



# Causes of Dropout Rate at Primary Level in Pakistan

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## Abstract

The study was designed to investigate the causes of dropout at primary level in Pakistan. Descriptive research method was adopted by using both quantitative and qualitative techniques for data collection. The study sought to get the opinion of education managers, teachers, parents and community members on various factors causing high dropout at primary level. Data was collected from 208 education managers and 291 primary school teachers. Twelve districts and 96 schools across the country were included in the sample. Moreover, focus group discussion was held with community members and parents in each sample school and district to solicit their opinion about causes of dropout. All the possible factors causing dropout were grouped into socio-economic factors, physical factors, geographical factors, teacher related factors, family related factors, teaching learning material related factors, administrative related factors, child related factors, and facilities in schools related factors.

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**Keywords:** causes of dropout, education managers, socio-economic factors, physical factors, geographical factors, teacher related factors, family related factors, teaching learning material related factors, administrative related factors, child related factors, facilities in schools related factors

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## 1. Introduction

Education is the backbone of every society and children are considered as human resource of the future development. Pace and quality of development in a country is directly related to quality of human capital produced by the country. This requires both access to education by the whole population and its quality. Without access to quality education it is impossible to produce quality human resource for sustainable development of the country. School education is instrumental to stimulate cognitive, emotional and social development and empower the children to contribute in national development. A child with better educational opportunities can become an effective community member in every walk of life (Government of Pakistan, 2014).

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National Education Policy (1998) recognizes education as a powerful catalyzing agent which provides mental, physical, ideological and moral training to individuals, so as to enable them to have full consciousness of their purpose in life and equip them to achieve that purpose. In other words the policy admits that development of human resource for future development of the country is only possible through quality education (Government of Pakistan, National Education Policy, 1998-2010).

Primary education is the most important and crucial stage for a child's education (Government of Pakistan, Economic Survey, 2017). Strengthening primary education may help Pakistan achieve goals of universal access and equity. Article 25(A) has been inserted into the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973 through 18th amendment which says: "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". Most of the provinces have made law for implementation of Article 25-A.

Since education has been recognized as fundamental human right, therefore, every successive governments has introduced policy interventions for providing educational facilities to the masses, but still there is need to implement laws related to free and compulsory education to the masses across the country in letter and spirit. In Pakistan dropout rate at primary level is 33% (Government of Pakistan, 2017) which is at a very high side. Low enrolment and high dropout at primary level have negative impact on literacy rate in the country.

According to National Institute of Population Studies projections (NIPS, 2015), there are currently 51.53 million children in Pakistan between the ages of 5-16. Among this group only 28.84 million children are attending educational institution (public or private), while 22.8 million of ages 5-16 are out of school of which 5.06 million are primary age children (ages 5-9). Wide variance is observed in enrolment across province/area and gender.

Although the government of Pakistan has taken a number of initiatives to increase retention at primary level which included, provision of free textbooks, revision of national curricula, production of quality textbooks, placement of graduate teachers at primary level and grant of stipends to girl students. In spite of these policy interventions, Pakistan has not been able to achieve 100% participation target of universal primary education by 2015.

Pakistan is among the signatory countries of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The goal 4 of Sustainable Development Goals relates to quality education and lifelong learning while the unfinished business of EFA would be integral part of new agenda. The 100% achievement of SDG 4 is possible only when all primary age group children have access to quality education and survival rate (SR) is 100%. All National Education Policies and Development Plans emphasized on access, equity and quality of education, however on ground situation is not very encouraging. The National Education Policy

(2009) has therefore, focused on two critical problems being faced by the education sector (i) low participation and narrow base of the sector; and (ii) poor quality of the provision of educational facilities.

Causes of dropout may be complex and vary from province to province and even district to district. The findings of various research studies on dropout identify number of reasons which included, poverty, distance to school, poor quality of education, non-availability of physical facilities, untrained teachers, irregularity of teachers, non-availability of female teachers in girls schools, medium of instruction, security problem in girls schools, overcrowded classrooms, weak instructional supervision. Personal and family related factors such as illiterate parents, poverty and poor health condition are the main hindrance towards retention and completion of primary education. Along with these factors some social factors such as orphans, migrants, tribal culture and minority groups, and children of different languages are more inclined to dropout (UNESCO, 2010).

### *1.1. Rationale of the study*

The review of literature indicates that high dropout rate in general and particularly at primary level is a crucial policy issue which needs to be addressed immediately in order to achieve target of universal primary education. There was a dire need to conduct a full-fledged study to investigate the causes of low participation, low retention and high dropout at primary level. This important policy issue also needs to be looked in a broader perspective for policy makers, planners, education managers, head teachers and teachers so as to have meaningful dialogue to find out solution of this problem. The challenges faced by the country in the provision of quality education to the masses particularly in the context of demand and supply also require investigation. Moreover, 22.8 million out of school children of age groups 5-16 and high dropout is a major challenge; there was a need to conduct an inclusive research to explore causes leading to this situation and take remedial measures based on evidence for the solution.

### *1.2. Objectives of the study*

The objectives of the study were to:

- i) investigate the causes of dropout at Primary level in Pakistan.
- ii) explore the main factors causing high dropout rate.
- iii) suggest measures for formulating strategies to reduce dropout rate.

### *1.3. Significance of the study*

Providing quality education in the context of the Constitutional provisions and international commitment, the policy makers, education managers, heads and teachers can take well informed decisions on the basis of findings of this study in order to improve the situation in respective area of interventions. The findings of the study would therefore, facilitate all the stakeholders in practicable decision making at federal, provincial, regional and district level.

#### *1.4. Literature Review*

##### *1.4.1. Concept of Dropout*

The term dropout means that any student who leaves school for any reason before graduation or completion of a program of studies or specific cycle of education (Khan, Azher, & Shah, 2001) It also refers to children who abandon the education system without completing the academic year they started, i.e. those who did not obtain the right to get the final mark for that academic year and to be issued an official document to prove they finished the particular year of primary or secondary school (Estevao & Alvares, 2014; De Witte et al., 2013). In other words, the term dropout means discontinuing of schooling before completion of any specified cycle of education i.e. primary, middle and high schools. The dropout means those students who leave the school for any reason except death before completion of education programs of studies and without transferring to another school (Kamal, 2002 and Attaullah, 2000).

##### *1.4.2. Situation of students' dropout in Pakistan*

It is evident from literature and national education policies that dropout is a serious policy issue which is to be solved in order to achieve target of universal primary education, as constitutional obligation and international commitment of government of Pakistan. The problem of dropout in general and particularly at primary level is faced by all developed and developing countries of the world. In developing countries dropout rate is remarkably high, even for the basic school going children (Martins, 2006). Dropout rate in Pakistan is high as compared to other developing countries. Substandard primary education system, deficiency of trained teaching staff, and weak parent teacher relationship are the major reasons of dropouts in Pakistan (Mohsin et al, 2004). According to Pakistan Education Statistics (2016-17) the survival rate to grade V is 67% with equal ratio of male and female. It is very encouraging to note that 100% survival rate has been observed in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and Gilgit Baltistan, (The female survival rate is 26% in FATA and 85% in AJK). The dropout rate at national level is 33%, while FATA has the highest dropout rate i.e. 66% (63% male and 74% female)

followed by Balochistan having 59% (61% male and 56% female), whereas AJK has the lowest dropout rate only 15% followed by Punjab 27%.

From gender perspective, it is evident from literature that girls are more likely to drop out in general across the country and particularly in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Study further found that about 25% of children (22% boys, 28% girls) who complete primary school do not enroll in secondary school and highlighted that dropout is higher among girls than boys due to many social reasons (GoP, NEMIS, 2014; Alif Ailaan, 2014).

