



Investigating the Role of Economic Impediments in the Extent of Dropout of Females from Secondary Schools in District Bajaur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa - Pakistan



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Abstract *The titled study is concerned with the dropout of females from secondary schools in District Bajaur due to the economic impediments of the study population. A sample size of 169 respondents was taken purposively by using Sekaran criteria. A cross-sectional study design was developed for the collection of data according to the conceptual framework showing the dependent variable (Nature of Drop out) and independent variable (Economic Impediments). Furthermore, Univariate and Bi-variate analysis was conducted through the use of SPSS software. After the analysis of data at the Bi-variate level, a highly significant association ($P=0.000$) was found between the Nature of Drop out and economic indicators (statements) namely the most dominant cause of high dropout ratio was financial problems, money was considered a wastage when it's spent on female education, money was well spent if sons are getting the education and parents prioritize boy's education more as compared to their girl child, along with the cultural norms and beliefs constraining females education, as well as parents, believed that religious education is more important than formal education.*

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Introduction

Education is critical for the growth of an individual, a community, and a country (Jafar et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2019). Pakistan's constitution enables the state to provide basic education to all citizens in order to eliminate illiteracy. However, the dropout rate is increasing by the day, as defined by the National Center for Degree Statistics as leaving school without

finishing a high school education or an equivalent credential such as a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. Students dropping out of school is a continuous process that begins with a little negative attitude and gradually grows until the student entirely drops out of school, and it is no longer disguised. The phrase "actual dropout" refers to a

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student's physical withdrawal from the educational system ([Franklin et al., 1991](#); [Dupper 1993](#)). Previous studies suggested that dropouts of students from schools are involved in criminal cases and aberrant behavior ([Beauvais 1996](#)).

Different socio-cultural and economic issues, such as a child's conduct, family, friends, and schools, all contribute to children dropping out of school. Poverty and a lack of parental interest in monitoring their children's academic development also contribute to school dropout ([Attaullah 2018](#)). In most parts of the globe, girls have a higher dropout rate than boys. In forty-nine nations, according to a report issued by UNESCO in 2012, girls had a higher dropout rate than males. Boys and girls have the same number of enrolments, although male students continue to study more collaboratively than female students ([Chimombo 1999](#)). In comparison to Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KPK) and the rest of Pakistan, FATA has an extremely poor educational status, particularly among females. According to KPK government records from 2005, the literacy rate is 17.42, with male and female proportions of 30 and 3, respectively. These are the stunning and distressing facts about the literacy rate, particularly among women. There are 0.1 million above-grade schools in Pakistan, including about 20,000 in KPK and 2425 in FATA. In schools, the male-to-female ratio is 1:2. Given the tribal area's anti-women education position, it's difficult to estimate how many of the 1600 schools for girls will be fully or partially functioning. The enrollment ratio in Pakistan is 20 million, while in KPK, it was 0.3 million ([IHSN 2019](#)). The current study, on the other hand, identified the sources of economic obstacles to female students dropping out.

Economic Impediments

Poverty

Due to poverty and underdevelopment, tribal regions have been particularly receptive to this radicalization process ([Rashid & Awan 2019](#)). By comparison, Fata is very poor. Job opportunities are not available according to the desired ratio as most of the people are engaged with agricultural and livestock activities where enough land and water is available. However, some people are engaged in a business that is limited to the local area. According to the statistical data report, about 3.5 million people in FATA are engaged in agriculture and local business practices, which support about 40% of its population. Due to the non-availability of jobs and business activities, illegal activities such as Transboundary smuggling of various commodity items, weapons, and drugs are the only source of income for people. Compared to other region of the country poverty ratio is higher in FATA ([Areas 2010](#)).

The high poverty and unemployment ratio in FATA lead to joining various militant groups such as TTP and al-Qaida as they are offering high salaries to them. According to a report published by a local analyst, most people join militant groups due to poverty and political demotion. Just like the Afghan Taliban, the TTP leaders offer high salaries to the native people to join their groups ([Shehzad 2011](#)). FATA is considered a base for militant groups as most of the people join militant groups due to the unavailability of basic life facilities available to him ([Alam 2012](#)). Poverty is the main factor in FATA that inhibits students from schools both for boys and girls. However, it is perceived that unavailability of educational institutions and other facilities like roads and safety are the key factors that lead to a high dropout ratio from secondary schools.

