

## **Social Factors Causing Low Motivation for Primary Education among Girls in the Slums of Karachi**

Iffet Sultana\*

---

### **Abstract**

The present paper explores some important social factors responsible for the low motivation of girls for primary education in the slum areas of Karachi, Pakistan. The objective of the study was to identify the challenges and social factors responsible for the low motivation of girls for education in the slums of Karachi. The study was qualitative in nature. All the teachers, school heads and female students of government girls primary schools in slums areas from Kamari, Malir, Lyari, Baldia and Gadap towns of Karachi were included as the population. Fifty teachers, twenty-five school heads, and fifty students were selected as a sample on the basis of purposive sampling. The information was collected through interviews, focus group discussions, observations and informal conversations. To analyze the qualitative data of interviews, focus group discussions and field notes, "Constant Comparative Method" was used. The researcher conducted thematic analysis approach to analyze the qualitative data. The analysis revealed that the socio-economic status of the parents, socio-cultural barriers and child labour are the main reasons for the low motivation of education for girls in the slum areas of Karachi. Policy recommendations based on the findings have further been discussed in the study.

**Keywords:** Social factors, low motivation, girls' education, Slum areas

---

\*Assistant Professor, IQRA University, Karachi. Email: iffetsultana4@gmail.com

## **Introduction**

Education is the fundamental right of every child and plays an important role in one's life including girls (UDHR, 1948). Education serves as an opportunity for the girl child to grow and its impact on the upkeep of the family is equally important. Education creates awareness in various aspects of women's life such as social, political, religious, and economics, as a result, they are then able to participate in decision making regarding family matters. Girls should have equal access to education so that they can realize their potential and contribute to the betterment of their life. In Pakistani society, girls are still trying to get equal access to education. The International Human Development Indicators (2013) listed Pakistan in the category of "low human development" countries with a female literacy rate of thirty percent, and Pakistan has ranked 145 in the world in terms of human development. This figure shows the picture of girls' education in Pakistan

In fact, Pakistan is undergoing an education emergency especially when it comes to girls' education. The females of Pakistan have been unable to play an active role in the development of society mainly due to poverty, socio-cultural issues and rigidity of very traditional families (Parveen, 2008). There are several obstacles that prevent them from benefiting from a right they equally deserve (Abbasi & Saeed, 2012). This indeed is having a negative impact both socially and economically and is a waste of talent and potential of the young female generation of Pakistan. Naz and Rehman's (2011) study and Ali, Krantz, Gul, Asad, Johansson, and Morgen (2011) have portrayed various social, political and economic barriers towards women's empowerment and highlighted serious issues regarding gender inequalities and human right violations against women in Pakistan. However, changes have been noted in gender roles concerning women's participation in socio-cultural activities.

In the slums of Karachi, education sector suffers from major issues regarding quality, enrollment, child labour, women/girls trafficking, and massive gender disparities. According to the Annual Status of Educational Report (2012), the rate of female enrollment is way below than that of boys in the slums of Karachi. Reviewing the issues relating to the girls' education in slum areas, it is apparent that many challenges exist in providing education to girls in these slum areas of Karachi, Pakistan. These are compounded by the complex political and social contexts and the low priority given to the education in slums of Karachi by the government.

## **Objective of the study**

The objective of the study was to identify the challenges and key social factors responsible for the low motivation of girls for Primary education in the slums of Karachi.

## Literature Review

Education is the basis of socio-economic development (Memon, 2007). The poor standard of an education system adds to the major reasons why poor countries do not progress. Efforts have been made but Pakistan is yet to compete with developed nations (Naz, Daraz, Khan, Hussain, & Khan, 2011). It is a fact that education is an empowering key for women that enables them to face the oppression of society and obstacles to their right to educate themselves. The research by Kakar, Khilji, and Ullah (2011) supports the proposition that the education level of a woman has an impact on the family structure as well. Evidence has proven that family size is also affected. A reduction in early marriages provides women with the opportunity to build a career and thus has an impact on the number of children. Education helps to increase consciousness regarding the benefits of having small families. Faridi, Malik and Basit (2009) also confounded that with education females can have a better standard of living.