#### *1.4.3. Factors of high Dropout rate at primary level in Pakistan*

There are many factors of high dropout rate in general and particularly at primary level in Pakistan. These, include economic, social status/condition, parental illiteracy, and mal-nutrition, poverty, illiteracy, ignorance of parents about importance of education, distance from home to schools, early marriages of girls' and security/safety of children. These factors have been categorized as under:-

#### *1.4.4. Socio- economic Factors*

Education is a social process of the individual so that individual would be able to live in the society with dignity and honor, therefore, education is the key to the socio-economic development of nations. (Hussain, Salfi, and Khan, 2011). The level of economic development of a country plays an important role in the development of education and students' retention rate. Findings of the studies revealed that there is positive relationship between education and economic growth, these are interdependent on each others, children belong to well off family or better socio-economic background have more chances to retain in schools as compared to low income background children (Alderman, et al. (1996); Behrman et al. (1999); Burney and Irfan (1991); and Sathar & Llyod (1994). The low level of economic development of the country, low per capita income, unemployment, and inadequate income of the parents and poor health outcomes in addition to haunting poverty of the people, poor standards of health and mal-nutrition are the major causes of high dropout rate in Pakistan (Bhatti et al., 2011; Rumberge, 2001; and Shami & Hussain (2005). Similarly, Social reasons like cultural and religious beliefs, social exclusion, low social positioning, low parental perception etc. are also restricting girls' education. Economic reasons are worth mentioning which may include high poverty, deprivation due to lack of food, illness, lack of choices, unemployment, wage work by children, vulnerability, unpaid family labour, sibling responsibility, cattle grazing, high cost of education (Rumberger, 2011; Estevao & Alvares, 2014 ).

According to Pakistan Economic Survey, 2017-2018 Pakistan's economic growth is 5.8 % in 2018, GDP growth was 4.5% in 2017 and 4.71% in 2016. This indicates low economic growth in the country. Consequently spending on education in term of GDP during the last decade remained 2.2%, due to limited revenue generation through taxation, major portion of the country's budget allocated for military expenditure and debt servicing of the country and poor economic growth are major constraints in allocating 4% of GDP to education as per international recommendation (GoP, PES, 2017-2018: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015, UNESCO: Khichi, et al, 2015).

#### *1.4.5. Physical Factors*

Physical factors are contributing towards either retention or high dropout rate at primary level in Pakistan. Availability of school building, conducive working environment, availability of physical facilities contribute to enhance retention but on the contrary lack of physical facilities, punishment by teachers, non-conducive environment and overcrowded classes are main causes of high dropout rate in Pakistan (Government of Pakistan, 1998, 2008). Lack of infrastructure, Physical punishment, corporal punishment, loss of self-respect, heavy bags, non-availability of transportation in some of the rural areas of the country, especially in remote rural areas, lack of basic facilities of life such as roads, health facilities are causes of students dropout and low retention rate. (Government of Pakistan, 2008: Shami & Husain, 2005: United Nations, 2008: UNICEF, 2005)

#### *1.4.6. Geographical Factors*

The geographical factors are affecting enrolment and lead to drop-out at primary level in Pakistan. Findings of the studies revealed that long distances of schools from homes and poor transportation facilities, natural calamities and poor communication facilities are important causes of dropout at primary level in Pakistan (UK Aid, 2017). Similarly the research studies also established positive impact of less distance on students' dropout and retention rate. Sathar and Llyod (1994) found that having a school one kilo meter away from home had a positive and significant effect on the primary school attendance. Swada and Lokshin (2001) also maintained that accessibility to a primary school within the village seems to contribute to about 18% increase in a girl's primary school entry and that the female primary school dropout will decline by about 16%. Mountainous areas experience higher drop-out rates, as do deltaic regions. Provision of primary schools and of teachers in these regions can be very difficult and travelling to school poses a problem for school attendance. Many studies found that children in conflict situations and those living in communities affected by natural disasters are more likely to drop out of school. The conflict in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa between 2008 and 2010 led to around 3.35 million people being internally displaced, around 60% of whom were children (UK Aid, 2017). The vast majority of those displaced stayed with host communities where in many cases local schools were unable to accommodate the additional influx of children (Jones and

Naylor, 2014). In 2010, extensive floods affected 16,400 schools in Pakistan (UNICEF, 2010). The earthquake in 2005 destroyed 3,669 educational institutions in the Hazara Division alone, of which 2,000 have yet to be reconstructed (Dawn, 2015). Pakistan Education for All: Review report 2015, the report highlighted key challenges, i.e. lack of access to education, poor quality of education, budgetary constraints and weak governance.

#### *1.4.7. Teacher Related Factors*

Teachers play vital role in the quantitative expansion and qualitative improvement of education system in the country, in fact teacher is the pivot around which all teaching learning process depend. Teacher related factors are contributing towards dropout of student. According to Shami & Hussain (2005) teachers related factors include, shortage of teachers, non-availability of required number of teachers at primary level, hesitation of female teachers to work in rural areas and teachers' absenteeism are the major causes of dropout in Pakistan. Findings of the study by Hussain, Salfi and Khan (2011) revealed that shortage of teachers, especially, in primary schools, single teacher or two teachers policy in the provinces, posting of teachers far from their homes are some factors that contribute to dropout, Teachers especially female teachers hesitate to go to schools located in remote areas, inadequate and improper residential facilities for teachers especially in far flung areas, low morale of primary school teachers and their harsh treatment towards pupils; sub-standard student-teacher ratio; inadequate knowledge of the child psychology; and low qualified and un-experienced teachers are main causes of high dropout rate in Pakistan (GoP, National Plan of Action, 2001-2015:United Nation,2008).

#### *1.4.8. Family related Factors*

Family of a child is key player for providing education to the children, therefore family's economic and educational background is important factor to have educated children in the future. Families who can no longer afford to send their children to school were found in acute poverty which does not permit children of poor families either to join or continue their education (Ghafoor & Baloch,1990: Chaurd & Mingat,1996). Poverty is the biggest and the strongest limiting factor to attain desired outcomes concerning UPE in the country, (United Nations Development Program, 2004). Poor motivational level of parents, illiteracy of parents, large family size, parents non-willingness to send their children to school due to poor condition of schools, low quality of education conservative attitude of parents, migration of parents, early marriage of girls and engaging children in labour market are the major causes of dropout of children from schools ( Gulm, Gulshan and Ali,2013: Shah, Shah, Noor and Ayaz, 2015). Parwaan E-9 ECED (2015) found that illiteracy and poverty are major causes restricting rural parents to take interest in the development of child.

Previous research studies also established positive impact of parents' education on students' retention rate and on reducing dropout rate. Holmes' (2003) study shows that the education of the father increases the expected level of school retention by boys, and that of the mother's enhances the educational attainment of girls. Behrman et al. (1999) found that father's education had a significant impact on children's education. Similarly, Swada and Lokshin (2001) reported a consistently positive and significant coefficient of father's and mother's education at all levels of education. Usha (1989) reveals parental poverty and consequent drive of the parents to employ their own children could be a very crucial factor for dropout. The researcher further states that family background also plays a key role in retaining the children within the school. Education, occupation, and income of parents, the educational statistic as a whole, family size and health status of parents etc. are the external factors which have an impact on the retention of children or their defection from schools. Rumberge, (2001) identifies that dropout in one manner or the other relates to high unemployment, inadequate income of the parents and poor health outcomes in addition to haunting poverty. It has also been pointed out by Horn (1992) that the children dropped out of school are needed by their parents for certain domestic responsibilities i.e. for the look after of other siblings, sharing household works and farming.

#### *1.4.9. Teaching Learning Material Related Factors*

Quality education at all levels depend on the quality of learning material available to the teacher (and learning material inferred from the most desired goal of education system of any country, but in Pakistan, quality of education, at all levels in general and at primary level in particular, is not satisfactory which causes high dropout (Saadi & Saeed, 2010). The contents of curriculum are difficult and not in accordance with needs and abilities of the students and society. Many research studies concluded that medium of instruction at primary level education may be a leading factor of drop out. In Pakistan in most of the schools Urdu is used as medium of instruction which is mother tongue of only 8% of the country's population (Coleman and Capstick, 2012). Majority of population has different local languages as mother tongue and students are facing problem in learning. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab, English is being introduced as the medium of instruction in schools. Teaching in a language other than the child's mother tongue, especially in the early years of schooling, is highly inefficient and results in low levels of learning, and high rates of repetition and dropout (HEART, 2011)

#### *1.4.10. Administrative Factors*

Findings of the studies indicated some of the administrative factors which are contributing to high dropout rate in Pakistan. The weak supervision and indifferent attitude of administrative and supervisory personnel towards teaching community also



contribute to high dropout. Moreover, teachers' absenteeism and undue political interference in school affairs are also the main factors that compel students to leave the school. Lack of monitoring and supervision of schools effect performance of the schools (Government of Pakistan, 2009, Jatoi & Hussain, 2010).