Female education suffers more severely due to poverty and unavailability of resources in the area; as a result, a small number of females get higher education ([Understanding FATA. 2010](#)).

In Pakistan, lack of educational opportunity is the key indicator of the need for human-Resources-Development ([Chicago Public Schools](#)). Only 17% of the total population is literate. However, the literacy rate of a female is only three percent. A few small schools are available in FATA with a total enrolment of 65 students per school with two or three average teaching staff. Official data, on the other hand, is suspicious because many school facilities are utilized for other reasons, such as running businesses, and many teachers are absent from their duties. The traditional way of teaching is established in FATA; however, corporal punishment is still exists in the region. Total enrollment from primary to secondary level is less than forty percent; however, in the case of females, it is just 21% at the high secondary level. The dropout ratio is high because more than half of children only complete the primary level ([Understanding FATA. 2010](#)).

Investment Of Parents On Children

Most of the parents do not invest equally for all in education. However, most the parents are humane to their child's gender ([Kingdon 2005](#); [Glick & Sahn 2000](#)). Most of the parents prefer to invest on male sons as they take care of his parents ([Leung 2008](#)). Gender-based investments are common in families with low income; most of the females leave school earlier as compared to boys with low family income. In South Africa, the main cause of the dropping out of female from schools are low family financial status ([Grant & Hallman 2006](#); [Fuller & Liang 1999](#)).

Educational Expenses

Research indicates that direct and indirect educational expenses are the main factor that leads to dropping out of children from schooling. Direct expenses include school fees and stationery fees; however, indirect costs include transport and other fees. Twenty investigated that in rural areas of China, 47 percent female and 33 percent of male dropout from school at elementary level due to incapability to pay the school fee. The drop-out ratio in South Africa at the primary and secondary level was twenty-seven percent for males and 30 percent for female ([Hunter & May 2003](#)). In Kenya, the dropping out ratio for girls are higher due to high fee as compared to boys ([Lloyd & Leslie 2000](#)).

Materials and Methods

The current research was conducted out in the Bajaur district (previously known as the Bajaur agency). Furthermore, district Bajaur was made up of seven tehsils, three of which were purposefully chosen: Khar, Utmankhail, and Slarazi. According to a pilot survey conducted from March 20th to April 21st, there was 3381 total registered students, with 379 dropout pupils in classes 9th and 10th, respectively (see table 1). As a result, the 169 sample size was determined using the ([Sekaran & Bougie 2003](#)) criterion. The chosen sample size was then allotted proportionally to each stratum (Tehsils-based distribution) using ([Chaudhry, S. M. 1970](#)) formula. Furthermore, a structured questionnaire was utilized to gather data from possible sampled respondents, i.e., household heads, in order to get primary information on the research dynamics (militancy and type of school dropout). Finally, the information was entered into SPSS (version 25) for additional analysis, including descriptive and inferential statistics.

Table 1. Showing the name of schools along with their concerned Tehsils enrolled & Dropout with effect from 2015-2020

Name of schools [Government Girls High Schools]	Tehsil	Enrolled students	Dropout students
Inayat kali	Khar	253	45
Raghgan	Khar	204	38
Khar	Khar	1424	88
Nagai	Nagai	36	09
Bandai	Utama kheil	621	83
Parshat	Salarzi	164	22
Nari tangi	Salarzi	59	17
Kamal dara	Arang	496	47
Sharbatai	Arang	124	34
Total		3381	379

Source: Pilot Survey, 2021

Table 2. Proportional allocation of Sample Size

Tehsils	Schools Name of GGHS	Dropout Ratio	Sample Size
Khar	Inayat Kali	45	26
	Raghgan	38	22
	Khar	88	51
Utmankhel	Bandai	83	48
Salarzi	Parshat	22	12
	Nari tangi	17	10
Total		293	169