It is generally assumed in the Pakistani community that investment in education specifically girls' education is not beneficial for the parents. Also, it is a common practice in slums of Karachi that parents send their daughters for work. According to Brown (2011), working children struggle to manage education along with the job. Such children are more likely to drop out of school and head towards employment. Due to the consequences of child labour, these children are likely to receive lower wages as compared to adults. Very little data were available on the problem of girl child labour in Karachi. Most of the literature that was reviewed described either the global scenario of child labour or the scenario in Pakistan in general. According to the report of Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC, 2013), the last child labour survey was undertaken in 1996 which estimated that there were 3.3 million underage labourers in Pakistan. In the absence of a national database on child labour, international NGO provides estimates of underage employment in Pakistan. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), the number of child labourers in Pakistan exceeded 12 million in 2012. UNICEF estimates that there were around ten million underage workers in the country in 2012. The available literature indicated that the rate of child labour is rapidly increasing in Pakistan especially in slums of Karachi and according to the Abbasi (2014, p. 03) "girls are favoured over boys as they are thought to be more caring, committed and protectors by nature. They also raise their younger siblings themselves so many of them already have the experience and sense of responsibility".

Literature and reports indicated that human trafficking is also a general issue of most slums of Karachi due to poor socio-economic conditions; the following studies supported this fact. According to the Azam (2009) and Mehdi (2010), Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Burmese, Afghan and Central Asian women are also sold in sex markets of Pakistan. These markets are reportedly doing very well in posh areas as well as in the

slums of Karachi. Commercial and non-commercial sexual exploitation is one of the more prominent reasons for women trafficking in Pakistan. The rural-urban migration patterns have also played a role in adding to forced labour and lack of financial systems aid in human trafficking across Pakistan. The studies highlighted that slums of Karachi are a hub for human trafficking as well as other illegal activities. There are studies that conclude the highest flux of illegal migrants can be found in Karachi and is considered as an important market for illegal migrants.

The report of the International Labor Organization (2006) stated that child trafficking persists in Pakistan as a result of many factors; including widespread poverty in rural areas. Other factors include obstacles for girls' access to quality education which is due to the inability of parents to afford the fees. Moreover, they possess an attitude that the school curriculum is irrelevant to their real needs, teachers are unqualified and the use of corporal punishment and verbal abuse create insecurity for their daughters. Cultural practices inculcate differential values among males and females and also contribute to girls' increased vulnerability to being trafficked. According to the report of Noor Educational Trust (2008) titled "Brides for Sale", trafficking can be termed as abuse to 'humanity'. In Pakistan, trafficking has led to complex issues such as child marriages, forced beggary, prostitution, Karo-Kari as well as human organ trade and camel kids. Based on the findings of this study, most women who are sold as brides are unduly exploited in many ways. This involves sexual abuse, prostitution, or agricultural labour. Girls who survive this ordeal are not even sure whether their families will accept them or not. Those who are not accepted, end up in shelter homes. Interaction with several of these victims shows the involvement of gangs in such kinds of practices. "This industry seems to be flourishing and vilely violates human rights of the victims and thrives on the socio-economic vulnerability of women and girls in rural and lesser developed areas and the majority of these women are impoverished, poor, uneducated, and belong to an ethnic minority in rural areas or a refugee group" (Janin, 2010, p. 05). This study is focusing on finding the answer to the following research question.

### **Methodology and Procedure**

The current study employed a qualitative research approach. Therefore, by using a grounded theory approach, a qualitative survey of twenty-five girls' primary public schools was conducted. A grounded theory approach is used in this study because it is a systematic methodology that helps in the construction of new theories by gathering and analysis of data. The Grounded theory implies that the selection of the sample should be done in such a way that the respondents are involved in the social process that is under investigation (Lobindo-Wood & Haber, 1998).

The population of this study was heterogeneous. The target population of the study consisted of all government girls' primary school teachers (PST), school heads, and female students of fourth and fifth grades and parents of slum areas of Karachi. Since the objective of the study was to know the determinants of low motivation for primary education for girls students, these participants were the suitable target population.

For the study, twenty-five government girls primary schools of the slum areas of five towns namely, Kemari, Malir, Lyari, Baldia, and Gadap of Karachi, Pakistan were selected as the sample of the study. The selection of research participants was purposive because key informants were required to provide information on the given phenomena; therefore, the sampling technique adopted for the study is the purposive sampling technique. Detailed interviews of fifty teachers, twenty-five school heads, and focus group discussion with fifty students were conducted to explore the major social factors and causes for the low motivation of girls' education in the slum areas of Karachi. This research is based on detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, and behaviours. The researcher tried to make close interactions with research participants. This research was cross-sectional in nature as the researcher wanted to explore the phenomenon at a particular point of time.

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews of teachers, in-depth interviews of school heads and focus group discussions with students, and informal conversation with all the research participants. Our research pertains to investigate the determinants of the lesser extent of education in females in the slum areas of Karachi, hence we focused on the population pertaining to schools and did not focus on the drop out from school.

