that they had never been part of any school-based involvement regarding their children's schooling and that the teachers had never contacted them to discuss their children's academic performance. On the contrary, the teachers and head teachers argued that the majority of fathers did not respond when they were invited to school to discuss their children's progress (see Chapter Five).

I was unable to reach some of the fathers of the dropped out pupils regularly, as they were either working for their daily wages or busy in their fields in remote areas. It was apparent that a trade-off between their manual labour and seeing teachers at school was difficult for them. A mother's role in the secondary schooling of her boys was not studied in this research because of the cultural constraints in the remote rural areas. Meetings between male teachers and a mother of absentees or dropouts are typically not permitted. Similarly, a father of daughters has restrictions in meeting female teachers. The male teachers can only contact the fathers regarding their sons at school. When fathers fear that they will lose wages if they attend meetings with teachers, they will not attend. I approached some fathers working in fields which were far from the main villages. It was also observed that when a father's workplace is away from a school, time and travelling cost negatively affect meetings with teachers. In this way, the teachers' cultural constraint of only being able to contact parents of the same sex, and the fathers' inability because of economic pressures to trade-off between work and meeting with teachers, widens the communication gap between parents and schools.

This study revealed that lack of communication between school and parents gave sole authority to teachers to decide about the students who were at risk of underperforming. It has been found that "some schools intentionally encouraged students at risk not to sit the board exams and instead to apply as a private candidate" in order to keep their failure rate low (Mughal & Aldridge, 2017, p. 372).

One of the fathers argued that there was no point in the teachers contacting him to tell him that his son was not performing well in studies. He said:

> Once I met the head teacher and he told me that my son in class 9 was not doing well in science subjects and he needed extra help in studies. He asked me to arrange supplementary tuition for him. I said to him that I did not have money for private tuition. I also told him that it was responsibility of the teachers to teach and make him able to pass.

According to Hornby and Laffele (2011), when parents think that their role is limited to sending children to school, they are less involved in their children's education. However, this study shows that they are less involved when they are not academically able to help their children. Furthermore, when parents cannot afford supplementary private tuition for their children at risk of dropping out, they totally rely on school teaching.

Providing for-profit tutoring by teachers to their own formal pupils is a norm at schools in developing countries (Bray, 1999). In this study, eight fathers expressed their concerns over the trend of private tutoring in the area. They said that the teachers who taught science and mathematics at local schools also offered paid tuition at their homes in the evening. They were of the view that some teachers intentionally did not take an interest in teaching at school and urged children, either directly or indirectly, to seek private tuition from them. They further said that the teachers ran such local tuition centres unofficially. Wealthy families also paid them to provide one-to-one tuition to their children.

The existing literature corroborates the fathers' views expressed in this study. For example, Jayachandran (2014) showed that Nepalese teachers taught less at school in order to create a demand for their private and paid tutoring to their own pupils. He used a large nationwide survey data covering 28 districts, 450 schools and 11,250 students who took secondary school exams in 2004. The pupils who could not afford private tutoring were left behind in their studies and ultimately failed their exams and dropped out of school. Jayachandran (2014) highlighted that "student performance on the national secondary exam appears to fall when the school offers tutoring, concentrated among the students from poorer families who are less likely to take up tutoring" (Jayachandran, 2014, p.202).

It is clear that private tutoring widens the educational gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' (UNESCO, 2017). Nath (2008) observed that primary school pupils in Bangladesh who received supplementary tuition learnt more than those who did not get such support. He

further noted that the demand for supplementary tutoring was higher among the children of educated parents and wealthy families. Bray et al. (2014) showed similar results in their study based on a questionnaire survey of 16 secondary schools in Hong Kong in the 2011/12 academic year. They found that "students from wealthier families are [more] likely to receive private tutoring […] than students from low income families" (Bray et al., 2014, p.35). The affluent pupils received supplementary tutoring from their class teachers or hired private tutors. Students and parents desire better exam grades, which compels parents to invest more in their children's education; thus, the demand for private tutoring is created (Bray et al., 2014).

There are many reasons for the provision of private tuition, including the low salaries paid to teachers in state schools which produce the need for a supplementary income, and fewer official teaching hours at school to cover the syllabus (Bray, 1999). The existing literature highlights the issue of teachers giving paid tuition to their own students. Bray (1999) found that some teachers would "ensure that syllabuses are not fully covered" in class, creating a market for private tuition, and that teachers might blackmail students, telling them "that pupils who do not come to the private lessons will be penalised in class tests and other activities" (Bray, 1999, p.37). Bray further notes that teachers "may also deliberately fail students in order to create a market for their services".

This study further found that some children drop out from secondary classes because of their poor educational background (see Chapters Five and Six). They need extra study support out of formal teaching hours at school to cope with the syllabus at secondary level, which creates a demand for private tutoring. Thus, at the secondary level, the supplementary tuition market arises from poor schooling in early classes. The children of rich families may fulfil their academic deficiencies through private tuition, whereas the children of poor families who cannot afford private tutoring are left behind academically.

Furthermore, the teachers were of the view that they had to do some non-teaching duties, imposed by the government, in addition to their regular teaching hours at school (see Chapter Five). This suggests that the demand for private tutoring also arises when teachers are not able to teach a full syllabus during school hours. The students who can afford fees seek private tuition from their class teachers to cover the syllabus.

As discussed in Chapter Five, both male and female teachers reported that the mathematics and science teachers rarely stayed at schools located in remote rural areas, preferring to teach in big cities where they can earn extra money for private tutoring.

Obviously, the opportunities for private tutoring are greater in big cities than the remote villages. The rural secondary schools suffer from the resulting shortage of subject specialists because of this brain drain. The unavailability of mathematics and science teachers in secondary schools also creates a demand for private tutoring. In this study, eight of the fourteen fathers openly criticised the private tutoring by the teachers to their own pupils during out of school hours. There is a possibility that some teachers teach less at school or give more attention to those students who get private tuition from them.

However, the fathers ignored the other factors that created a demand for supplement tuition, such as their children's poor schooling in early classes, a shortage of qualified staff, and the requirements of the teachers to carry out non-teaching duties. None of the fathers reported that their son was ever penalised by teachers in class tests or in other activities at school for not having private tuition from them. They argued that they did not have the money to pay for supplementary tuition for their children and insisted teachers should make extra efforts to help their children pass secondary school exams. Thus, this is an economic issue and also one relating to governmental policies, rather than fathers blaming the teachers for not teaching very well.

This fathers' perspective of their children's poor academic performance and subsequent dropping out from school supports the views of some teachers and dropped out children who maintained that poor schooling and academic background were among the causes of dropping out of secondary classes (see Chapters Five and Six). The teachers and parents doubted the abilities of underperforming students to complete secondary schooling. Similarly, some dropped out pupils also believed that the syllabus was too difficult for them in secondary classes (see Chapter Six).

However, the fathers who blamed teachers for not taking an interest in teaching at school held them responsible for their sons' poor academic performance. They argued that when teachers would not teach their pupils in class, they fell behind in their studies. For example, a father of a class 10 drop out said:

> Some teachers remain engaged in gossiping to each other and do not deliver the lessons. They just come to school to complete their official working hours and entertain their personal visitors at school. They do not teach their pupils sincerely and honestly. The pupils' academic performance will go down if their teachers do not teach them properly.

It is evident from the perspectives of fathers and some dropped children that the teachers' attitude and an unsupportive school environment add to pupils' poor academic performance. If a school culture fails to recognise the needs of students, they are less able to improve their academic performance (Patterson et al., 2007). The perspectives of the fathers of the secondary school dropouts regarding teachers' behaviour are consistent with the findings of Seidu and Adzahlie-Mensah (2010) in three Ghanaian rural schools. They observed that absenteeism, late arrival at school, punishing students with a cane, wasting teaching hours in gossip and poor teaching practices contributed to the dropout problem.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has accounted for the perspective of fathers of school dropouts. According to the fathers of the school dropouts, family poverty and poor academic performance were the main pull out factors of their children's dropping out. Teachers' engagement in private tutoring emerged as a push out factor of dropping out.

It is evident that the parents' level of education, family circumstances, socioeconomic status, class and ethnicity, and their beliefs about school and teachers, serve as barriers to parental involvement in school management (Hornby & Laffele, 2011). None of the fathers of the dropped out boys interviewed in this study were members of the village school councils, or were even aware of the existence of school councils. Among the 14 fathers of school dropouts, none reported that the teachers had discussed the school council with them or invited them to become a member. Nevertheless, the widely-held notion that there is reluctance among people in local communities to get involved in school affairs is not supported by the findings of this study. The fathers of school dropouts clearly argued that they were not told about the existence of school councils and they showed their willingness to become a member of the school council.