#### *1.4.11. Child related Factors*

Health and general mal-nutrition of a child may also lead to dropout. If a child is in poor health, school attendance may be affected, leading to repetition or eventually drop-out. Even if a child attends school regularly, the child may not be able to give sufficient attention to the classroom situation because of physical or mental fatigue due to hunger or undernourishment. Children from poor homes do not receive the nourishment they require and mal-nutrition and stunting of development, leading to fatigue and poor concentration, probably help to determine eventual drop-out of many poor children (Parwaan, E-9 ECED, 2015).

Primary students' age is an important factor regarding dropout. Many children of the region enter school late. In grade I, children may be 7, 8, 9, or even 10 years of age. In any grade, about 20% of the children will have ages higher or lower than the officially notified age group. Entering school late and being over-aged for a particular grade increases the chances of dropping out before they complete a full cycle of schooling. For example, if children enroll late in primary school, there are fewer years available for school before they must start contributing to the household economy. If girls enroll late, there are fewer years before they reach puberty when they are likely to be withdrawn from school because of parental concerns about their daughters' safety and reputation (Lewin, 2011).

#### *1.4.12. Facilities in schools*

The availability of physical facilities has positive impact on the development of education. The availability of building, physical facilities and pedagogical methods, have effects on the child's learning experience and influence on retention or drop-out. Findings of research studies indicate that basic physical facilities for the students are not available in the schools as per requirements. In AEPAM Shami & Hussain conducted research studies in (2004a), (2005b) and (2006c) regarding access and equity in basic education and learning achievement of the students. The findings of these studies identified internal factors such as non-availability of physical facilities, (drinking water, boundary wall, electricity, toilets for students and teachers), causing dropout. According to another, AEPAM report (2015), 21% of primary schools across Pakistan are required to be repaired and 12% are in a dangerous condition and 8% have no building. Lloyd et al., (2006) found that some 'schools' do not even have building, forcing children to sit out in open without shelter.

The review of literature has identified various factors that cause high dropout at primary level. The most important factors which are considered the reasons for high

dropout included, poverty, illiterate parents, non-conducive environment for learning, long distance to schools, non-availability of physical facilities especially toilets for girls students, teachers absenteeism, single teacher schools, harsh attitude of teachers, children to help parents in home chores, poor health of children, low quality of education, conflict situation, natural calamities, incompetent teachers, lack of in-service training, and lack of monitoring and supervision.

## 2. Method

The study was descriptive and a survey type of research in nature. Detail of research methodology is as under.

### 2.1. Population of the study

The study was designed to explore causes of dropout at primary level. Provincial and regional stakeholders of primary education were respondents of this study. All education managers at district i.e. Executive District Officer (EDO) education, District Education Officers (DEOs), Deputy District Education Officers (DDEOs) and Assistant Education Officers (AEOs) constituted the population. All heads and teachers of Primary Education level were also included in the population of the study. Moreover, parents and community representatives as members of School Council/SMC/PTC from each school were also included as respondents of this study.

### 2.2. Sample of the study

Random sampling technique was used to select a representative sample for the generalization of results. Total 12 districts from provinces/regions were included to make it a representative sample. Detail of sample districts and district wise number of respondents is given in the following tables.

Table 1. Sample Districts

S#	Province/Region	Sample Districts	No. of Sample Districts
1.	Punjab	Lahore, Faisalabad, Kasur and Gujranwala	04
2.	Sindh	Karachi and Jamshoro	02
3.	Balochistan	Quetta and Ziarat	02
4.	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)	Peshawar and Swat	02
5.	Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK)	Mirpur	01
6.	Gilgit-Baltistan (GB)	Hunza-Nagar	01

<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>
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Table 2. District-wise Respondents

S.#	Districts	Education Managers	Teachers
1	Lahore	29	26
2	Faisalabad	20	24
3	Kasur	23	24
4	Gujranwala	23	34
5	Karachi	15	32
6	Jamshoro	14	18
7	Quetta	15	27
8	Ziarat	04	14
9	Peshawar	19	28
10	Swat	22	17
11	Mirpur	10	12
12	Hunza-Nagar	14	35
<b>Total</b>		<b>208</b>	<b>291</b>

This study was conducted at national level by and covering 12 sample districts. In each district 8 primary schools with equal ratio of boys and girls belong to rural/urban areas were randomly selected. It was decided that from sample schools 3 to 5 teachers would be included for data collection, but during field visits in rural areas single or two teachers were available in schools, therefore available teachers were requested to fill in the questionnaire that is why there is a variation in district-wise respondents. Data was collected from 208 education managers, 291 primary school teachers and 96 schools.

It is pertinent to mention here that parents/community representatives as members of School Council/SMC/PTC were also included as respondents of the study, the exact number could not be included because in each sample school it is varied subject to availability of these representatives for example in some schools they were two or three at the time of data collection from the sample district and schools.

### 2.3. Research instruments of the study

Two questionnaires were designed for the collection of data, distinctively for Education Managers and Teachers. Focus Group Discussion was also conducted in each sample district by using a separate FGD protocol.

#### *2.4. Pilot testing of research instruments*

The instruments were pilot tested in district Rawalpindi. In light of the feedback received as a result of pilot testing, necessary changes were incorporated in the research instruments (i.e. questionnaires). Efforts were made to design comprehensive instruments to get relevant information from the respondents.

#### *2.5. Data collection and analysis*

The researchers visited 12 sample districts of four provinces and two regions i.e. Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan to collect required data. Collected data were tabulated and analyzed within the context of objectives of the study.

### **3. Results**

Respondents (Education Managers) were requested for providing information regarding pass percentage at primary level in their districts. Data indicates that the number of students who completed primary schools education was not encouraging as 15% schools had result between the range of 71-80% and 21% schools had result between the range of 81-90% and only 11% schools in the sample districts had result ranges between 91-100% in the year 2017. 37% of respondents did not respond this question. The result indicates that performance of primary schools in terms of result percentage is not encouraging. Repetition in grade 5 is at higher level which results in dropout particularly in case of girls.

The education managers were requested to provide information regarding the method they usually adopted to reduce dropout in their districts. 92% respondents positively responded that they applied some methods to reduce dropout in their districts.

The managers were also requested to provide information about the method they considered most effective to increase students' enrollment as well as their retention in their districts. Data shows that 96% respondents had opinion that parent teachers' meeting is either most effective or effective method to increase retention rate. It was observed that 94% respondents were of the view that child friendly environment is either most effective or effective method for increasing retention rate. Data indicates that 90% respondents had opinion that door to door campaign is either most effective or effective method to increase retention rate at primary level. Analysis shows that 85% respondents had opinion that involvement of school council is either most effective or effective method for increasing retention rate. It was also observed that 80% respondents had opinion that media campaign is either most effective or effective method to increase retention rate at

primary school. As a whole child friendly school environment and involvement of parents can contribute to prevent dropout and increase rate of retention at primary level.

There are many causes of dropout which vary from province to province and district to district. Some causes related to socio-economic factors were identified and education managers were requested to categorize these causes with respect to their importance. Data illustrates that 90% respondents had opinion that low economic development of the country and low per capita income are either very important or important factors of dropout rate at primary level. Data shows that 83% respondents considered poor health and mal-nutrition either very important or important factors. It was observed that 74% respondents had opinion that shortage of funds at school level either very important or important factor of dropout rate. The results show that it is the poverty that has a great impact on enrollment as well as retention of students in schools.

Some of the causes of dropout related to the physical factors were identified. The education managers were requested to categorize these causes with respect to their importance.