### **Data Analysis and Discussion**

For the data analysis, the study used thematic analysis technique to analyse the qualitative data as guided by Braun and Clarke (2006) and defined thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data". Table 1 given below presents all the themes that have emerged from focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews from all the research participants. As data were collected in person so the response rate was 100%. This increases the reliability of the findings. In order to ensure face validity of the instrument, it was shared with the field experts. Furthermore, to confirm the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was also done in the real setting. In this regard, two schools were selected from the complete study sample. In-depth interviews of 4 teachers and 2 school heads were conducted, whereas a focus group discussion with a small group of students and parents was also conducted. With the help of this process, some of the questions for semi-structured interviews and focussed group discussion were modified and some were also dropped.

Table 1

Themes	Categories within each theme
Existing Condition of Girls' Primary Education in Slums of Karachi	Physical Infrastructure of Schools Necessities Security of the schools Ratio of enrollment Absenteeism Dropout Ratio Teachers and School Heads' Qualification and Skills Classroom Management Discipline of Schools Shortage of Staff Co-curricular activities Language Barriers Law and Order Situation of Slum Areas Security Concerns Crime Rate
Challenges of Girls' Education Faced by Stakeholders	a. Challenges Faced by Teachers Problems in Teaching The Environment of the Surroundings b. Challenges Faced by School Heads Administrative Challenges Behavior of Stakeholders c. Challenges Faced by Students School Environment Environmental Hazards and Health Issues d. Challenges faced by Parents Socio Economical Status Religio-Cultural Challenges Environment of Surrounding
Major Causes of Low Enrollment and High Dropout Ratio of Girls in slums of Karachi	Early Marriages Child Labor Migrant Families Care Taker and Baby Sitters Poverty Socio-Cultural Hurdles
Role of Stakeholder to Promote Girls' Education in Slums Karachi	Role of School Management Committee (SMCs) Role of Top Management Role of Parents Role of Community Role of NGOs

The researcher also took field notes. Some views of participants are given such as one teacher of Bin Qasim town said,

*“Bachiam k waja se akser school nai ate.”*(Girls are often absent from school due to labour.) Another teacher said, *“akser bachiaapne relatives k sathrehte he aurseapne parents kobejte he.”*(Usually, girls live with their relatives and send money to their parents).

One girl said, *“mere cousin ek ghar me kam kerte he aur us ke bab ne pese advance me lelyete wo larki six months se apne ghar wapis nahi ai aur wo log us per bohat zulm kerte he”* (My cousin works in a house and her father has received her salary in advance. She did not come home for six months and is being treated very badly there).

The other student of fifth grade said, *“larkio ko akser chote kam kakhe kr gharo me rakha jata he lekin sare kam leyejate he aur chote se galti par mara bhi jata he”*. (Usually girls are appointed for the minor type of works but every type of labour is taken and are beaten badly on silly mistakes).

One parent said, *“pele hum areya larkio ko per anekijasadnahite lekin ab larkio ko per arahe he”* (In our culture, in the past girls were not allowed to receive an education but now girls are receiving an education).

One mother said, *“hum joint family me rahte he baro kafeslamanaaperta he aur larkio ke qismat ka fesle yehi log krtehe”* (We live in a joint family system, we have to obey our elders' decisions and they are the decision makers of the fate of our girls). Most of the parents avoided and did not respond about the custom of “WANI” “SOHRA” (marriage with Quran) and “KAROKARI” (honor killing).

A teacher of Orangi town said, *“yeh bachi aitnegahrib hote he k in k pass pencil, rubber, copy kuch be nahi hota”*. (These girls are very poor. They do not even have a pencil, eraser or a notebook). One head said, *“ye areas her kisam ki masherteburiokemarkaz he”*. (These slums are the centre of all social evils). The other head said, *“berozgari ki waja se akser male ghar per hote he aur frustration me bewi bacho ko marte he, drugska use kerte he aur bachio ko school ane se mana kerte he”* (Due to a large number of men unemployed, the men often stay at home and in frustration are violent with their wife and children, use drugs and do not allow their daughters to go to school).

One student said, *“hum ereghar me khamanahi pakta he hum wo khamak hate hi jo ammi gharo se lekr ate he”* (In my house, food is not cooked; we eat the food, which our mother brings from the houses where she works at). The other girl said with grief, *“mere pass colour pencils b nahi he, muje drawing kabo hatshoq he”* (I do not have colour pencils; I am very fond of the drawing).