The next chapter focuses on key findings, implications and recommendations of the thesis. The chapter summarises the findings of the study and discusses their implications for policymakers. The proceeding chapter lists the policy measures necessary to prevent dropout as suggested by the participants of the study; presents the contribution of the study; the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research. The thesis closes with an overall conclusion of the study.

Chapter 8: The Issue of Dropping Out in Rural Pakistan: Implications for Policymakers

8.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises findings of the study and discusses the issues regarding schooling and dropout. As discussed in Chapter Four, qualitative research adopts a naturalistic approach and seeks to understand a phenomenon in a context-specific setting (Bryman, 2016). The qualitative approach is inductive in nature; it identifies a social problem and designs some general research questions to address it without having a predetermined hypothesis (See Chapter Two). The conceptual framework for the study is usually drawn on the existing literature as it has been done in Chapter Three for this study. Then, suitable research methods are employed to collect data. For the study, Chapter Four details these methods. The data are analysed by using appropriate qualitative techniques. The results are linked to the existing studies (See Chapter Five, Chapter Six and Chapter Seven) and a theory is developed based on new finding.

Chapter Eight accounts for the specific issues of dropping out from secondary classes in the subdivision of Pind Dadan Khan, in the district of Jhelum. The findings are linked to the existing studies and a further theory of school dropout is developed based on the new findings. One of the arguments of this study is that the voices of teachers, head teachers, non-school members of school councils, parents and school children should be rooted in public policies related to them, in line with the principles of participation in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Thus, top-down and bottom-up policy approaches are discussed, and the latter is supported to lessen the problem of dropping out in the remote areas like Jhelum, a rural district of Pakistan. Therefore, the policy interventions suggested by the participants of the study are listed and their implications for policymakers are discussed in the chapter.

Furthermore, the chapter highlights the significant contribution of the study to knowledge. Limitations of the study and areas for future research have also been presented in the chapter. Finally, an overall conclusion of the study is given at the end.

8.2 Summary of Findings of the Study

The thesis explored the reasons for dropping out from secondary education (classes 9 and 10) through the perspectives of teachers, head teachers, community members of school councils, fathers of dropouts and the children and young people who had dropped out in the remote areas of Jhelum, a rural district of Pakistan. Pull out and push out theoretical frameworks (Jordan et al., 1996) were employed to understand the financial and social pressures outside the school which conflict with educational objectives and the inside school environment which do not fulfil the learning needs for all. The research used an interpretivist philosophy, where subjective meaning was at the core of knowledge. The aim of interpretive research is to understand the meanings human beings attribute to their behaviour, actions, motives, and the external world (Porta & Keating, 2008). The main aim of the study was to investigate the reasons for dropping out among secondary school students, which included examining the motives behind their decisions for dropping out and how they, their teachers, school councillors and parents perceived it. Primary data were collected through in-depth individual and group interviews with 103 participants comprising 18 head teachers (10 males and 8 females), 41 teachers (20 males and 21 females), 18 school dropouts (boys), 14 fathers of school dropouts, and 12 community members of school councils (all males). Table 8.1 presents a summary of the main findings.

Table 8.1 A Summary of the Study's Findings

Participants' Perspectives on Dropping Out	Pull Out Factors	Push Out Factors	Policy Related Factors
Perspectives of male and female teachers and heads of schools	Individual and family characteristics. Desire to seek religious education. Pupils' and parents' lack of interest in schooling. Household poverty. Local labour market opportunities. Pressures of domestic responsibilities. A large number of siblings. Trends of early marriages. Migration. Poor educational background and subsequent failure in class 9. Influence of feudalism in the rural areas.	Location of a school. Lack of facilities at a school. Also, poor/ineffective education policies – structural or systemic factors. Failure in class 9 is also a push out factor because it demonstrates ineffective education policies and also poor teaching.	English medium syllabus. Varied examination patterns. Automated progression policy. Non-deregistration policy for absentee pupils. Imposing non-teaching duties on teachers. Ineffective school council policy.
Perspectives of the community members of school councils	Parents had less control of children. Poverty. Lack of interest of parents in their children's schooling. Poor academic performance.	Teachers' lack of interest in teaching.	Ineffective school council policies.
Perspectives of secondary school dropped out boys	Poverty. Parental illness or death and loss of family income. Family size and structure: large number of siblings. Domestic responsibilities and out of school activities. Personal attitudes and interests. Parental education level and lack of family support in learning. Poor educational background and failure in class 9.	Poor quality teaching. Long distance schools. Practices of rote learning and memorization. Bullying from class teachers. Teachers' lack of interest in teaching.	Ineffective school and public policies. Automated progression policy. English medium syllabus. No accountability for non-attendance.
Perspectives of the fathers of secondary school dropped out boys	Family poverty. Poor academic performance.	Teachers' lack of interest in teaching. Provision of private tutoring from the school teachers.	

Table 8.1 presents a summary of the findings, showing that the influence of pull out factors is stronger than the other factors of dropping out from secondary classes in rural areas of Jhelum. Previous qualitative studies also show that pull out is a leading factor for dropping out from schools in poor and low-income countries (Abuya et al., 2013; Al-Hroub, 2014; Baku & Agyman, 2002; Bridgeland et al., 2009; Dakwa et al., 2014; T. Lee & Breen, 2007; Lessard et al., 2008; Mitchell et al., 2018; Mokibelo, 2014; Munsaka, 2011; Ritchotte & Graefe, 2017; Saraiva et al., 2011; Tukundane et al., 2014; Zuilkowski et al., 2017). Doll et al. (2013) further confirmed this observation when they compared and analysed seven nationally representative studies in order to understand the reasons for dropping out through the school dropouts' own perspectives in the US. They found that the impact of pull out factors was more dominant in those studies.

Further to the established pull out factors in the previous studies, the influence of feudalism, a desire to seek religious education to attain social respect, and the need to earn money to fulfil the cultural practice of providing a dowry, emerged as new findings. This study showed through the teachers and head teachers' perspectives that the system of feudalism badly affected schooling and increased the dropout rate in the remote areas of Jhelum. It further emerged that some children of disadvantaged families opted for a Madrasah education to attain religious authority, despite being able to afford formal schooling. They wanted to earn social respect and representation in the traditional power structure, which was otherwise not possible due to the strong system of landlordism. Social pressures of buying a dowry and the cultural practice of marrying off girls early pulled some secondary school pupils out of school in the research area.

Regarding the push out factors, Table 8.1 shows that the non-school members of councils, fathers and the dropped out pupils held different perspectives compared to the teachers and head teachers. The teaching staff held pupils responsible for not paying attention to their studies, as well as blaming their parents for not showing an interest in their children's schooling, whereas the dropped out pupils argued that their class teachers took less interest in teaching, showed poor quality teaching, relied on rote learning and memorization, and explicitly bullied learners who were weak in their studies. Evidence from the existing empirical studies largely shows that the teachers do not agree that their teaching practices and the school culture pushes some pupils out of school. Instead, they hold pupils, their parents, and other social and economic factors responsible for children dropping out (Patterson et al., 2007; Seidu & Adzahlie-Mensah, 2010; Smyth & Hattam, 2002). However, along with the dropped out

pupils, their fathers and community members of school councils also blamed the teachers for taking less interest in teaching at school and more in their private businesses and tutoring outside the school. Practices of rote learning and memorization at school, and class teachers openly calling poor learners derogatory names emerged as new findings of dropping out in the rural areas of Jhelum which consequently discouraged students from continuing their schooling.

Some factors are both pull and push – not just the fault of children and families but poor or ineffective education policies. Besides pull out and push out factors, Table 8.1 shows that some ineffective school and public policies increased the dropout rate in the public secondary schools in the district of Jhelum. The English medium syllabus, varied examination patterns, automated progression policy, non-deregistration policy for absentee pupils, imposing non-teaching duties on teachers, and ineffective practices of forming and running the school council emerged as new findings for dropping out in the research area, which have not been shown in previous studies.

Furthermore, Table 8.1 shows that community members of school councils and fathers of dropped out pupils are less expressive in detailing the reasons for dropping out. This implies that they may not have a direct or lived experience of dropping out. Additionally, as they are not fully involved and engaged with local schools, as found by this study, they are less able to understand and explain the dropout phenomenon.

Another implication of this finding could be the fathers' lower socioeconomic status and academic inability to engage with their children's home or school-based learning. They appeared to be less aware of the problems their children went through at school. Moreover, they did not talk about policy-related factors of dropping out. This further shows that they do not have the knowledge of school or public policies that have an adverse effect on their children at school. On the other hand, the teachers, head teachers, and dropped out children have direct and lived experiences of dropping out, and therefore they discussed it in detail.