Geographical factors as cause of dropout were identified and education managers were requested to categorize these causes with respect to their importance. 70% respondents were of the view that long distance of schools from home is either very important or important factor of dropout rate at primary level. Data shows 50% respondents had opinion that natural calamities are either very important or important factor of dropout rate at primary level. As a whole the geographical factors particularly long distance between home and school lead to high dropout at primary level. There is need to ensure availability of educational facility at door step as per provisions of NEP, 2009.

The education managers were requested to categorize teachers' related factors with respect to their importance. It was found that among teachers related factors, the most important factors are shortage of teachers (88%) and non-availability of teachers in primary schools (84%). Similarly data shows that 75% respondents were of the view that non-willingness of teachers to work in remote areas is either very important or important factor of dropout. It was further observed that 71% respondents considered multi-grade teaching a very important or an important factor causing dropout at primary level.

Family play vital role to enhance enrolment as well as retention in schools and in converse situation contribute to dropout. The education managers were requested to categorize causes of family related factors with respect to their importance. Major causes of dropout rate are poverty (88%), illiteracy of parents (85%), engagement of children in some employment/child labor (81%), migration of parents (80%) and child is helping hand for parents in domestic chores (80%). Data further shows that 74% and 72% respondents

were of the view that causes of dropout rate are, low priority to educating female child and no-body at home to help in doing home work respectively. From the data it is concluded that family either due to poverty, illiteracy or other social reasons contributes to dropout. This means that financial support to school going children and their families can help increase retention and decrease dropout.

Among the causes of dropout factors related to teaching learning materials are critical one. The education managers were requested to categorize these causes with respect to their importance. 71% respondents had opinion that teaching learning material is not in accordance with the needs and abilities of children and it is either very important or important cause of dropout rate at primary level. It was observed that 65% and 63% respondents were of the view that no relevance of teaching learning material to the needs of the community and difficult contents/concepts of the courses for learners respectively, are either very important or important factors of dropout rate at primary level. This requires attention of policy makers, curriculum developers, textbook writers and teachers themselves.

Non professional attitude of administrative staff is one of the contributing factors of dropout. The education managers were requested to categorize these causes with respect to their importance. 71% respondents had opinion that political interference in transfer and posting of teachers is either very important or important cause of dropout rate. Data indicates that 67% respondents had opinion that non-availability of funds for visits of supervisory staff is an important factor, whereas 61% respondents considered non-supportive school administration and lack of proper monitoring either very important or important factors, causing dropout. The data shows that there is a need to streamline the posting/transfer mechanism of teachers particularly at primary level and improve governance with effective modern monitoring tools.

The provision of physical facilities increases retention and their non-availability causes dropout, therefore, the education managers were requested to categorize provision of facilities with respect to their importance. indicates that availability of physical facilities is very important factor to increase enrollment and retention rate in school education.

It can be concluded that availability of physical facilities in schools may attract the students and parents towards schools, ultimately enrolment and retention rate will increase in general and particularly at primary level.

Primary school teachers directly interact with the students and they are stakeholders of primary education. Primary school teachers are most appropriate respondents to unveil the causes of dropout at primary level in Pakistan. A separate questionnaire was designed to get first hand information from the teachers.

Primary school teachers directly interact with the students and they are stakeholders of primary education. Primary school teachers are most appropriate respondents to unveil the causes of dropout at primary level in Pakistan. A separate questionnaire was designed to get first hand information from the teachers. It was very important to get information regarding completion rate of primary school during year, 2017, therefore, teachers were requested to provide result of their schools during the year 2017.

Data shows that 9% schools had result between the range of 71-80%. Data shows that 12% schools had result between the range of 81-90% and only 40% schools had result between the ranges of 91-100% in the year 2017. Data further indicate that 25% of respondents had no idea about pass percentage of their students. According to teachers responses 8% students were below 40% pass percentage. There are evidences that most of students who could not pass primary level dropout from school, instead of repeating the same grade.

The teachers make their efforts by adopting different methods to reduce dropout at their schools. 85% respondents said that they adopted methods to increase retention rate in their schools. It means the school staff was aware of their responsibilities with regard to increase enrolment, retain students and decrease dropout.

It was very important to know the methods which were being implied by schools to increase retention rate; therefore, respondents were requested to provide information about the method they considered the most effective to increase students' enrollment as well as their retention in schools.

92% respondents had opinion that parent teachers meeting was either most effective or effective method to increase retention rate in their schools. Data shows that 90% respondents were of the view that child friendly environment was either most effective or effective method to enhance retention rate in their schools. It was observed that 79% respondent were of view that involvement of school council was most effective or effective methods to enhance retention rate in school. From the data it appears that collaboration between teachers and parents or school and community is an effective way of improving retention and reducing dropout. Different implied forms of interaction between school and community can improve the situation of dropout.

There are many socio-economic causes of dropout which vary from province to province, district to district and family to family. Some causes have been identified with the help of

data and respondents were requested to categorize these causes with respect to their importance. 83% respondents had opinion that either very important or important factors of dropout are low economic development of the country and low per capita income of the people. Analysis of data shows that 82% respondents were of the view that poor health and mal-nutrition were either very important or important factors of high dropout at primary level. It means poverty and low income as a whole are major causes of dropout or low retention. Measures are needed to be taken at the level of decision makers to improve the current situation.

Teachers also unveiled some physical factors as causes of dropout at primary level, therefore, teachers were requested to categorize these factors. 63% respondents were of the view that over-crowded classes were either very important or important cause of dropout rate at primary level. It was found that 53% respondents had opinion that non-conducive environment of the school was either very important or important cause of dropout rate. Data also shows that 47% respondents informed that either very important or important cause of dropout is punishment by teachers.

Primary schools are established to provide education to children of age group 5 to 10. At this tender age poor or unsupportive geographical factors become causes of dropout; therefore teachers were requested to provide information in this regard. 67% respondents had opinion that long distance of schools from homes is either very important or important cause of dropout at primary level. It was found 44% respondents informed that natural calamities are either very important or important cause of dropout rate at primary level. This data is in line with the other causes related to physical and geographical factors explained in education managers' responses.

Generally teachers play a vital role in the development of child at primary level. Some factors related to teachers are main causes of dropout. 76% and 73% respondents had opinion that either very important or important cause of dropout rate was shortage of teachers and non-availability of teachers respectively at primary level. For other causes (60%) teachers' absenteeism, (57%) female teachers are not willing to serve in remote areas are the main causes of dropout rate at primary level.

Family as the basic agency plays vital role in providing education to the children, therefore some family related factors were identified. 81% respondents had opinion that illiteracy of parents was either very important or important cause of dropout at primary level in Pakistan. Data also shows that 78% respondents were of the view that poverty and migration of parents were either very important or important causes of dropouts. It was observed 69% respondents informed that engagement of child in employment/child labor and nobody at home to help doing home work were either very important or important causes of dropout at primary level in Pakistan.

Teaching learning material is designed to impart knowledge to the students, some factors of dropout were identified from literature review. 60% respondents had opinion



that teaching learning material was not in accordance with the needs and abilities of the children. Difficult contents/concepts and lack of relevance of teaching learning material are either very important or important causes of dropout at primary level. Though over 50% respondents consider some problems with teaching learning materials causing dropout, but it is not very high as compared to other causes like family related problems (81%). This issue needs to be highlighted for consideration of curriculum and textbook developers and others.

Child is the central point of whole teaching and learning system 69% respondents had opinion that learning difficulties of children is either very important or important cause of dropout. Data indicate that 63% and 61% respondents were of the view that mental capabilities of children and poor health were either very important or important causes of dropout.

Physical facilities are provided to facilitate teaching learning process at school level, non-availability of physical facilities are also cause of dropout at primary level. Usually parents try to get their child admitted to those schools where these facilities are available. Data shows that very important causes of dropout are:-

- 65.7% non-availability of separate classroom for each class.
- 63.4% non-availability of furniture and toilets.
- 56% non-availability of electricity.
- 59.4% non-availability of drinking water.
- 59% non-availability of play ground.
- 57.7% non-availability of library.
- 54.7% non-availability of computer lab.
- 55% non-availability of boundary wall.