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The findings of the study indicated that due to the poor socio-economic status of girls, their education was affected negatively. The living conditions were devastating along with victims having to suffer the consequences of inadequate education. Infectious diseases were common in girls here as the environment was unhygienic and unhealthy. Other factors that add to poor living standards was overcrowding in slums. Also, several diseases were prone to spread because of overcrowding. Moreover, adding to ill health were the effects of natural disasters such as floods, etc. Thus amplifying the sufferings of these residents of slums. As slum dwellers had no legal right to land, thus they were inclined to face a severe threat of eviction and because they were not very educated, they find it difficult to even secure a job or had access to a bank loan. Many times it had even been noted that because slum dwellers did not have a formal address, they were deprived of medical and other basic facilities. They were compelled to do with poor sanitation and unsafe necessities because of which each year several lives were claimed and girls were extremely affected. Slum-dwellers could not afford the price of clean drinking water and proper sanitation and thus risk their lives in the unhygienic circumstances that they have to dwell in.

All the participants acknowledged that more than eighty percent of parents and families were illiterate and did not support girls to get education. According to them the parents of these areas were very possessive and conservative and did not give permission to their daughters to attend the schools. Usually, in slum areas, different communities lived together; they all had traditions and culture which was hostile towards girls' education. It was found that due to the high rate of poverty in the slum areas of Karachi, human trafficking particularly related to female became very common. It was found that a large number of people living in these settlements live below the poverty line. Mostly they were very poor, illiterate, unskilled or semi-skilled. According to the teachers, it also had been witnessed that fathers sold their daughters for the sake of money and illegal sale of girls was a common practice in these slum areas. It is noted that Macher Colony is the biggest hub of human trafficking in Karachi. The study indicates that child/girl trafficking was one of the most common forms of trafficking in Pakistan. Factors that contribute to child/girl trafficking included poverty, illiteracy, conflict and local dealers.

The finding of the study highlighted that poverty was the major issue of slum areas. Most fathers did not work and were addicts. Only mothers worked and supported the family. Due to poverty, most of the girls did not continue their education although education was free they were supporting their families in various manners. Consequently, the ratio of child labour was high in these areas. According to all respondents, girls were working in fisheries where they clean and pack prawns. In rush season (September to April) they were absent from schools and busy in overtime and due to this they were



suffering from different diseases especially frozen bites and joint pains as they had to sit in a particular posture while packing seafood. According to the finding, more than fifty percent of the girls' population of the slums worked as domestic servants or maids. Either they assisted their mothers or looked after the small kids as care-taker in posh areas of Karachi. Some girls helped their family in embroidery work which was called "khhudi" work or in cottage industries. Literature and reports of the International Labor Organization (ILO) supported these findings that the rate of child labour in Pakistan was very high and distressing particularly related to the girl child labour.

Currently, girls' education has become an emergent issue of Pakistan. It is universally accepted that gender disparity in any walk of life is an undesirable phenomenon, but the main concern is to leave this problem unresolved. This study seeks to identify key factors related to the low motivation of girls' in the slum areas of Karachi, Pakistan. The study revealed that the socio-economic status of the parents in slum areas of Karachi is very low and it highly affects the education of girls because due to poverty it is not the priority of parents to send their daughters to schools. About seventy percent of girls dropped out of school before primary education. The ratio of girls attending schools is very low. All the school heads and teachers agreed that poverty, child labour, and human trafficking are very common in these slum areas. All respondents acknowledged that people who live in these areas have a particular culture and traditions which are unsupportive of girls' education. Moreover, most schools in slums also lack the required teaching staff because teachers are not willing to come to this area due to law and order, fear, unhygienic conditions. On the basis of data analysis, the study reveals that there are many social factors involved in the low motivation of girls' education in the slum areas of Karachi, but the following four factors were predominantly the most crucial ones:

- socio-economic status
- socio-cultural barriers
- child labor
- women/girls trafficking

Females have a greater ability to participate in economic and business activities. Women should also be provided with vocational and technical training so that an equal impact on society can be witnessed by both an educated father and mother but in Pakistani society, women particularly belonging to slums or rural areas have limited access to education. The enrollment ratio of girls' education in schools of underprivileged areas/ slums is very low and on the other hand, the dropout ratio is very high due to numerous reasons/factors. Dropouts of girls at primary school level are due to the home environment, school environment, social environment, poor infrastructure, and insufficient basic facilities (Khan, Tahir, & Shah, 2011; Munshi & Bhatti, 2009).

Government and non-governmental organizations need to give more attention to these neglected slum areas of Karachi, specifically in the field of education and health. Child labour and women/girls trafficking can be controlled by creating awareness through electronic and print media. Due to urbanization, slum areas are increasing very rapidly in Karachi. Steps should be taken to prevent this by providing jobs and facilities in rural areas of Pakistan. Proper security should be provided to the students and staff of the schools in the slum areas of Karachi because law and order situation and criminal activities such as human trafficking are on the rise in these slums. NGOs and the media can play a very significant role to motivate parents to send their daughters to schools.