This study further argues that the problem of dropping out can better be addressed if it is understood through the perspectives of teachers, school councillors, parents, and dropped out children themselves at the point of service delivery. These perspectives are not often accounted in the existing literature on school dropout. Good interventions always require local analysis of problems and assessments of potential strategies at the point of service delivery.

8.3 Addressing the Dropout Problem: Respondents' Perspectives

The respondents of the study suggested some policy interventions to effectively address the problem of dropping out at school level. They were:

- Extra support classes at school for academically weak secondary students.
- Free transportation facilities to get to school.
- Hiring of teachers at school level to fulfil the vacant posts immediately.
- Standard of education provision should be improved in public primary and elementary schools in remote areas.
- A uniform examination system for primary, elementary and secondary exams.
- Free text books in Urdu.
- Extra financial support to poor students.
- Holding class teachers accountable for poor results.
- Year repetition for class 9 should be allowed.
- Medium of instruction should be the choice of the students.
- Class 9 and 10 board exams should be combined and held after two years.
- Abolishing the automated progression policy.
- Refresher courses for teachers.
- An effective public policy for dropout prevention is needed.
- Curbing the non-deregistration policy from public schools.
- Tougher checks on class teachers who provide private paid tuition to their students.
- Posts for school councillors should be advertised publicly.
- Empowering school councils to hold school staff accountable.

The rationality and practicality of the policy measures suggested by the respondents to prevent dropping out at school level are interpreted, analysed and discussed in the next section.

8.4 Policy Interventions to Prevent Dropping Out: Implications and Recommendations

In the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) of the Economics and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations in July 2011, Pakistan voluntarily agreed to present its national report on the ARM theme: 'Implementing the Internationally Agreed Goals and Commitments in Regard to Education'. The report identified key challenges in education in Pakistan, such as: the large number of out of school children; illiterate adults; poor quality of

education; a lack of financial resources; weak coordination of international development partners; a lack of supervision and monitoring; ineffective public-private partnership; and a lack of community participation (United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), 2011). The Pakistan Education for All (EFA) Review Report 2015 asserts that because of these challenges, "As a cumulative effect, this generates a lack of interest/motivation among students who drop out from school – adversely affecting every EFA goal and its corresponding targets" (GoP, 2014, p. 13).

Along with another 164 states at the Dakar World Education Forum 2000, Pakistan pledged to develop an approachable and accountable education system to encourage good governance and management. The forum participants also ensured the involvement of civil society in the process of policy-making, implementation and monitoring at school level (UNESCO, 2007). However, the role of civil society in policy-making and implementation at school level is not evident in Pakistan. Until 2010, the federal government would make policies and pass them to the provinces to implement by designing their own strategies. This is known as a top-down policy approach.

Pakistan devolved sixteen federal ministries, including the Ministry of Education, to the provincial governments in 2010. However, on 16 September 2011, a National Education Conference was held at the Prime Minister's Secretariat in Islamabad and a joint declaration was signed by the then prime minister and the relevant provincial educational authorities. The declaration clearly stated that "National Education Policy 2009, subject to such adaptations as are necessitated in view of the 18th Constitutional Amendment, shall continue to be a jointly owned national document" (Mukhtar, 2010, p. 5). Thus, the provinces inherited the current educational policy in-practice from the federal government.

The provincial education ministries make decisions on schools through their executive district Education Officers who directly control the schools in their districts. Nevertheless, this decentralisation has fully empowered the provincial governments to make their individualised policies and implementation frameworks to achieve the targets set out in the National Educational Policy 2009 (Mukhtar, 2010). This decentralization and devolution of power provide the opportunity to the provinces to take the decision-making process to grass-roots level. Therefore, this study advocates a bottom-up policy approach to address the issue of dropping out at school level.

The existing literature mainly focuses on the evaluation of conditional cash transfer programmes and other material subsidies in response to enrolment and attendance at schools (Alam et al., 2011; Chaudhury & Parajuli, 2010; Essuman & Bosumtwi-Sam, 2013; Gelli et al., 2007). These studies quantify the outcomes in percentage increases of enrolment and attendance. Further to the supply side, the current literature emphasizes the formation of school committees at local level (Amevigbe et al., 2002; Baku & Agyman, 2002; Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Bray, 1996; Pellini, 2005; Swift-Morgan, 2006); however, demand-side interventions are less evident. The literature on school dropout largely overlooks the perspectives of schoolteachers, head teachers, school councillors, parents of school dropouts and the dropped out children themselves in proposing a solution to the problem.

8.4.1   222m444

According to the top-down policy implementation approach the starting point is the authoritative decision; as the name implies, centrally located actors are seen as most relevant to producing the desired effect"(Matland, 1995, p. 146). There are three main criticisms of the top-down approach: top-downers do not consider the steps taken prior to the policy-making process; they take implementation as a purely administrative function, and they support complete control of authorities over implementation (Matland, 1995). The decision-making process in the top-down approach starts from the top and other actors are ignored. The top-down perspective has also neglected the strategies used by street-level bureaucrats and target groups of practising or moulding the central policy to their needs (Sabatier, 1986).

On the other hand, the bottom-up approach serves the purpose of targeting the population and point of service delivery (Hjern & Hull, 1982). Lipsky is considered to be the founding father of the bottom-up approach of policy implementation (Hill & Hupe, 2002). Lipsky (2010) introduced *"street-level bureaucrats"* who influence policy implementation at local level, such as school head teachers and social workers. He highlights that policy delivered by street-level bureaucrats is more "immediate and personal" (Lipsky, 2010, p. 8). He further argues that there might be a gap between street-level behaviour and written policy statement, but a skilful worker bridges this gap by compromising between policy objectives and actual practices. Street-level bureaucrats act as front-line staff, so they have to respond to situations. This discretion gives them more confidence and the clients believe that they are capable of solving their problems.

As discussed in Chapter Five, teachers, parents and community members of school councils have no role in making school policies; policy input from these local actors can better serve the purpose of a target population, such as dropped out children. The National Education Policy (2009) also endorses that one of the reasons why the past educational policies and plans in the country could not reach their targets is the lack of community participation in decision-making and policy implementation at local level. Therefore, the perspectives of teachers, parents, dropped out boys and community members of school councils are useful in designing better policies and practices to prevent dropping out from the rural public secondary schools. This study fully supports the bottom-up policy approach to prevent dropping out at school level in the rural areas of Pakistan.

The head teachers said that vacant posts at school were filled through lengthy official processes. Meanwhile, the pupils either missed their lessons or were taught by teachers who were not subject specialists; consequently, it affected academic performance and the students failed their annual exams. Therefore, the head teachers suggested that they should be allowed to fill the vacant posts on a contractual and temporary basis. The head teachers largely reported a shortage of teachers and overcrowded classes as a determining factor for pupils dropping out. The dropped out pupils argued that poor quality teaching affected their performance at school and contributed to their dropping out. The lack of adequately qualified teachers at secondary level was a problem in the public secondary schools in the research area. Therefore, the immediate response to this problem was hiring teachers at school level. However, by adopting this approach head teachers' favouritism could manipulate the recruitment process, as we have seen in selecting members for school councils (See Chapter 5). Competent authorities can overcome this problem by setting up strict merit criteria for hiring teachers at school level.

8.4.2 School-Based Management (SBM)

As discussed in Chapter 3, governments across the world use different strategies to improve service delivery in the education sector at a local level. Among these strategies, the most common approach is school-based management (SBM) or decentralisation of the decision-making authority from central government to school level (Caldwell, 2005). The main purpose of SBM is to encourage parents and other community members to engage in school management and governance.

It emerged from the research that the process of involving the local community in school affairs was ineffective. The male teachers greatly recommended to adopt an effective

mechanism of community participation at school level. The evidence in this study shows that parents and community members were not being encouraged to get involved in school management; instead the head teachers selected members on the grounds of favouritism and nepotism.

School councils should play a key role in working together with school staff with other partners and agencies in local communities, and with parents and children themselves, in order to address and prevent pupil dropout. The evidence shows, however, that a number of barriers prevent the effective implementation and performance of school councils. The problem lies in the criteria and methods used to identify 'suitable' council members. What is needed is a formal and rigorous selection procedure for election onto school councils.

Recommendations based on the findings of this study propose that posts for school council members should be advertised publicly, with a set of selection criteria, and members should be selected through a formal procedure rather than being individually nominated by head teachers. Furthermore, in order to avoid perpetuating a culture of favouritism, which this study found is deeply rooted in schools in rural areas, head teachers should not be given the sole authority to select members for school councils.