Source: Pilot Survey, 2021

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Characteristics	Respondents response		
Marital status of the respondents	<i>Married</i> 160(94.7%)	<i>Widow</i> 7(4.1%)	<i>Divorced</i> 2(1.2%)
Family head of the respondents	<i>Male</i> 169(100.0%)	<i>Female</i> 00(0.0%)	
Family types of the respondents	<i>Joint</i> 133(78.7%)	<i>Extended</i> 16(9.5%)	<i>Nuclear</i> 20(11.8%)
Any other family who daughters are dropped out from school	<i>Yes</i> 102(60.4%)	<i>No</i> 31(18.3%)	<i>Don't know</i> 36(21.3%)

Source: Authors, 2021

Table 3 represented respondents' socioeconomic characteristics in terms of marital status, household head, family

type, and other factors to establish the nature of dropout in terms of family members or others. Thus, 94.7 percent of

the 169 respondents were married, 100 percent of the households' heads were men, 78.7% of respondents were from joint families, and 60.4 percent of respondents knew the other family's daughter or daughters who had dropped out of school. These findings suggest that the research area (Bajaur) was built on patriarchal standards that have existed since the birth of Pukhtunwali (Pashtun code of conduct) ([Jafar et al., 2021](#); [Khan et al.,](#)

[2019](#)). Women in general, and girls in particular, were restricted to domestic duties, which falls under the private sphere at times, resulting in greater school dropout rates. Sons, on the other hand, were more likely than females in the research area ([Khan et al., 2018](#)) to attend schools or enter the public sphere, which prompted them to take on more tasks in the future.

Table 4. Respondents Perception Regarding the Nature of Dropout

Statement	Yes	No	Don't know
Distance from school is the key factor of dropping out from school for female students.	130(76.9%)	29(17.2%)	10(5.9%)
Pregnancy is the significant cause of school dropout for girl.	81(47.9%)	68(40.2%)	20(11.8%)
Domestic work of girls at household level dysfunctional the school performance which resulted into dropout.	93(55.0%)	64(37.9%)	12(7.1%)
Parents' illiteracy cause dropout of girls from school.	110(65.1%)	50(29.6%)	9(5.3%)
Fear of failure in exams enforces dropout of girls from school.	56(33.1%)	99(58.6%)	14(8.3%)
Peer pressure of course mates cause to drop out of girls from school.	60(35.5%)	91(53.8%)	18(10.7%)
Long-distance and unsafety on the way to girl's school encourages dropout.	127(75.1%)	32(18.9%)	10(5.9%)
Timely marriage for young girls is a priority as compared to schooling.	110(65.1%)	43(25.4%)	16(9.5%)
Lack of awareness regarding female education is also the reason for female school dropout.	130(76.9%)	29(17.2%)	10(5.9%)

Source: Authors, 2021

Table 4 shows that the majority of respondents (76.9%) believed that distance from school is a major issue in female students dropping out. ([Juneja 2001](#)) backed up this claim, stating that distance from school is a major factor in female students dropping out. Similarly, the table found that 47.9% of respondents believe that pregnancy is a significant factor of female school dropouts. This assertion was also backed by Dunne and

Leac ([Khan 2016](#)), who highlighted that one of the biggest causes of female dropout is pregnancy and that while some states allow students to return to school after becoming pregnant, the percentage is relatively low. However, in the context of Pakistan, this is not true. Similarly, 55.0 percent of respondents said that domestic labor by females at home has a negative impact on their school performance, resulting in dropout. These findings were

also consistent with (Jafar et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2019; Abena 1991 & Atayi 2008), who stated that parents in Africa were more concerned about the role of females at home, which does not need schooling because girls are supposed to care for children and prepare food. (Brock & Cammish 1997) also discovered that girls start working at a younger age than boys, particularly in rural regions, and that girls also perform more housework than boys. According to studies, female students are more likely to drop out of school to care for their younger siblings. Furthermore, 65.1 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that parents' illiteracy causes girls to drop out of school, 58.6 percent disagreed with the statement that fear of failure in exams causes girls to drop out of school, and 53.8 percent stated that peer pressure from classmates causes girls to drop out of school. Furthermore, the table revealed that 75.1 percent of respondents agreed with the assertion

that driving a lengthy distance and in a risky manner to a girl's school increases dropout. According to (Nekatibeb 2002), the most major impediment to female education is the distance from the school. Many studies in African countries have found that school distance might deter girls from attending school because of two key issues. One of them is the amount of time and energy required by hungry children to cover a distance. Parents' concerns about their daughters' sexual safety are another aspect. Furthermore, 65.1 percent of respondents agreed that timely marriage for young females should take precedence over study. According to different surveys, when females reach adulthood, their families prefer to arrange their marriages over completing their education (Molteno et al., 2000). Furthermore, the majority of respondents (76.9%) believe that a lack of knowledge of female education is another factor for female school dropouts.