The time has come when we should focus on developing and empowering girls in slum areas. Having identified root causes, we must make the required efforts to create an environment where girls can acquire education so that they can realize their true potential. At present, the condition of women in the slum areas of Karachi is pitiful and needs attention.

## References

- Abbasi, G. P., & Saeed, A. (2012). Critical analysis of the factors influencing female education in rural Sindh as viewed by primary school teachers. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 4(6), 334-338.
- Abbasi, M. (2014). *Labour watch Pakistan*. Retrieved from Labour Watch Pakistan: [www.labourwatchpakistan.com](http://www.labourwatchpakistan.com).
- Ali, T. S., Krantz, G., Gul, R., Asad, N., Johansoon, E., Morgren, I. (2011). Gender roles and their influence on life prospects for women in urban Karachi, Pakistan: A qualitative study. *Global Health Action*, 4(1), 1-9.
- ASER. (2012). *Pathway to progress: Girls education in rural Sindh*. Retrieved from, [http://aserpakistan.org/document/aser\\_policy\\_briefs/2012/Brief%20by%20Theres a.pdf](http://aserpakistan.org/document/aser_policy_briefs/2012/Brief%20by%20Theres%20a.pdf).
- Azam, F. (2009). *Human trafficking, human smuggling and illegal migration to and from Pakistan: Review of government policies and programmes*. Pakistan: The European Union. Retrieved from [https://sherloc.unodc.org/cld/bibliography/2009/human\\_trafficking\\_human\\_smuggling\\_and\\_illegal\\_migration\\_to\\_and\\_from\\_pakistan.html](https://sherloc.unodc.org/cld/bibliography/2009/human_trafficking_human_smuggling_and_illegal_migration_to_and_from_pakistan.html).
- Brown, G. (2011). *Child labor & educational disadvantages-breaking the link, building opportunity*. Retrieved from Child labor & educational disadvantages-breaking the link, building opportunity: [http://www.ungei.org/files/child\\_labor\\_and\\_education\\_US.pdf](http://www.ungei.org/files/child_labor_and_education_US.pdf).

- Faridi, M. Z., Malik, S., & Basit, A. B. (2009). Impact of education on female labor force participation in Pakistan: Empirical evidence from primary data analysis. *Pakistan Journal of Social sciences*, 29(1), 127-140.
- ILO. (2006). *Combating child trafficking*. Islamabad, Pakistan: International Labor Organization.
- Janin, N. (2010). Theoretical analysis of human trafficking: A South Asian Perspective. *Journal of Global Social Work Practice*, 3(1).
- Kakar, Z. K., Khiliji, B. A., & Ullah, Z. (2011). Effect of female education on family size in Pakistan: A case study of Quetta city. *Journal of International Academic Research*, 11(2), 37-41.
- Khan, G. A., Tahir, M., & Shah, S. A. (2011). Gender dimensions of drop out in basic education in Pakistan: A probit analysis. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 24(1), 121-133.
- Mehdi, S. S. (2010). *Illegal migration, human smuggling and trafficking from Bangladesh to Pakistan and beyond*. Pakistan.
- Memon, G. R. (2007). Education in Pakistan: The key issues, problems, and the new challenges. *Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 3(1), 47-55.
- Munshi, P., & Bhatti, T. (2009). Low rate of literacy: A dilemma of Sindh province. *Journal of Education Research*, 12(2), 13-30.
- Naz, A., & Rehman, H. (2011). Developing gender equality: An analytical study of socio-economic and political constraints in women's empowerment in Pakhtun society of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. *Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing*, 2(1), 259-266.
- Naz, A., Khan, W., Daraz, U., & Hussain, M. (2011). The dormancy of empowerment: An analytical study of various impediments to women's education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 2(16), 78-87.
- Noor, Z. (2008). *Brides for sale: Internal trafficking nexus at a glance*. Pakistan: Noor Education Trust.
- Parveen, S. (2008). Female education and national development: As viewed by women activists and advocates. *Bulletin of Education & Research*, 30(1), 33-41.

Report. (2013). *International human development indicators*. Retrieved from International Human Development Indicators: [www.undp.org/en/report/global/hdrd2013/](http://www.undp.org/en/report/global/hdrd2013/).

SPARC. (2013). *Society for the protection of the rights of the child*. Retrieved from Society for the protection of the rights of the child: [www.sparcpk.org/](http://www.sparcpk.org/).

*The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. (1948). Retrieved from The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>.