It is problematic to claim that local people do not take interest in school affairs without implementing a fair and rigorous recruitment process in order to test this claim and in order to improve the current recruitment process. Leaving decisions about the makeup of school councils solely in the hands of head teachers, without an agreed formal process in place, can and does impede the successful implementation and efficacy of school councils in schools in rural Punjab. Furthermore, the official school council policy does not include students in councils. These underestimations about the abilities of secondary school students make school councils less effective in addressing dropout issues at local level.

Furthermore, the prescribed roles of the school councils are subjective in nature. The community members of school councils are not given any authority to hold schools to account. Without any authority, the parents, students and community members are not able to hold teachers and head teachers responsible or accountable for misusing school development funds, for not taking interest in teaching, for running private tuition centres, and for disrespecting and bullying poor pupils.

Thus, it was clear from these findings that a significant proportion of school development funds was being drained as a result of financial malpractice at both the school

(illicit spending activities of head teachers) and in the district (bribes made by staff in the accounts office) levels. Had these monies been spent on addressing the needs and welfare of children in most need, then it is likely that the school dropout rate could have been significantly reduced.

Finally, the government should invest more in secondary education and allocate sufficient funds to school councils in order to address the current high dropout rate and prevent children from dropping out of school in the future. However, there needs to be an effective monitoring system for fair usage of such funds at school level. At present, school councils in rural Punjab are less effective in their functioning, in preventing pupil dropout and in bringing dropped out children back to school, as shown by this study.

8.4.3 Extra Support Classes

It was evident that weak educational background, poor academic performance and subsequent failure in class 9 were causing high dropout levels from secondary education in the rural areas of the district of Jhelum. Some dropped out children said that they could not afford private tuition to improve their academic performance. This was further evidenced by some fathers of school dropouts who also stated they could not afford private tutoring for their academically weak children. Therefore, teachers, fathers of school dropouts and some dropped out pupils themselves suggested extra support from class teachers. Regardless of the reasons for a weak educational background and poor academic performance, the pupils have every right to receive a quality education and schools should help them to improve their performance. All the schools included in the sample reported that they did not have any extra arrangements in place (out of formal classes) to support the academically weak pupils.

It is evident that children whose parents can afford it receive extra study support through private tuition. The ASER report (2017) shows that 15 percent of children in government schools and 33 percent in private schools receive paid tuition in the province of Punjab. Again, the trends of taking private tuition are higher in classes 9 and 10 compared to other classes. In governmental schools, 22.1 percent of children in class 9 and 27.1 percent in class 10 attend paid tuition in Punjab, whereas this ratio is 42 percent and 40.8 percent for classes 9 and 10 respectively for pupils in private schools (ASER-Pakistan, 2017b, p. 182).

The trends for private tuition are also apparent in the district of Jhelum. The ASER report (2017) further shows that 19 percent of the children in government schools and 47 percent in private school attend paid tuition in this district. This trend is greater for secondary

classes. In government schools, 32.6 percent of pupils in class 9 and 24 percent in class 10 receive paid supplementary tuition, whereas this rate for the pupils in private schools is 50 percent and 87.5 percent for class 9 and class 10 in Jhelum (ASER-Pakistan, 2017b). During the fieldwork, I witnessed many advertisements offering secondary school students private tuition in English, mathematics and science, even in remote rural areas. The widespread tuition trends in the remote rural areas of Jhelum substantiated the fathers' claim that some teachers took more interest in providing private tuition outside school and less in teaching at school.

The fathers of the dropouts suggested that the class teachers should be completely banned from providing private paid tuition to the students they were responsible for teaching at school, arguing that some teachers intentionally taught poorly at school to create a demand for their private tuition services. The poor pupils who could not pay for private lessons were left behind in their studies and eventually dropped out of school. Similarly, the fathers of dropouts and some community members of school councils suggested that the teachers should not be allowed to run their own businesses during school time.

The pupils of poor parents suffer in many ways. As this study evidenced, they attended poorly managed primary schools in remote rural areas, did not have any family support with home-based learning, and their parents could not afford private tuition for them. At school, children could not access extra study support to improve their performance. Thus, the suggestion of giving extra classes at school is highly relevant to meet their study needs. In this regard, the government should improve the standards of education in the primary public schools in remote villages by providing them with adequate human and physical facilities, making them free from political interference, involving parents in school management, adopting innovative teaching practices, and improving the quality of the teachers. Furthermore, the government should arrange extra support classes for the secondary school pupils of disadvantaged families by allocating a special budget for this purpose. However, these support classes should not be taken by the same school staff, so that the head teachers or teachers cannot derive personal benefits from this scheme using their official capacity. The government should hire private tutors for the proposed support classes after formal school hours.

Alternatively, the government should consider giving tuition vouchers to academically weak secondary school students to enable them to attend private tuition from their preferred tutor. As we have seen in Chapter Two, the current policy interventions, such as the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and the Child Support Programme (CSP), offer a cash

subsidy of between Rs. 300 to Rs. 1,500 ($3 to $15) to poor families on condition that their children attend school. It seems difficult for the poverty-stricken families to arrange private tuition for their children with this small amount. Furthermore, the Government of Punjab provide scholarships of up to Rs. 1,500 to the poor secondary school students in its 16 less-developed southern districts on condition they achieve at least 60 percent marks in their elementary board exams and their parental monthly income is less than Rs. 1,5000 ($150). However, the existing interventions do not consider the poor and academically weak students who are unable to achieve 60 percent in elementary exams and are struggling with their studies in secondary classes. Therefore, arranging extra support classes or giving them an education voucher to attend private tuition could be effective practical suggestions to prevent their dropping out from school.

8.4.4   Financial Support to Poor Secondary School Pupils

Again, as we have seen in Chapter Two, the Punjab Educational Endowment Fund (PEEF) scholarships and the Khadim-E-Punjab Zewar-e-taleem programme for girls are limited to 16 districts in the Punjab which are less developed compared to other districts. Jhelum, the sample district of the study, has not yet been considered for such financial incentives. The Education Voucher Scheme (EVS) of the Punjab government gives Rs.450 for primary, Rs.500 for elementary and Rs.600 for secondary classes per student on a monthly basis to the partner schools, not direct to the students. The direct financial support to the poor students or their families ranges from Rs. 300 to Rs. 1,500 through different programmes (see Chapter Two).

The question is whether this assistance is sufficient to prevent dropout at secondary level. If we look at the evidence of this study, the dropped pupils were earning between Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 9,000 per month in the local market. The teachers and head teachers suggested that the assistance of Rs.1000 per month could help reduce dropout. The dropped out pupils, however, argued that this amount was not enough to prevent them from dropping out and they gave figures of between the range of Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 5,000 depending on their needs.

They suggested that board registration and the examination fees should be abolished at secondary level. The male and female teachers and the head teachers confirmed that some poor pupils did not take exams or reappear if failed, in the board exams just because they could not afford the registration and examination fees. One of the fathers and his dropped out son also corroborated that they could not pay the examination fees for the failed subjects in class 10.

In the remote rural areas, as in the district of Jhelum in this study, it is less likely that girls engage in paid jobs because of the limited market opportunities, cultural constraints, and the social perception of girls' roles in society. Therefore, programmes like Khadim-E-Punjab Zewar-e-taleem, that give Rs. 1,000 ($10) per month to the girls enrolled in grades 6-10, may increase their attendance at school. With this monthly stipend, girls can pay their transportation cost to distant schools and use it to meet their further educational needs. However, this type of assistance is less helpful for secondary school boys who drop out to earn an income for their families.

It is recommended that the government should adopt a need-based policy to help the poor secondary school pupils who face financial problems in the wake of their parents' illness or death. Simply providing financial assistance of Rs. 300 to Rs. 1,500 is not a solution for boys dropping out from secondary schools in these contexts.

The female teachers and head teachers suggested travel vouchers should be given to poor girls whose families could not afford the transportation costs of schooling. They maintained that this scheme would enable them to use any convenient means of transportation of their own choice to get to school. This policy intervention appeared to be relevant to address the issue of dropping out at school level and it has been recommended in other studies. For example, while comparing children's proficiency in English and maths in government and private schools in Pakistan, Siddiqui and Gorad (2017) suggested different ways to narrow down the socioeconomic stratification between in-school and out-of-school children. They concluded that the state would have to ensure schools were accessible for all students, "perhaps by providing free or subsidised public transport in the most remote areas" (Siddiqui & Gorard, 2017, p. 167).