The opinion of teachers is similar to that of education managers. The decision makers need to think and plan for providing equal facilities across the system i.e. equally both in rural and urban areas irrespective of gender.

### *3.1. Group discussion*

#### *3.1.1. Focus group discussion with education managers*

Research teams visited sample districts and conducted a group discussion with concerned Education Managers i.e. District Education Officer (DEO) Deputy District

Education Officer (DDEO), Assistant Education Officer (AEO) and in case of Punjab CEOs of District Education Authority.

### 3.1.2. Group discussion with Education Managers

The team had a group discussion with education managers of provinces/regions both male and female in these districts, with following talking points and their responses are presented as under:-

**Question: Whether they face the issue of dropout in their concerned district/region? If so, what are major causes of drop out in that specific area?**

District management identified the following factors which causes high dropout at primary and elementary level education:

- i) Poverty
- ii) Illiteracy of parents
- iii) Migration of Parents
- iv) Unawareness of parents about importance of education
- v) Early marriage of girls
- vi) Non-availability of teachers
- vii) Harsh treatment of the teachers
- viii) Multi-grade teaching
- ix) Lack of basic facilities in school
- x) Overcrowded classes in urban areas, due to shortage of space in school building for construction of additional rooms.

Variation in causes of dropout by region was observed in group discussion for example the education managers from KP and Sindh identified multi-grade teaching was one of the major causes of drop out whereas in Tehsil Bahrain, (Swat district) seasonal migration was identified as one of cause of dropout. In Sindh, teachers' absenteeism and harsh behaviour of teachers towards pupils were considered very important causes of dropout. Moreover, better infrastructure and good quality of private sector schools also attract the parents to admit their children in private schools that also causes dropout from public schools in Sindh.

Education managers from Punjab especially Lahore identifies different reasons of dropout which included coeducation at grade-5, shifting of school to new location, migration of parents for livelihood, preference of parents to send their children to NGO run schools due to free meals and transportation facility, poor quality of public schools,

and parental perception about low competency level and poor performance of public school teachers.

The Education managers of district Kasur considered a number of factors responsible for high dropout which included difficult teaching learning materials for students in lower grades, students' absenteeism due to the harvesting season, poor conditions of health, girls helping their mothers in home chores, working children especially in Brick Kilns to support their family, and children getting admission in Madaris (religious schools) because of free education, accommodation and food.

The district education managers in district Mirpur identified numerous reasons of high dropout which included parental preference to enroll their children in private schools, migration of Afghan refugees, less employment opportunities to educated people in rural areas, lack of basic facilities in schools and single teacher schools.

***Question: What is the percentage of dropout in your District?***

District Education Officers (DEOs) said that in their districts dropout rate was around 20 to 30% while AEOs were of opinion that dropout rate was between 40 to 50%. It is fact that dropout is high in primary schools in all the districts, which ranges from 20 to 50% in different areas which is quite alarming.

In district Swat Assistant Education Officers told that in their Tehsil (Bahrain) dropout rate was 90% due to seasonal migration. In Sindh Education Managers could not tell dropout rate in terms of percentage because of variations in dropout with respect to different localities

***Question: Specify the areas i.e. rural or urban where dropout is high.***

The education managers in Balochistan were of the opinion that drop out in rural area was higher than the urban area due to poor facilities and non-availability of teachers in rural areas. The education managers of KP also reported that drop out was high in rural area.

The education managers in Jamshoro district were of the opinion that drop out was high in rural areas because of single or two teachers per school policy and non-availability of facilities whereas in urban areas school buildings were insufficient to accommodate all the children in schools. Education managers of Karachi were of the view that dropout was due to non-availability of physical facilities and deplorable condition of school buildings and posting of senior teachers, who were unable to teach the revised textbooks.

***Question: Whether dropout rate is high in girls 'schools or boys' schools?***

Majority of the education managers of Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab were of the opinion that it could not be specified as to whether dropout was high in girls'

schools or boys' schools; it varied from area to area. However, in some areas, dropout was high in girls' schools as compared to boys due to early marriages of girls.

It is interesting to note that majority of the education managers in Karachi had opinion that drop out was high in boys schools as compared to girls schools because these children work in hotels, factories and workshops to support their families. On the contrary, in district Jamshoro dropout was high in girls schools as compared to boys schools. The dropout was high in district Kasur in boys schools, because parents wanted boys to learn some vocational skill to help parents financially.

***Question: Types of strategies adopted to reduce dropout:***

The district managers in all the provinces told that they had given instructions to the concerned head-teachers of schools to approach the parents to send their children to the schools. They further added that head-teachers of schools had been given clear instructions not to drop name of any student and try to convince the parents to retain their children in schools. They indicated reduction in dropout is depending upon the efforts of teachers and head teachers.

Moreover, schools teachers had been given task to conduct survey regarding out of school children and bring them to the schools. During Universal Primary Education (UPE) campaign, a stipend of Rs.300/- per months was provided to all girls from class 6th to 10th class in Balochistan. Stipend was also provided to girls Rs.300/- per month from grade 6 to 10 class on 80% attendance in school in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial government has conducted survey of out of school children, and head-teachers and teachers have been given instruction to give admission to all the children of 4 years of age in schools. They also informed that textbooks were also provided to all the students free of cost.

The members of Parents Teacher Council (PTC) are mobilized all over the country to bring children back to the schools. Local teachers were involved to bring children back to the schools.

***Question: Impact of strategies used to reduce dropout and identifying the strategy which was the most effective in reducing dropout.***

In response to this question the education managers had divided opinion all over the country. Some of them responded that they have made efforts to bring children back to the schools but some others were of view that parents decision can be reversed due to various reasons such as reason such as poverty, girls help their mothers in home chores, working children to support their families and early marriages of girls.

Different strategies were being used all over the country to reduce dropout. Majority of the managers in all the districts had opinion that door to door visit of the teachers and parent teachers meetings were the most effective methods. If some incentives were given to the children, drop out could be avoided. According to the school management teachers'

motivation might help reducing the dropout and increasing retention of the students as it was strongly linked with emotional stability of the child.

***Question: Steps required to be taken by Federal/Provincial Government to reduce dropout***

Some suggestions were given by district education managers of sample districts keeping in view the causes of dropout in their areas. These suggestions are listed below:

i) The incentives like Zewar-e-Taleem should also be given to the boys so that parents could be motivated to send their boys to schools, stipend of Rs.1000/- may be given to all the children, to address dropout issue due to the poverty of parents.

ii) Stationery and uniforms alongwith free textbooks may also be provided to the enrolled children.

iii) Media campaign may be initiated to convince the parents for sending children to the schools.

iv) Infrastructure may be developed, equally in urban and rural areas and funds may be provided for purchase of land so that capacity of schools to enroll the children could be enhanced.

v) At least five teachers should be provided in each primary school.

vi) Schools building may be extended in accordance with school enrollment.

vii) School councils should be actively involved to motivate parents to reduce dropout.

viii) Community provides land for the construction of the schools but other required facilities such as electricity and sewerage are not available, so the facilities like electricity, sewerage etc. may be provided to the area by the government on priority basis, where land for school is donated.

ix) In many schools teachers sometimes have to perform the task of chowkidar and as a peon, due to non-availability of helping staff which reduced their concentration towards teaching. When children are not taught well that causes dropout. There was no post of sweeper in majority of public primary schools. If toilets are constructed, soon after construction they become nonfunctional due to non availability of sweeper. At least 1-2 non-teaching staff may be provided to each primary school.

x) Schools are given target to increase enrollment about 10% every year, increase in allocated budget may also made accordingly.

xi) It is observed that female teachers teach better in early grades so for grade 1, 2&3 only female teachers should be appointed.

xii) Political interference into school affairs makes it difficult for the management to perform. There is a need to empower education managers and head teachers.

xiii) Teachers are not satisfied with the monitoring mechanism in schools which need drastic modification. MEAs have the power to rate the districts and the whole educational management is just trying to reach top position. To achieve top position and 100% retention rate, they use every fair and unfair means.