Association between Economic Impediments and Nature of Dropout

Table 5. Association between Economic Impediments and Nature of Dropout

S.No	Economic Impediments	Nature of Drop Out			Total	Chi-Square P=Value
		Yes	No	Don't know		
1.	The most dominant cause of high dropout ratio is financial problems.					
	Yes	90(53.3%)	16(9.5%)	4(2.4%)	110(65.1%)	X ² =26.347 P= (0.000)
	No	25(14.8%)	11(6.5%)	4(2.4%)	40(23.7%)	
	Don't know	5(3.0%)	11(6.5%)	3(1.8%)	19(11.2%)	
Female education suffers more severely due to poverty and unavailability of resources.						
2.	Yes	76(45.0%)	20(11.8%)	6(3.6%)	102(60.4%)	X ² =17.715 P=(0.001)
	No	41(24.3%)	17(10.1%)	2(1.2%)	60(35.5%)	
	Don't know	3(1.8%)	1(0.6%)	3(1.8%)	7(4.1%)	
	Sons are considered as economic resource while daughter as economic burden.					
3.	Yes	64(37.9%)	25(14.8%)	4(2.4%)	93(55.0%)	X ² =10.142 P=(0.038)
	No	44(26.0%)	11(6.5%)	3(1.8%)	58(34.3%)	
	Don't know	12(7.1%)	2(1.2%)	4(2.4%)	18(10.7%)	
	Poverty enforces the girl to dropout from school.					
4.	Yes	77(45.6%)	22(13.0%)	5(3.0%)	104(61.5%)	X ² =5.521 P=(0.238)
	No	39(23.1%)	13(7.7%)	4(2.4%)	56(33.1%)	
	Don't know	4(2.4%)	3(1.8%)	2(1.2%)	9(5.3%)	
	High cost on education of females lead to dropout.					
5.	Yes	66(39.1%)	19(11.2%)	4(2.4%)	89(52.7%)	X ² =20.648

S.No	Economic Impediments	Nature of Drop Out			Total	Chi-Square P=Value
		Yes	No	Don't know		
6.	No	48(28.4%)	12(7.1%)	2(1.2%)	62(36.7%)	P=(0.000)
	Don't know	6(3.6%)	7(4.1%)	5(3.0%)	18(10.7%)	
	Expensive educational expenditures on female education barbeduced from further schooling.					
7.	Yes	72(42.6%)	18(10.7%)	8(4.7%)	98(58.0%)	X ² =14.829 P=(0.005)
	No	43(25.4%)	11(6.5%)	2(1.2%)	56(33.1%)	
	Don't know	5(3.0%)	9(5.3%)	1(0.6%)	15(8.9%)	
Money is considered a wastage when it's spent on female education.						
8.	Yes	42(24.9%)	13(7.7%)	3(1.8%)	58(34.4%)	X ² =23.905 P=(0.000)
	No	72(42.6%)	23(13.6%)	3(1.8%)	98(58.0%)	
	Don't know	6(3.6%)	2(1.2%)	5(3.0%)	13(7.7%)	
Money is well spent if sons are getting the education.						
8.	Yes	102(60.4%)	22(13.0%)	3(1.8%)	127(75.1%)	X ² =43.058 P=(0.000)
	No	16(9.5%)	12(7.1%)	3(1.8%)	31(18.3%)	
	Don't know	2(1.2%)	4(2.4%)	5(3.0%)	11(6.5%)	

Based on indexation and cross-tabulation method, chi-square test statistics were ascertained to expose the association between dependent and independent variable attributes. Table 5 shows the association of economic impediment and nature of dropout where different indicators of economic impediments are measured with nature of dropped out. A highly significant association (P=0.000) was found between the nature of drop out, and the most dominant cause of high dropout ratio is financial problems. The study was supported by [\(Shahidul 2012\)](#). studied that families with low economic status will face difficulties if their female gets higher education. Hence these factors lead to a high dropout of females from schooling.