8.4.5 Policy Changes

The male and female teachers, head teachers and dropped out pupils proposed some policy changes to prevent dropping out from secondary classes in the remote rural areas. These include: a uniform examination system for primary, elementary and secondary exams; the supply of free text books in Urdu; holding class teachers accountable for poor results; year repetition for class 9; abolition of the English medium syllabus; class 9 and 10 board exams should be held after two years; ending the automated progression policy; refresher courses for teachers; a clear dropout prevention public policy; curbing the non-deregistration policy from

public schools; and tougher checks on class teachers who provide private paid tuition to their students.

The teachers and head teachers stated that primary and elementary exams held by the Punjab Examination Commission (PEC) were largely based on multiple choice questions. By contrast, secondary boards employ a subjective examination system that requires detailed written answers. It appears to be a right approach to address dropout problem at secondary level. The teachers argued that an examination system consisting of short answers badly affected students' writing abilities as they could not develop the writing skills necessary for secondary education. Moreover, the PEC promoted to the next level students who obtained an overall 20 percent mark, or even failed in two to three subjects. The boards of intermediate and secondary education, however, made it compulsory for pupils to achieve a minimum or 33 percent in each subject for a pass. In this way, they argued that a large number of elementary level students were promoted to the next stage even though they were not able to meet the standards of secondary education. Thus, the male and female teachers and heads of schools suggested that the government should introduce a uniform examination system across all levels to reduce the dropout rate from secondary education. It was clear that there was a huge difference in the assessment process at elementary and secondary levels.

The suggestions of a uniform examination system and the abolition of an automated progression policy seem relevant to address the dropout problem at secondary level. As some fathers and dropped out pupils argued that teachers showed less interest in teaching, an automated progression policy and an examination based on multiple choice questions could be one of the reasons for it. There is a possibility that teachers are not taking an interest in teaching as they know that everyone will automatically be promoted to the next class.

During the fieldwork it was learnt that schools were the centres for board exams. These examination centres kept rotating among schools. There is a possibility that, in order to show good results, schools may arrange deliberate cheating in exams to help the students answer multiple choice questions. Meanwhile, this is difficult in subjective exams which require more explanation and writing. The practices of rote learning and memorisation, a soft promotion policy in early classes and variations in the examination system cause a large number of students to drop out during secondary education in the remote rural areas of Jhelum. Therefore, a uniform examination and progression system across all classes is recommended to prepare the pupils for secondary schooling and lessen the problem of dropping out. At primary and

elementary levels, the assessment processes should concentrate more on pupils' reading and writing skills.

The teachers, head teachers and dropped out pupils also suggested pupils be given the opportunity to repeat year 9 to reduce the dropout rate at secondary level. Currently, the pupils who fail in class 9 are allowed to sit it again in class 10. It is difficult for them to prepare for all the subjects in class 10 and consequently they fail and drop out of school. They further said that the relevant examination boards would combine the class 9 and 10 exams; this exercise had been in place for a long time. Meanwhile, class 9 exams were held by schools. The schools did not promote students with poor academic performance to class 10; they only allowed students to sit the board exams when they were prepared for it. However, the government has changed this policy and class 9 exams are now held by the secondary boards. The head teachers further said that they could not stop any class 9 student from sitting the board exams despite their poor academic performance. They argued that the official policy of holding class 9 exams through boards increased the dropout rate at secondary level. Therefore, they highly recommended the restoration of the past policy of combining the examinations.

The suggestion of ending class 9 board exams is useful in preventing the dropout rate, as this study showed that poor academic background was one of many reasons for the high dropout rate at secondary level. The pupils from remote rural areas need some time to adjust to secondary schooling after they have completed their primary and elementary education in often underdeveloped, underfunded and poorly managed public schools. The public secondary schools do not follow any formal admission policy; they have to admit all students, regardless of their previous progress. The students with a poor educational background are less able to cope with the secondary school syllabus. Along with some other push out factors, the pressure of the board exams in class 9 also increases the dropout rate among academically weak students.

The head teachers also criticised the inconsistent government policies on the medium of education. For example, 5 years ago the government introduced a policy to teach maths and science subjects in English, even at primary level, across Punjab, but it did not produce the desired results. Then the government changed this policy and now from classes 1 to 3, all subjects are being taught in Urdu. The secondary school teachers, head teachers and dropped out pupils suggested abolishing the English medium syllabus to reduce the dropout rate. Furthermore, the head teachers reported that the government had provided science and maths

books in English, as it had decreed that science subjects should be taught in English. However, staff members and students were not prepared to teach or learn in English. Although the government has recruited some fresh graduates to meet the English teaching requirements in schools, they were not sufficient to cover all the classes.

These suggestions are relevant to address the dropout problem in remote rural areas. The rural students speak regional languages and it is often difficult for them to learn even in their national language (Urdu); English is too difficult for them. Moreover, the students have the choice in board exams to attempt the paper either in Urdu or English, but the government provides free books to secondary students only in English, so there is a clear division between policy and practice. The poor students who cannot buy their own books in Urdu struggle with the English syllabus and ultimately fail in exams, causing them to drop out. Therefore, the teachers, head teachers and school dropouts recommended that the medium of instruction should be the choice of the learners. This recommendation is further supported by the Global Education Report 2016 entitled: "If you don't understand, how can you learn?" which drew evidence from various empirical studies and shows that the students who learn in the language spoken at home have higher attendance and promotion rates and lower repetition and dropout rates (UNESCO, 2016).

The teachers and head teachers suggested abolishing the non-deregistration policy for long absentee pupils, as it added to the dropout problem. Some dropped out students also confirmed that they took this policy for granted and remained absent from school. The habitual absentee pupils are not afraid of being deregistered from school and thus frequently miss classes, do not complete their homework and have no sense of accountability. The school administration cannot take stern action against them and, as a result, they often fail in board exams and drop out of school.

The policy of automatic, unconditional progression regardless of whether children pass or fail their exams is a trade-off between higher retention in early classes and poor educational outcomes in later years. At the primary and elementary level, repeating a class may lead to a greater likelihood of some children dropping out; however, promoting a child who has not achieved grade-level outcomes means that it is likely they will struggle in later years. Monitoring quality indicators in the early grades and arranging remediation classes are some possible recommendations to overcome this problem.

The male and female head teachers argued that the government held only the head teachers responsible for the high dropout rate and poor results in board exams. As a punishment, their promotions and increments were stopped. In extreme cases, they were demoted to lower positions or transferred to other areas. The head teachers argued that there were eight to ten subjects in secondary classes taught by different teachers. Instead of punishing the head teachers in the case of poor results, teachers' promotions should be linked to the students' performance in exams, they suggested. If many students failed in English, maths or in any other subject, the relevant class teacher should be held responsible for it. This suggestion also looks workable and effective. By adopting this policy, the teachers would work hard to teach their subjects and pay extra attention to underperforming students.

The head teachers' suggestion of linking teachers' promotion with their performance seems to be effective in the rural areas of Jhelum. A tool to measure the teachers' performance is the percentage of students who obtain a pass in the subject they taught. Behrman et al. (1997) also suggest, "Linking teachers' rewards directly to gains in students' cognitive achievements; utilizing material inputs effectively; and making schools more responsive to local demands, all might enhance the efficiency of the system" (Behrman et al., 1997, p. 137).

The approach of punishing only the head teachers for a low percentage of pass rates appears to be ineffective as a performance management strategy. A head teacher's performance is measured against the percentage of the pass rate in board exams, regardless of the number of students. However, the teachers acknowledged that sometimes the school administration would push underperforming students to drop out from school in order to keep the failure rate low. This is why the government introduced the non-deregistration policy to deal with school tactics of discharging at-risk students from class 9.

From the field data it was noted that some schools had 40 and some others had more than 100 enrolled students in class 9. A school with 40 students can show a 75 percent pass rate with 30 pass students. Meanwhile, a school with 120 students will show the same percentage of pass rate with 90 pass students. It is not equitable to put both the schools in the same category. A school that is teaching 120 students must be given weight in the final result over a school with only 40 students.

8.4.6   Refresher Courses for Teachers

The teachers and head teachers largely argued that the government was introducing frequent changes in the syllabus but was not arranging refresher courses for teachers, who had

no prior training or updated knowledge to teach new syllabuses. They suggested that a training programme should be introduced for new recruits, with a refresher course for existing teachers.

This suggestion is also very relevant to prevent pupil dropout from public schools. If teachers are not familiar with the new syllabus, they are less able to meet the changing requirements of learners. Refresher courses and the necessary training are important in promoting professional growth among the teachers and to enhance good and quality education outcomes. Such courses would help the teachers to prepare and teach new syllabuses better and bring positive impacts on students' performance.