On the basis of focus group discussion it can be concluded that there are many reasons of high school dropout and this issue require multi-pronged strategy to be designed by involving all concerned stakeholders.

### *3.2. Opinion of Parents and Community Members regarding Dropout Rate*

The school management committees/school councils play a vital role in the development of schools in Pakistan. In all provinces/regions these committees have been notified. Their roles and responsibilities had also been defined to work with heads of schools.

According to ESR report, 2001, the governance reforms in education in the provinces focus on decentralizing the management of local schools to School Management Committees (SMCs) or Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), or School Councils (SC) which have already been initiated in some of the provinces and reaffirmation of their role in school management aimed at monitoring and curbing teachers' absenteeism. The composition of these committees includes head teacher of concerned school with three parents and three local community members (Jatoi & Hussain, 2010).

The School Council/SMC comprised of community notables and parents whose children are studying in the schools. It was not possible for the The researchersto collect information from parents of those children, who had been dropped from schools because in schools record only one reason was mentioned i.e. migration of parents/shifting of residence. It was therefore appropriate to get information from community notables and parents working as members of School Councils/School Management Committees. The researchers requested the heads of schools to arrange meeting with community members and parents of the children to have group discussion aimed at exploring causes of dropout from parents' point of view who are a major stakeholder. The The researchershad group discussion with members of School Council, SMCs and parent members in almost every school. Their views are summarized as under.

#### *3.2.1. Socio-economic factors*

Discussion with parents/community members was conducted in accordance with the context of socio-economic background of the parents whose children left the schools. Majority of community members were of the opinion that people who live in that particular area, belong to low socio-economic background, they work as labourers on daily wages and cannot afford to send their children to schools. Usually they drop their children from schools either to send them to Madaris for religious education or to send

labour market to earn livelihood for the family. Community representatives opined that merely exemption of tuition fee and free textbooks were not enough to retain their children in schools.

### *3.2.2. Physical factors*

The opinion of parents/community members was also sought regarding physical factors. Majority of parents or community members informed that over-crowded classrooms and non-conducive environment for learning in public schools led to dropout of children, because those parents who can afford the expenses of private schools prefer to send their children to private schools because of better infrastructure and conducive learning environment. In public schools with insufficient space in the school building, students of junior classes were to sit in the open sky.

### *3.2.3. Geographical factors*

While discussing geographical factors, majority of parents and community members were of the view that distance from home to school is one of the major causes of high dropout at primary level. Sometimes transport expenses were unbearable for parents, in some part of the country there were also security issues, especially, where girl schools were located far away in deserted places.

### *3.2.4. Teacher related factors*

Majority of parents/community members reported that shortage of teachers and non-availability of teachers in schools were the major causes of dropout at primary level. School council/SMC members especially in rural areas were of the opinion that single teacher school was one of the main factors towards high dropout rate because when the teacher is absent the school is closed.

### *3.2.5. Family related factors*

Parents play pivotal role in educating their children. Majority of parents and community members stated that poverty, illiteracy, migration of parents from one place to another place in search of job were the main causes of dropout from schools. Migration in search of employment was a continuous phenomena, if they found a school near their workplace, they admitted their children, otherwise it was very difficult for them to keep continue schooling of their children. In some cases schools refused to admit children of frequent migrating families because this affects study of their children and cause dropout.

### *3.2.6. Teaching Learning Material*

It was very interesting to note that community members were fully aware about difficulty of contents of textbooks. Majority of the parents/community members informed

The researcher that new books were difficult and teachers could not teach these books particularly English and mathematics, consequently, children left the schools.

### *3.2.7. Facilities in school*

Community members were of view that lack of basic facilities in public schools especially in rural areas contribute towards high dropout at primary level.

## *3.3. Field Observation*

The researchers visited 12 sample districts of provinces including AJK and Gilgit Baltistan. During field visits, the researchers visited eight primary schools from each sample district and made the following observations.

### *3.3.1. Poor infrastructure of public sector schools*

It was observed in almost all sampled districts that poor infrastructure and lack of physical facilities in public schools were one of the main causes of drop out. In urban areas overcrowded classrooms, deplorable condition of school buildings, lack of facilities and cross ventilation in some public schools functioning in rented buildings were the main factors towards dropout. In district Peshawar, urban schools including boys and girls were visited. It was observed that overcrowded classes were one of the causes of dropout and schools had no capacity to give admission to additional children. Similarly, in district Swat The researchers visited girls schools and observed over-crowded classes. In district Faisalabad it was observed that students were sitting in the open places or in Verandas in miserable condition. In Mirpur (AJK), many school buildings damaged during earthquake in 2005 still have not been repaired. Some public schools are without building and teachers are taking classes under trees. It was further found that many schools displaced after the extension of Mangla Dam were still functioning in mosques. Situation observed in Mirpur (AJK) district was identical to many districts of Sindh and Balochistan.

### *3.3.2. Lack of physical facilities in public schools*

It was observed that physical facilities i.e. furniture, drinking water, toilets for the students and teachers were not available in majority of public schools in almost all sample districts. Due to deplorable public school infrastructure, parents who can afford the expenses of private schools prefer to send their children to private schools. When education managers and teachers were generally asked why parents sent their children to private sector, majority of them informed that private sector provides education in a conducive learning environment having better infrastructure.



### 3.3.3. *Poor quality of teaching in public sector*

It was observed that teachers in public sector were not teaching properly due to lack of training, consequently, parents prefer to send their children to private schools. In Balochistan and Sindh, most of the teachers have political affiliation and education managers cannot take action against them. Due to political affiliation, the teachers do not attend schools and the management are unable to take any action against them as a result the teaching and learning process stops. It was also observed that majority of teachers appointed on political basis do not have the capacity to teach properly.

However, it is encouraging to observe that newly recruited teachers, in Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh and Mirpur (AJK) may bring some changes in the schools environment and their teaching methods seemed better as compared to senior serving teachers. The education managers were found satisfactory with the performance of these newly recruited teachers through NTS.

### 3.3.4. *Migration of parents*

i) Residential societies like DHA where the children of home servants are getting education in public schools but due to frequent migration of these workers from one place to another, their children drop out from schools.

ii) It was observed in Karachi, Lahore and Faisalabad that people who were working in factories, government offices or in labour markets and they did not have permanent residences. Due to high house rent or shifting of their place or employment they migrate from one place to another, consequently children are dropped out from schools.

iii) The highest percentage of dropout is in the rural areas in general and particularly in Punjab province where schools are located near brick kilns. Families working in brick kilns frequently migrate from place to place.

iv) Seasonal migration in districts Swat and Ziarat is one of the main causes of dropout at primary level. Similarly, the families who are working in various fruit farms move from one place to another in search of job resulting in children dropout.

### 3.3.5. *Poverty*

It was observed that poverty was the main cause of dropout at primary level in Pakistan. Several students whose elder brothers or sisters left the schools due to poverty and working with their parents in the labour market to support their family also intend to dropout and to join labour market.

In Peshawar district one student who was studying in grade-II told that his two elder brothers left the school and they were working in a restaurant children in Faisalabad were identified who left school in grade-IV and now working in the potatoes field. The researchers visited that potato field and found three more children who had left the school due to poverty of their parents. The researchers in Peshawar and Faisalabad come across many children who left school and were working in labour market to earn a livelihood for their families.

### *3.3.6. Religious Education*

In rural areas it was observed that most of children of poor families left schools to get admission in Madaris for getting religious education which is free of cost with free meals and boarding.

### *3.3.7. School consolidation or merger policy*

Government of Punjab adopted merger/consolidation policy of public schools, according to which school with low enrolment were merged with nearest school. It was observed that in some areas girls of grade 5 left school because boys and girls were combined in grade 5 and parents did not like their girls to study with boys in schools.

### *3.3.8. Harsh behavior of teachers*

Some school council members on the assurance of anonymity told that in public sector students leave school because of harsh treatment of the teachers. In Karachi students also informed about the harsh behaviour of teachers and frequent corporal punishment.