Similarly, a significant association (P=0.001) was found between the nature of dropout and female education suffers more severely due to poverty and unavailability of resources. A report published by Fata sustainable development plan 2005-06 [\(Hunt 2008\)](#). stated that female education suffers more severely due to poverty and unavailability of resources in the area; as a result, a small number of females get higher

education (Fata sustainable development plan 2005-06).

Furthermore, it was found that there was a non-significant association (P=0.038) between sons are considered as an economic resource while daughter being as economic burden and nature of drop out. Moreover, there was a non-significant association (P=0.238) between the nature of dropout and poverty enforces the girl to drop out from school. The present study was supported by [\(Hunt 2008\)](#). found that poverty is a great factor, and it is responsible for the largest schedule dropout it makes the students unable to complete their studies there are many expenses like tuition fee transport charges, stationery pocket money, and exam fee that are not paid easily by the poor students do it which they are dropped from the college.

A highly significant association (P=0.000) was found between high cost on the education of females lead to dropout and nature of drop out. A report published by the [\(PROBE 1999\)](#) stated that parent is reluctant to get higher education to their daughter as Higher education leads to the high cost of daughter's marriage. However, in Bangladesh, females with low

financial income drop out of the school as they are afraid of the high cost of dowry.

Expensive educational expenditures on female education barbed from further schooling were cross tabulated with the nature of dropout, which depicted ($P=0.005$) a significant association. This statement was supported by (Shahidul 2012). Studied that families with low economic status will face difficulties if their female gets higher education. Hence these factors lead to high dropout of females from schooling.

In addition, with, a highly significant association ($P=0.000$) was found between the nature of dropout and money is considered a wastage when it's spent on female education. According to (Shovan Ghosh & Susmita 2012), the costs of educating for girls in impoverished Indian homes are likely to be greater, but the advantages are less certain for them than for boys. The authors also point out that, despite the fact that direct expenses for boys and girls are identical, parents are less inclined to spend on females.

The study further shows a highly significant association ($P=0.000$) between money being well spent if sons are getting the education and nature of drop out.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted in a cross-sectional manner to assess the nature and extent of dropout among females in district Bajaur (formally known as Bajaur agency). Thus the study revealed that Dropout is a major social issue worldwide, and its affects both genders, males and females, but compared to males, female dropout ratios are high in the entire world. There are many factors that contribute to this issue, important among being economics, infrastructure, traditional values and militancy. Pakistani society, and with special reference to Pashtuns, is a male dominant

society where more importance is given to males in over females; likewise, in the same way, parents prefer their sons' education at all cost while least concern in shown in case of their daughter education. Parents want their daughters to work at home and arrange their marriage early instead of continuing their studies. Due to poverty, parents cannot afford their children's education, schooling cost, transport fee, their clothing, and cannot arrange their books and daily expenses due to which they dropout. As a result, in order to control the worsening situation of student dropouts from educational institutions, relevant stakeholders should take some remedial measures, such as:

1. The government should ensure that all students, particularly girls, have access to "Free, Equitable, Inclusive, and Compulsory Schooling" as stipulated in the country's constitution (Article A-37). The government should provide for all necessary educational resources to be delivered to kids within the school.
2. Government should consider building new schools in proximity of areas/ villages so that girls' students shouldn't travel immense distances to go to schools. Priority should be given to the rehabilitation of damaged institutions due to militancy.
3. The establishment of schools with all basic amenities, including appropriate teaching personnel, a boundary wall, furniture, power, drinking water, and a computer/science lab.
4. Community awareness should be promoted in order to foster parental and student enthusiasm in education and prevent school dropout. Politicians, religious leaders, local influential, local district administration, volunteers,

civil society organizations, and print, electronic, and social media should all be used to raise public awareness about the need for girls' education.

5. The school should provide a positive learning environment for students

and make school a fun place for them to go. The educational environment would be engaging, and kids would perceive it as a place of study, leisure, and emancipation.

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