8.4.7 Introducing an Official Dropout Prevention Policy

The government has never introduced a formal dropout prevention policy for public schools. None of the schools across the sample had a designated dropout prevention policy in place. It was clear from the monthly proceedings of the six selected school council meetings that they had not recorded the issue of dropping out in the last 12 months. Thus, the dropout prevention policy did not exist from top to bottom.

The male and female teachers and the head teachers stated that the government focus was only on the need for schools to register more students, but there was no clear direction of how to retain them. The community members of the school councils were asked to help the schools in preventing the dropout rate and motivating the parents of dropped out children to send them back to school. However, the teachers reported that the school councils were ineffective in preventing dropout or motivating parents to send their dropped out children back to school. They argued that the stated reasons for dropping out were beyond the social and economic capacity of the school councils.

The teachers and the head teachers further argued that they had no authority to compel dropped children to re-enrol or to force their parents to send them back to school. The schools did not receive any official funding to help the dropped out children. The government had not specified a fund at school level to prevent dropping out. The teachers further reported that when they approached dropped out children or their parents to persuade them to continue their schooling they were told stories of extreme poverty. The dropped out pupils and their parents said that they were fighting for their survival which was more important for them than going to school. When they were motivated towards school education and its related future benefits, they said that they did not have anything to eat and wear; they had no means to afford indirect school costs and had not enough resources to run their daily lives as they needed to eat first

and meet the other necessities of life before going to school. The head teachers further reported that when community members of the school councils were approached and asked to help the poor students, they were unable to offer any monetary help to the impoverished dropouts.

Furthermore, the school did not receive adequate financial sources to compensate for the reasons for dropping out. Some teachers reported that many times they had contributed from their own pockets to help at-risk of dropping out or dropped out children; they were, however, unable to extend such help to all dropped out children. Usually, the schools were held responsible for low enrolment and a high dropout rate. The teachers had to work as community motivators instead of teaching at school and felt that it was not their job to knock on every door in the area and convince parents to send their children to school; their job, they said, was to perform teaching duties at school. The head teachers reported that sometimes parents became irritated when visited over and over again by teachers and shut the door on them without listening to them.

The teachers and head teachers focussed only on financial help for the poor pupils as a remedy to the dropout problem. However, there are clearly many other reasons for dropping out, along with poverty. The government should introduce an effective dropout prevention policy to address this issue. The perspectives of the teachers, head teachers, community members of school councils, dropped out children and their parents must be included in designing policies and decision making that relates to them. Any proposed dropout prevention policy should comprehensively address all the pull out, push out and policy-related factors of dropping out evidenced by this study. The next section concludes the significant contributions of this study to the existing knowledge.

8.5 Contribution of the Study

In the context of rural Pakistan, this is the first study to offer a deep insight into the dropout problem at school level through the perspectives of young people who dropped out of school, teachers, head teachers, parents and community members on local school councils. The findings of the study are significant with respect to understanding the dropout rate in public secondary schools in rural areas of Pakistan, such as the district of Jhelum. The study has contributed to the existing knowledge in many ways.

UNICEF and UIS (2011) introduced the Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE) Model. Dimension One includes pre-primary excluded children; Dimensions Two and Three indicate

primary and lower secondary age children who attended but dropped out, will never enrol or will enrol later; and Dimensions Four and Five represent those primary and lower secondary age children who are at risk of dropping out. As noted in Chapter Two, the UIS (2018) stated that some 63 million children of primary school age (6 to 11 years), 61 million adolescents of lower secondary school age (12 to 14 years), and 139 million youth of upper secondary school age (15 to 17 years) were out of school globally. This study has further expanded the UNICEF and UIS Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE) Model by including upper secondary school age (15 to 17 years); this expansion I refer to as Dimensions Six and Seven. Dimension Six represents upper secondary school age children who attended but dropped out, will never enrol or will enrol later, and Dimension Seven is designated for upper secondary school children at risk of dropping out (see Figure 2.2 in Chapter Two). Among the out of school children, the focus of this study was on Dimension Six students aged 14-16 who attended but dropped out from secondary classes 9 and 10 before completing a formal secondary school certificate in the educational context of Pakistan.

Generally, the studies on school dropout in the lower and middle-income countries focus on primary and lower secondary education, whereas this research has extended it to the upper secondary level. The study has contributed to the UNICEF and UIS Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE) Model by investigating the dropout phenomenon among high school pupils who attended but dropped out from secondary education. The school dropouts who participated in this study are between 14 to 18 years old. This contribution to the existing knowledge will further help to understand the reasons for dropping out from the public high schools located in the remote rural areas of Pakistan.

The study has provided a notable methodological contribution to knowledge. As discussed in Chapter Three, the previous qualitative studies typically used regional or national survey data on dropout and then selected two to five schools in a particular geographical area for studying the dropout phenomenon. The past empirical studies recruited dropouts representing various age groups and schooling levels and provided less contextual understanding of the problem in accordance with specific age groups and schooling levels. The reasons for a nine-year-old pupil dropping out are certainly different from those of a 16-year-old.

The study has used a unique approach to obtain data from schools and from parents and children themselves in setting that has rarely been studied. Children 'activities after dropping

out are rarely pursued and matched with their reasons for dropping out in the previous studies. This methodology has offered a better understanding of the reasons for dropping out in accordance with age groups and class levels, focussing only on pupils aged 14 to 16 who dropped out from secondary classes in the last two academic years. The sample rural district was a true reflection of national representation, which presented the same dropout rate at secondary level that prevailed at national level. Instead of using regional or national survey data on dropout, I obtained the number of secondary school dropouts for the last two years directly from schools located in the specified research area. The participants belonged to 18 different schools (10 boys' and 8 girls' schools). The dropout data and the participants of the study, such as teachers, heads of school, school councillors, dropouts and fathers of dropouts, all related to the same schools. The perspectives of male and female teachers, head teachers, community members of school councils, fathers of school dropouts and dropped out pupils were combined in one study. This methodology has given a precise, more contextual and well-grounded understanding of the dropout problem at the grass-roots level compared to the previous qualitative studies on the same issue.

The findings of this research are largely consistent with the prior empirical studies on dropout in the developing countries. However, some new aspects of dropout emerged which offer noteworthy empirical and theoretical contribution to the existing knowledge. In general, the existing literature theorised the dropout phenomenon through the influences of demand and supply (Hunt, 2008), push out and pull out factors (Jordan et al., 1996), and the opportunity cost of schooling and rate of returns to education (Becker, 1994). This study has also established these influences on dropout rates in the remote rural areas of the district of Jhelum. However, the study adds a further dimension and understanding of the dropout problem as it evidences that, in addition to the aforesaid influences, when government policies put undue pressure on teachers and often do not coincide with the socio-cultural environment of schools, children, parents and community, these factors can also contribute to the school dropout problem. Sometimes, ineffective public policies also result in children dropping out of school (push out factors); for example: government policies of introducing an English medium syllabus; using teachers as community motivators during school time; putting teachers under unnecessary monitoring; demanding needless paperwork; employing varied examination systems across primary, elementary and secondary education; automated progression to the next class; and an unproductive school council policy etc., all of which contribute to the dropout problem at secondary level in the rural areas of Jhelum. These policies are not only

compromising the quality of education, but they also result in large numbers of students leaving school before they have finished their education. In addition, the easy promotion policy prevalent in primary and elementary school classes across Punjab may help to keep more children in school but increase the dropout rate at secondary level. This study has also offered a further conceptual framework – influence of official policies – to investigate the dropout phenomenon.

The study adds a further dimension and understanding of dropout regarding the children's rights to education and participation, and how girls are excluded from participation based on their gender. The government of Punjab has not included students as members of the school councils. At school level, none of the teachers or head teachers ever mentioned that they consulted with students while making decisions related to them. Ethical and access barriers (including 'gate-keeping' by intermediaries), as well as threats made against the researcher and fears among some adult women participants about the personal consequences of participating in the study, were also significant issues that affected the progress of the study and hindered opportunities to discover more about the lives of dropped out schoolgirls.

Girls' exclusion from participation was based on the belief that girls at the age of puberty onset should be protected and that personal and private matters relating to them should not be discussed with others. Girls in rural areas are considered a family honour and mentioning their names or desiring to meet them could potentially 'damage' their honour and even, potentially, endanger their lives. In this school dropout study, while every effort was made to address and overcome the cultural and ethical barriers that make conducting research on females in rural Pakistan more challenging, in the end these proved insurmountable. While research involving children and young people presents a number of challenges to any researcher, the specific cultural and ethical barriers encountered in this study meant that accessing girls, as opposed to boys, could be difficult to overcome and thus the perspectives of girls themselves are and will be missing from the research.