### *3.3.9. Early marriages of girls*

During the focus group discussion with education managers, they told that there was still customs of early marriages of girls in rural areas. During field visits in the schools some young girls of grade 2 or 3 stated that their elder sisters had left the school either in grade 4 or 5 due to their marriages. Moreover, school council members also endorsed this point of view of early marriages given by education managers.

On the basis of field observations, it can be concluded that there are numerous reasons of high dropout rate at primary schools in Pakistan such as poor infrastructure of public schools, low quality education in public schools, harsh attitude of teachers, poverty and socio- cultural barriers in rural areas.

## **4. Discussion**

This study tried to find out the factors that contribute to drop out at primary level in Pakistan. All the factors found were grouped into socio-economic factors, physical factors, geographical factors, teacher related factors, family related factors, teaching learning

material related factors, administrative factors, child related factors, and factor related to facilities in schools. The study sought the opinion of education managers, teachers and community member regarding dropout at primary level. The perspective of education managers, teachers and community members are reported below.

#### *4.1 Causes of Drop out as perceived by Education Managers*

##### *4.1.1. Socio-Economic Factors*

The socio economic development of a country plays a crucial role in the development of education sector and it helps reduce the dropout. The study found that socio-economic factors led to drop out at primary level. The study revealed that majority of education managers (90%) were of the opinion that low economic development of the country and low per capita income were main factors of high dropout rate at primary level. The study revealed that majority of respondents (74%) stated that shortage of funds at school level was one of important factors contributing to dropout rate because the schools were unable to improve their physical facilities. The study discovered that most of the respondents (83%) were of the view that poor health and mal-nutrition of students were among the main causes of high dropout rate. The findings of this study are supported by other studies such as (Bhatti et al., 2011; Rumberge, 2001; Shami & Hussain (2005); Estevao & Alvares, (2014). The findings regarding economic factors are in the line with economic growth of the country as stated in Pakistan Economic Survey, 2017-2018 Pakistan's economic growth is 5.8% in 2018 owing to low economic growth in the country, spending on education in terms of GDP during the last decade remained about 2.2%. Limited revenue generation through taxation, major portion of the country's budget allocated for military expenditure and debt servicing of the country as well as poor economic growth are the major constraints in allocating 4% of GDP to education as per international recommendation (GoP, PES, 2017-2018; EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015, UNESCO: Khichi, et al, 2015).

##### *4.1.2. Physical Factors*

Physical facilities play an important role in teaching and learning process. These facilities not only provide conducive environment for learning but also have a positive impact on quality of education. Lack of physical facilities in public schools is one the major contributing factors towards high dropout at primary level in Pakistan. Findings of the study indicate that some of the factors related to lack of physical facilities cause dropout at primary level. The study found that majority of respondents (73%) agreed that non-conducive environment of school was one of the important factors of dropout rate at primary level. One of major reasons identified by majority of respondents (77%) was over-crowded class-rooms. Due to non-conducive environment for learning, some of the parents are compelled to withdraw their children from public school and send them to private schools. The findings of this study are aligned with the findings of other studies

conducted by Shami & Husain, (2005): United Nations, (2008): UNICEF, 2005). The findings from field observation and group discussion are also support these findings.

#### *4.1.3. Geographical Factors*

Geographical factors include distance of schools from home and natural calamities. The findings of study indicate that majority of respondents (70%) stated that long distance of schools from home was one of the important factors of dropout rate at primary level. The findings also indicate that about half of respondents (50%) were of the opinion that natural calamities in some localities also compel students to discontinue their studies and lead to dropout. The findings are consistent with the findings reported by (UK Aid, 2017: Swada and Lokshin (2001): (UNICEF, 2010). The findings indicate that geographical factors affect retention of students at primary level. Field observations and group discussion also indicate that geographical factors were main causes of high dropout at primary level in Pakistan.

#### *4.1.4. Teachers Related Factors*

Teachers play a pivotal role in teaching and learning process. The attitude of teachers and their relationship with students influence students' attitude towards schools. A positive student teacher relationship helps students' retention in schools whereas negative student teacher relationship leads to development of a negative attitude towards school in students putting them at risk of dropout. Majority of respondents (88% and 84%) were of the view that shortage of teachers and non-availability of teachers were the main causes of high dropout rate at primary level. Non-willingness of female teachers to serve in rural areas and multi-grade teaching were other contributing factors towards dropout reported by majority of respondents (71-75%). Some other teachers' related factors identified by respondents included harsh attitude of teachers, corporal punishment and teachers' absenteeism. The findings of research studies are consistent with the study conducted by Shami & Hussain (2005), Salfi and Khan (2011), (GoP, National Plan of Action, 2001-2015, United Nations, 2008). Field observations and focus group discussion also support these findings.

#### *4.1.5. Family Related Factors*

Family plays a critical role in the growth and development of children. The findings of various research studies indicate that children from economically sound households are more likely to remain in school, whereas the children from poor families are more likely to dropout from schools. Family related factors such as poverty, illiteracy of parents, migration, large family size, children helping in domestic chores, child labour, low economic return of education, low quality of education, non-relevance of education to job market, low priority towards female education are main determinants of high drop out at

primary level. The findings of study indicate that majority of respondents (88%) affirm that poverty is one of the main causes of high dropout rate at primary level. Most of the respondents (85%) agreed that illiteracy of parents was another major contributing factor towards high dropout rate. Majority of respondents were of the view that migration of parents (80%), child labour (81%), children helping in domestic chores (80%), low priority towards female education (74%), nobody at home to assist in homework (72%), low economic return of education (69%), non-relevance of education to job market (60%) and low quality of education (53%) are other key family factors contributing towards high dropout rate at primary level. Findings of discussions in focus group discussion and data collected through observations supported poverty as a major cause of dropout especially in low income group of population. The findings are supported by studies conducted by Gul, Gulshan and Ali, (2013), Shah, Noor and Ayaz, (2015). Parwaan E-9 ECED (2015) found that illiteracy and poverty were major causes restricting rural parents to take interest in the development of child consequently contribute to dropout of children from schools.

#### *4.1.6. Teaching Learning Material Related Factors*

Teaching/ learning resources are instructional materials through which teaching and learning are facilitated in schools. The purpose of using teaching and learning materials is to assist the teachers in delivering of lessons and helping the students in acquiring knowledge, skills and profiling different abilities and values. The relevance of teaching learning materials to the needs of community and learners is critically important, on one hand it motivates learner to acquire knowledge and skills and on other hand it helps to retain students in school. The findings of study indicate that majority of respondents (72%) affirm that irrelevant teaching learning material was one of the main factors towards high dropout rate a primary level. The findings revealed that lack of relevance of teaching learning material to the needs of the community; difficult language and contents were the main factors towards dropout identified by majority of the respondents. The findings were in consistent with study conducted by Saadi & Saeed (2010), Coleman and Capstick (2012), and HEART (2011). The findings of focus group discussion also support these findings..

#### *4.1.7. Administrative Factors*

Administrative factors also play a critical role in dropout at primary level. Administrative factors such as non-supportive school administration, political interference in posting and transfer of teachers, lack of proper monitoring of schools and non-availability of funds for supervisors to visit schools are some factors affecting quality of education and causing students to drop out. Findings show that about two-third respondents (71%) were of the opinion that political interference in posting and transfer

of teachers was one of the main contributing factors towards dropout rate. Similarly majority of respondents (61%-67%) stated that lack of funds for supervisory visits and lack of proper monitoring are other factors causing dropout. About 61% respondents affirmed that school administration was not supportive which also causes dropout at primary level. However, the education managers while giving their point of view during focus group discussion were partially agreed with these findings. The findings were supported by study conducted by Jatoi & Hussain, (2010) and Government of Pakistan, NEP, (2009).

#### *4.1.8. Factors Related to Facilities in Schools*

Availability of adequate facilities in schools not only influences students' achievement but also improves students' retention. The study identified that some of the factors related to physical facilities in schools cause dropout at primary level. Majority of respondents (86%) agreed that non-availability of separate classroom for each class is one of the main reasons of students leaving public schools at primary level. Majority of respondents stated that non-availability of physical facilities in school such as electricity, drinking water, toilets, boundary wall, playground, computer lab, and library were the main causes of dropout. It can be concluded that school facilities are important in retaining children to schools. Focus group discussion and field observation also supported the opinion of education managers. The findings were consistent with the findings of study conducted by Shami & Hussain, (2004a), (2005b) and (2006c): AEPAM Review report (2015) and Lloyd et al, (2006).