Currently, and as is evidenced in this study, coercion and violence against women and girls, including 'honour' violence, are preventing females from being counted and from meaningful participation in society. Effective prevention of faith-based and culturally prescribed 'honour' crimes and the subordination and silencing of women and girls are much bigger challenges, however. And if research cannot uncover these injustices through the willing and safe participation of females - and without the threat to the lives of researchers who are

willing and have the cultural knowledge to take this kind of research on - then it is unlikely we will ever know the full extent of the problem from women and girls themselves, or be able to fully protect them and effect change through evidence-based policy and practice.

Finally, the thesis has made a significant contribution by making recommendations for a dropout prevention policy, based on the findings. In communicating the solution of the dropout problem through the people who have a lived experience of it, or went through it recently, the suggestions and recommendations presented here have invaluable implications for better policy and practices to prevent dropping out from secondary schools.

8.6 Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

This study has some imitations. The dropout phenomenon under investigation is limited to secondary education (grades 9 and 10) only. The study is also limited to the formal education delivered in public secondary schools in rural Pakistan. Data on dropout rates were collected from 33 public secondary schools (17 for girls and 16 for boys) in the subdivision Pind Dadan Khan, a remote rural locality in the district of Jhelum. Furthermore, the data on pupils' dropout obtained from schools were for the academic years 2011-12 and 2012-13. The pupils in the study dropped out either from class 9 or class 10 from those schools during the given academic years. Also, those pupils whose dropping out period did not exceed two years were included in the study. The implications for these limitations are: the findings of the study are limited to secondary schooling only, they cannot be applied to primary and elementary education; the findings are limited to the remote rural areas, they are not reflecting the urban secondary schools; the findings relate to one subdivision of a rural district (Jhelum) and are not generalised across rural Pakistan.

However, further research is needed on the comparison of students from similar backgrounds who complete their education (without dropping out), and investigating the experiences of dropout girls, including both identifying girls and inviting them to take part in the research. While this is challenging, particularly in rural areas, it is not impossible, and it should be a priority in order to ensure girls' and women's perspectives are not 'forever missing' (Klasen & Wink, 2003). This could be achieved by hiring a female research assistant or conducting a combined study on girls' dropout with a female researcher.

It would also be useful to conduct further study of the impact of early grade retention on pupils' educational advancement, capacity, ability, and willingness to remain in school.

Also, a study on the drop-in process is needed in order to understand the factors that influence re-enrolment decisions after dropping out occurs at secondary level. It is vital to understand how factors within and outside school influence dropped out students to return to school to complete their education. Also, the socio-cultural aspects of dropping out need further investigation.

Furthermore, this study establishes through teachers and head teachers' perspectives that some children join Madrasahs to earn social respect and gain religious authority in society despite the fact that they can afford formal schooling. However, the individual perspectives of the children who opted for religious education over formal schooling are largely missing from the extant literature. A study is needed to seek the perspectives of the Madrasah students who came from formal schooling, to clearly understand the motives and reasons behind their opting for religious over formal education.

8.7 Overall Conclusion of the Study

The thesis identified dropping out from formal education to be a common problem across the developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia. It showed that the high dropout rate had been a barrier to achieving the international targets of primary and secondary education in the past. Among South Asian countries, Pakistan had the highest number of out of school children and dropouts.

The first argument of the thesis was that the world could only meet the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 4 if all boys and girls stayed at school and completed equitable and quality primary and secondary education. Therefore, the policy focus at national and international levels should be on dropout prevention strategies to achieve the prescribed targets of the SDGs by 2030. The second argument was that for interventions to be successful, they always require local analysis of problems and assessments of potential strategies at the point of service delivery. Thus, it is crucial that the perspectives of teachers, heads of schools, community members of school councils, parents and dropout children themselves are all recorded. The third argument is that the voices of the schoolchildren, teachers and parents should be embedded in public policies. Hence, this study advocates a bottom-up policy making and implementation approach to understand and address a social phenomenon, such as dropouts, at the grass-roots level.

The thesis found that defining a school dropout and establishing the occurrence of dropping out was complex and confusing. Therefore, the thesis argued that the definition of a dropout needed to be framed within the constitutional or officially declared (through other documents) responsibility of a country, in which it commits to educate its youth up to a specific age. Thus, a dropout is a pupil who enrols in formal education but does not complete compulsory schooling up to a certain age. The level of compulsory schooling and age for its completion is determined in the constitution or other officially declared documents of a country.

Nevertheless, the complexities in estimating and determining dropouts in Pakistani educational contexts still exist. For example, the intermediate and secondary education boards allow students to take exams either as a regular or a private student. Students of the public and officially recognised/affiliated schools are considered to be regular candidates, whereas the private candidates have no formal association with any school; rather they take board exams in an individual capacity. The majority of the private candidates are dropouts from public schools. A small number of them consist of students from non-formal institutions or study privately. The examination system is the same across Pakistan.

The candidates who pass board exams privately challenge the dropout definition, the figures, and the differentiation between formal and non-formal schooling. The existing literature largely constitutes data from students who drop out within the formal schooling context. Nonetheless, there is evidence that a considerable number of students complete their secondary school certificate informally in Pakistan. For example, in 2013 a total of 208,883 candidates sat the annual exam for 9 class for the Gujranwala board, of which 48,081 (29.90 percent) were private candidates (BISE Gujranwala, 2013). Similarly, 240,088 students appeared in the annual exam for class 9 class in 2014, of which 54,263 (29.20 percent) were private candidates (BISE Gujranwala, 2014). The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Gujranwala consists of six districts, namely: Gujranwala, Gujrat, Hafizabad, Mandi Baha-ud-Din, Narowal and Sialkot. Thus, in the last two years more than 29 percent of students took the annual 9 class board exam privately in the Gujranwala division. The private candidates also challenge the national dropout statistics. On the one hand, their withdrawal from public schools adds to the official figures of dropping out, but on the other hand they successfully complete school education, appearing as private candidates in board exams. This distinction challenges the overall dropout rate at national level and makes it more complicated.

Similarly, Allama Iqbal Open University (Pakistan) offers distant education to tens of thousands of children, including the dropouts from formal schools.[11] Madrasahs also provide education and their degrees are equal to the educational certificates earned through formal schooling (See Chapter Five). A large number of children, including the dropouts, complete the secondary school certificate through Allama Iqbal Open University and Madrasahs within the age of 16. The degrees and educational certificates issued by the formal boards of intermediate and secondary education, Allam Iqbal Open University and the recognised religious examination boards, all have equal recognition in the job market. This raises the question of whether the dropout phenomenon should be linked to withdrawal from formal schooling, or to appearing in a recognised examination system of a country as a private/distance candidate in Pakistan.

Furthermore, the thesis found that of the 18 dropped out pupils (all aged under 18), 17 were working in the local labour markets. They stated that they started working during their secondary classes when they were between 14 to 16 years old. At the government level, there is a clear contradiction in committing to international accords, constitutional declarations and announcing the legal age to work. Pakistan is a signatory of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which defines a child as anyone under the age of 18 (See Chapter Two). Pakistan's constitution insists that all children should have access to free and compulsory education up to the age of 16, while Article 11(3) of the constitution states that "no child below the age of fourteen years shall be engaged in any factory or mine or any other hazardous employment" (GoP, 2012). This implies that any child of 14 years or above can be employed as a labourer in a hazardous job. On the other hand, the state assumes the responsibility to provide free and compulsory schooling till the age 16. So, even though a signatory to the UNCRC, Pakistan is breaking its own commitment to it.

The provinces are also at odds in defining a child; for example, according to the Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act 2016: a 'child' is under the age of fifteen years,[12] whereas, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Employment of Children Act 2015[13] and the Sindh Prohibition of Employment of Children Act 2017[14] define a child as a person under the

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[11] http://www.aiou.edu.pk/index.asp
[12] http://www.punjablaws.gov.pk/index3.html
[13] http://www.pakp.gov.pk/2013/acts/the-khyber-pakhtunkhwa-prohibition-of-employment-of-children-act-2015/
[14] http://www.pas.gov.pk/index.php/acts/details/en/31/346

age of 14. Furthermore, the Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour, in the Brick Kilns Act 2016,[15] protects only children between the ages of five and 14. This clear contradiction in defining the age of a child has made child labour a serious issue in Pakistan. A secondary school dropout pupil who is between 14-16 years old can easily be employed in the labour market. The point of the UNCRC was to ensure that signatories guaranteed that their child policies, laws and practices conformed to the principles of the convention.

This further implies that the Western concept of a child (anyone under 18) is not applicable in Pakistani society. The social customs and expectations do not align with the principles of the UNCRC in Pakistan. Furthermore, the thesis also showed that Western notions of family and community are misaligned with family and local community responses to girls' resistance to culturally prescribed conventions and traditions in Pakistan, particularly in rural areas. Some parents do not wish to disclose or discuss why their daughters have dropped out of secondary school. Furthermore, under the strict rural traditions, meeting adult women, even in a public place, is still considered unacceptable in some cases.

The process of children's poor educational background develops during primary and elementary classes due to both school and household factors and structural and systemic factors too. Poor educational background and subsequent failure in class 9 also appear to occur, in part, as a result of low quality education indicators in rural areas. Furthermore, in terms of economics, poverty at both a structural and local (family) level also increase the likelihood that children will be forced to drop out of school in order to contribute to family finances and survival. Destitute children (and families) cannot be blamed for leaving school without completing their secondary education when their financial contribution to the household income becomes an absolute necessity. These factors show the failure of the state system, which is unable to invest more money in secondary education to improve the teaching and learning environment at public schools, compensate the immediate loss of family income, or provide better health facilities and free school transportation in remote rural areas. Siddiqui (2017b, p. 15) also contends that:

> There are no government provisions or services at all for the disadvantaged groups living in remote rural areas. There never has been a sufficient and consistent support scheme or relief programme offered by the state of Pakistan in the form of universal

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[15] http://punjablaws.gov.pk/laws/2475.html

allowance for poor, unemployed and disabled. In the circumstances where government support is not nationally available, children living in the abject poverty of the rural areas are the most vulnerable citizens to whom their basic right to education has been dismissed.

Pakistan spends 2.37% of its GDP on education (UNDP, 2014). It is evident that, with this limited spending on education, and without the structural and systemic changes in the education sector, Pakistan is less able to prevent high dropout rates or ensure that all out of school children return to school. If this situation remains the same, Pakistan may not be able to achieve the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in primary and secondary education by 2030.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Guided Research Questions

Overarching Questions for Dropped Out Children

i.   What are the factors which influence your decision of dropping out of school?

ii.   At what stage did you realise it was difficult for you to continue schooling?

iii.   Did you discuss your educational difficulties or plan of dropping out of school with peers, parents or school teachers?

iv.   What was the reaction of your peers, parents and teachers when you informed them about your decision of dropping out?

v.   What help you received from the family, teachers and school councils to encourage you to stay in school or re-enrol?

vi.   What relations do you have with your parents, siblings and in-school peers after dropping out?

vii.   What were your out-of-school activities/responsibilities before you dropped out?

viii.   What are your current activities/ responsibilities after you dropped out?

ix.   What is the importance of the after dropped out activities for you and your family?

x.   What factors can help you to re-enrol and complete your secondary school certificate if you wish to do so?

xi.   What support you need from the government, school, family and community to complete your secondary school certificate?

xii.   How your life is different from those friends who have completed secondary education?

xiii.   Reflecting on your own dropout experience, how the issue of dropping out can be addressed effectively?

Overarching Questions for Class Teachers and Heads of Schools

i. How many children have dropped out from class 9 and 10 in your school in the last two years?

ii. What were the reasons of their dropping out?

iii. How do you encourage the children themselves to return or not drop out in the first place?

iv. What procedures do you have in place in school to address or prevent drop out?

v. Reflecting on your own vast experience being a teacher/head teacher, how the issue of dropping out can be addressed effectively at:

• School level

• Community level

• Government level

Overarching Questions for Parents/ Guardians of Dropped Out Children

i. What are the particular reasons of your child's dropping out of school?

ii. Did the dropped out child ever discuss with you his/her academic difficulties or plan to quit schooling?

iii. Did the school administration inform you that your son/daughter is at-risk of dropping out before he/she actually dropped out?

iv. What did you do to encourage your children to stay in school and complete secondary school certificate?

v. What type of help you received from the school administration, school councils and local community to encourage your children to stay in school or re-enrol?

vi. What relationship do you have with your dropped-out child now?

vii. As a father/mother/guardian what support do you need to prevent your children from dropping out or getting re-enrolled?

viii.   Reflecting on your own experience being a father/mother/guardian of a dropped child, how the issue of dropping out can be addressed effectively?

Overarching Questions for Community Members of Local School Councils

i.   How are school councils formed at village level?

ii.   What procedures do they have in place to address the dropout problem?

iii.   How effective are school councils in reducing dropout and supporting

        continuance?

Appendix B: Participants' Information Sheet

Loughborough University

Project Title: Investigating the Issue of Out-of-School Children in Rural Pakistan: Implications for Policymakers

Participants' Information Sheet

Main Investigator: Abdul Mughal

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Supervisor's name: Professor Jo Aldridge

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Section A

What is the purpose of the study?

Pakistan is the second largest country in the world, after Nigeria, in terms of out-of-school children. Out-of-school children are classified as never enrolled or dropped out. This study is focusing on dropped-outs only. In Pakistan, out of total enrolment 63% children progress to primary level, 44% to elementary level and only 27% reach 10th class. Dropout rate from secondary level is higher all over Pakistan, however, it is prevailing more in the rural areas. Overall dropout rate from secondary schools in rural Pakistan is 14.6%, in Punjab 18.5% and in district Jhelum 14.5%. Dropping out from secondary stage limits the opportunities for further education and securing a job. This also reduces future earnings and increases unemployment.

In Pakistan, 55.6% population (male 55335419 and female 52191478) consists of 0-24 years old. The young people are the major segment of Pakistan. If they do not complete their school

education, they may not be able to have a better socio-economic life. They will have less future opportunities and the government's investment in their schooling goes to waste.

We cannot make beneficial policies until we are aware of the issues at grass-roots level. The purpose of this study is to comprehend school dropout problem at secondary level with perspectives of dropouts, teachers, heads of schools, parents and community members of school councils. I am hoping to achieve a true understanding of dropout phenomenon at school level so that I can contribute to better education policy and practices in rural Pakistan.

Who is doing this research and why?

This study is part of a Student research project supported by Loughborough University. Professor Jo Aldridge is supervising this research.

Once I take part, can I change my mind?

Yes! After you have read this information and asked any questions you may have we will ask you to complete an Informed Consent Form, however if at any time, before, during or after the sessions you wish to withdraw from the study please just contact the main investigator. You can withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing. If you wish to withdraw from the study, please contact the main investigator within six months of the interview as this may not be possible after the data has been aggregated or published.

Will I be required to attend any sessions and where will these be?

Yes, you are required to attend an interview session which will be held either at school or any other convenient public place (home, public library, cafeteria etc.,) you agreed upon.

How long will it take?

The expected time for individual interviews is 1-2 hours.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes! Your real name and location will be kept confidential. The obtained data will not be used for any other purpose besides this study. The data will not be passed to a third party. The data will be secured by audio recording. It will be kept safe and secure by transferring to a reliable device with protected passwords. The data will be destroyed after 10 years of the study.

I have some more questions; who should I contact?

You can contact the main investigator, supervisor or the Loughborough University at any time.

What will happen to the results of the study?

You will be informed about the results of the study.

What if I am not happy with how the research was conducted?

If you are not happy with how the research was conducted, please Ms Jackie Green, the Secretary for the University's Ethics Approvals (Human Participants) Sub-Committee: Ms J Green, Research Office, Hazlerigg Building, Loughborough University, Epinal Way, Loughborough, LE11 3TU. Tel: 01509 222423. Email: J.A.Green@lboro.ac.uk. The University also has a policy relating to Research Misconduct and Whistle Blowing which is available online at http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/committees/ethical/Whistleblowing(2).htm.

Appendix C: Participants Informed Consent Form

Loughborough University

Investigating the Issue of Out-of-School Children in Rural Pakistan: Implications for Policymakers

PARTICIPANTS' INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Participant: Teachers/Heads of Schools/School Dropouts/Parents or Guardian/School Councillor

1   (to be completed after Participant Information Sheet has been read)

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that all procedures have been approved by the Loughborough University Ethics Approvals (Human Participants) Sub-Committee.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and that I will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in strict confidence and will be kept anonymous and confidential to the		

researchers unless (under the statutory obligations of the agencies which the researchers are working with), it is judged that confidentiality will have to be breached for the safety of the participant or others.

Yes ☐   No ☐

I agree to participate in this study.

Yes ☐   No ☐

Your name   _____

Your signature   _____

Signature of investigator   _____

Date   _____