### *4.2. Causes of Drop out as perceived by Teachers*

#### *4.2.1. Socio-Economic Factors*

There are many causes of dropout which vary from province to province and district to district. Study revealed that majority of respondents (83% & 82%) were of the view that low economic development of the country, low per capita income, poor standards of health and mal-nutrition were important factors of high dropout at primary level. These findings are consistent with the findings of education managers, focus group discussion and the study conducted by (Bhatti et al. (2011), Rumberge (2001), Shami & Hussain (2005), Estevao & Alvares, (2014).

#### *4.2.2. Physical Factors*

Physical factors also cause dropout at primary level. Majority of respondents (63%-53%) stated that overcrowded classes and non-conducive environment of the school were important causes of dropout at primary level. The analysis further revealed that about

half of the teachers (47%) were of the opinion that corporal punishment by teachers was one of the causes of dropout rate from public schools. These findings are supported by the findings of education managers, focus group discussion, field observations and the study conducted by Shami & Husain, (2005); United Nations, (2008); UNICEF, (2005).

#### *4.2.3. Geographical Factors*

Primary schools are established to provide education to children of age group of 5-9. Majority of the respondents (67%-44%) had the opinion that long distance of school from home and natural calamities were important factors causing high dropout rate at primary level. The similar comments were given by the participants during focus group discussion. These findings are also supported by study conducted by Shami & Husain, (2005), United Nations, (2008) and UNICEF (2005).

#### *4.2.4. Teacher Related Factors*

Teachers play vital role in development of students to facilitate learning by imparting knowledge and skills. The findings revealed that majority of respondents (76%-73%) affirm shortage of teachers and non-availability of teacher were the main causes of dropout. Findings also indicate that most of the respondents (60%- 57%) were of the view that teachers absenteeism and non-willingness of female teachers to serve in remote areas were important factors causing high dropout at primary level. Findings from group discussion and field observations supported these findings. Moreover these findings were also in consistent with the findings of study conducted by Shami & Hussain (2005), Salfi and Khan (2011), GoP, National Plan of Action, 2001-2015, and United Nations, (2008).

#### *4.2.5. Family Related Factors*

Majority of respondents stated that illiteracy, poverty and child-labour were main causes of dropout at primary level in Pakistan. The findings indicate that most of respondents (81%-78%) were of the view that illiteracy of parents, poverty and migration of parents were important factors causing high dropout at primary level. The findings revealed two-third respondents (69%) stated that child labourer and nobody at home to help doing homework were the main factors towards high dropout rate at primary level. These findings are consistent with the findings of studies conducted by Gul, Gulshan and Ali, (2013), Shah & Shah, Noor and Ayaz, (2015), Parwaan E-9 ECED (2015). Moreover, findings from group discussion and field observations also supported these findings

#### *4.2.6. Teaching Learning Material Related Factors*

Teaching learning material is developed to facilitate teaching learning process. Majority of respondents (60%) stated that teaching learning material was not in accordance with the needs and abilities of the children. Irrelevant and difficult contents of teaching and learning material identified by majority of respondents (65% & 63%)

were other important factors causing dropout at primary level. These findings are supported by the findings of other studies conducted by Saadi & Saeed, (2010), Coleman and Capstick, (2012), and HEART, (2011). The field observations and focus group discussion also supported these findings.

#### *4.2.7. Factors related to facilities in Schools*

Availability of proper physical facilities in school not only create conducive environment and facilitate teaching learning process but also help to increase students retention. Findings of the study indicate that non-availability of physical facilities cause high dropout at primary level. Analysis indicates that majority of respondents (54%-66%) were of the view that non-availability of facilities such as separate classroom for each class, furniture and toilets, play ground, electricity, drinking water, library, and computer lab were the main reasons of high dropout at primary level. These findings are consistent with the findings of earlier studies conducted by Shami & Hussain, (2004a), (2005b) and (2006c): AEPAM Review report (2015) and Lloyd et al., (2006). The field observations and group discussion also supported these findings.

#### *4.2.8. Child Related Problems*

Child is the centripetal of the whole process of teaching and learning in school. Analysis indicates that majority of respondents (61%, 63%, 69%) of had the opinion that learning difficulties of children, mental capabilities and poor health of child were main causes of dropout at primary level in Pakistan.

### *4.3. Causes of Drop out as perceived by Parents and community members*

The parents and community members identified factors which cause high dropout including poverty, illiteracy of parents, migration, students from poor household getting admission in madaris for religious education, overcrowded classrooms ,non-conducive school environment, missing facilities, distance from home to school and security issues especially for girl where schools were located at far away from home in deserted places.

## **5. Conclusions**

The study tried to explore the reasons of dropout at primary level in Pakistan. The perception of education managers, teachers, parents and community members was sought to identify main reasons of dropout at primary level in Pakistan. It is inferred from the findings of the study that there are various factors contributing towards dropout at primary level in Pakistan. It was found that low economic development of the country and low per capita income were the main factors of high dropout rate at primary level. Moreover, the low socio-economic family background of students is one of the major causes of dropout because students dropped out due to poverty and to earn livelihood for



their families. The family related factors such as illiteracy of parents, migration, large family size, children helping in domestic chores, low priority towards female education are other main determinants of high drop out at primary level. The child related factors such as poor health, learning difficulty, mental capability and poor attendance also caused dropout. It was revealed that non-availability of physical facilities in public schools and dilapidated condition of school buildings were other major contributing factors towards high dropout rate at primary level. Long distance to school and natural calamities also cause dropout at primary level. The irrelevant and difficult teaching and learning materials were identified as other determinants of dropout at primary level. Teachers related factors such as harsh attitude of teachers, corporal punishment, teachers' absenteeism, non-availability of teachers and multi-grade teaching were found as major factors leading towards high dropout at primary level. Administrative factors such as non-supportive school administration, political interference in posting and transfer of teachers, lack of proper monitoring of schools and non-availability of funds for supervisors to visit schools were some of factors causing students to drop out.

## **6. Recommendations**

Following are the recommendations based on findings of the study:

1. Socio-economic status of a family directly affects the continuity of schooling of children. Low economic development of country in general and low socio-economic status of families in particular adversely affects students retention in school at primary level. In order to redress the situation of the poor people who live below poverty line, the government should evolve multipronged strategies as income support and cash transfer programs. The poverty reduction programs should be made conditional for poor households to send their children to schools and retain them in schools. Moreover, the government should incentivize primary education for the poor by providing, stationery, uniform, shoes, stipend and mid school meal.
2. School infrastructure needs to be improved by providing basic facilities like drinking water, electricity, toilet, sitting –mats, furniture, and black boards on priority bases. Moreover, the additional classrooms should be built in those primary schools where the classrooms are overcrowded.
3. Long distance to school especially for girls and early grade students is one of the main determinants of dropout, therefore, schools should be established in central location with easy access to majority of students. In case of long distance, transport facility should be provided to the students.
4. School curricula should be revised in view of the actual needs of the society. Teaching and learning material should be developed keeping in view the needs of community and mental level of children.

5. A robust monitoring and supervision system should be evolved to monitor school academic activities and teachers' absenteeism. Local community and parents can play a crucial role in monitoring of schools especially teachers absenteeism, therefore they should be empowered to monitor schools.
  
6. Single teacher school and multigrade teaching are serious challenges at primary level, therefore additional teachers should be provided to these schools. Moreover, an in-service multi-grade teaching training program should be extended to those teachers serving in schools with multi-grade classes.
  
7. Innovative teacher-training programs focusing on content, pedagogical skills, child psychology and activity based teaching strategies for primary school teachers should be introduced. Political interference in posting and transfer of teachers should be eliminated completely to make them professionally independent to perform their teaching duties efficiently.
  
8. Schools should extend effective remedial programmes for those students who have learning difficulty to improve their learning capacity.

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