

Apprehension of Teachers about Enrollment and Absenteeism at Primary Level in Punjab Province

Muhammad Riaz*, Muhammad Safdar**, Shameem Akhtar**, Meraj Bibi**, Aziz Ahmad**

ABSTRACT

The present research was conducted to determine the apprehension of teachers about enrollment and absenteeism at primary level in Punjab Province. The major objectives were to find out fears of teachers and anxiety regarding enrollment and absenteeism of students at primary level. The population comprised all the primary teachers of district Okara and Pakpattan. Sample of 250 teachers were taken from the both districts of Okara and Pakpattan. The data was collected through self-administered questionnaires. The data was analyzed with frequently used techniques of mean and standard deviation. It was concluded that child labor and poverty is the main hurdle in the process of students' enrollment in primary schools. It was also concluded that the strict behavior of teachers, distance from school, ill educated and illiterate people are putting difficulties in the way of students' enrollment and moreover all the above mentioned factors become the cause of absenteeism of students in the primary schools. It was recommended that teachers may try to respond to the problems of students by exploring creative techniques to increase their class attendance. Especially parents may need regular guidance and counseling services for the better future of their young ones.

Key Words: Primary level, Enrollment, Absenteeism

* PhD (Scholar), Institute of Social Sciences, BZU Multan, Pakistan

** M. Phil. Education (Scholar), The University of Lahore, Pakpattan Campus, Pakistan

1. Introduction

It's an acknowledged fact that primary education holds an essential place in Pakistani educational system. Pakistan is unfortunate in this regard and education is neglected since the birth of the country reflected by the low school enrollment. Absenteeism is persistent, habitual and unexplained absence from school which disturbs the dynamic teaching learning process. Absenteeism is becoming very common in school going children, especially in a third world country like Pakistan. There are different causes of absenteeism with different age groups.

No doubt primary education is a fundamental right for every citizen today. There are many factors regarding low enrollment but role of poverty relating low enrollments is discussed in many researches. The literacy rate in Pakistan is not more than 50 percent. Absenteeism has become very common in existing circumstances.

1.1. Research Objectives

- To explore the hurdles in the process of enrollment at primary level
- To find out the fears of primary school teachers regarding enrollment of students at primary level.
- To explore the anxiety of teachers about the absenteeism of students at primary level.

2. Review of Literature

Ahmad (2012) has the view that child labor is one of the major reasons of low enrollment at school especially at primary level. Illiterate and ill-educated parents determine the work choices from the very beginning of childhood of their children. This is one of the great hurdles in the way of enrollment at primary level. Parents encourage their children to work on some hotel or workshop to fulfill their economic needs. On the contrary, free textbooks help to increase enrollment. Consequently, it is a reality that child labor is very common among large poor families and male children.

Whereas parents send their children for labor in the field and harvest the crops and earn wheat for their food needs. In this whole process, they took help from their young ones, and took their children from schools for a long period of time. This becomes the cause of low enrollment as well as absenteeism of students from schools. It creates problems for teachers. Parents do all this because they cannot afford their family expenditure which lead to low enrollment. Generally at primary level parents do not provide even stationary to their children. That's because there prevailing poverty everywhere in the country.

Baluch & Shahid (2008) describe the effect of household on primary school enrollment. Family size, dwelling ownership problems, huge amount of expenses on education, literacy ratio and dependency ratio are factors which effect the school enrollment. In spite of all the above mentioned factors, there are also many other factors related to school enrollment. To encourage children for primary education, there is a dire need for the economic support of the poor families who are dependent on their young one i.e. of the age of school going children.

Khan and Yasmeen (2010) in their research deal with the impact of educational devolution on school enrollment in both urban and rural areas at primary level, mostly the rural areas and low literacy rate districts of Punjab. Dropout may be a real cause created by long absenteeism from school by the primary school student; it may become the cause of low enrollment. According to researchers, universalization of primary education can be assured by positive effect of devolution plan in the field of education. Devolution plan can play a vital role in the control of absenteeism of students from schools and enrollment of students in the schools in a convenient way.

Cook & Ezenne (2010) described that influence of personal, educational and community factors are the root causes of student absenteeism at primary level especially in rural areas. The casual factors do not find their genesis in the family only but also in schools, the communities, and the students themselves. Students' personal motivation toward education can lessen the absenteeism of students at primary level. Teachers' motivation can encourage to students to avoid the absenteeism but it's a difficult task for the teachers as well as the students.

Mobin, Shakoor, Habib & Qureshi (2012) illustrate that absenteeism is becoming a common problem in many countries all over the world. It is the main root cause of dropout in schools at primary level. The major reason of absenteeism is poverty in Pakistan. Machingambi & Wadesango (2011) studied about the reasons of absenteeism in primary schools and found that lack of subject interest, poor teaching, unfavorable learning environment and too much socialization are the causes of student absenteeism at primary level.

Bashir et al. (2011) narrated that the Government should decrease prices for consumer like food article and should increase Government expenditure in terms of education and health for better enrolment in Pakistan. Enrollment of students in an institution provides huge revenue to the institute at higher education level but at primary level it's a beneficial investment for a better nation in future. An institution gives positive feedback to the economy of a country and helps in the creation of new jobs in the country for the skillful force. In another study, Nazir (2012) revealed that enrollment of students can be enhanced by providing job opportunities to those who have completed their degrees as well as improving facilities in the institutions like polytechnic institute of Pakistan. The government and stakeholders in education can be increased the enrollment of students at primary level by providing basic facilities of life to the young ones at their door steps.

3. Methodology

The present study was a descriptive survey research to explore the apprehension of the teachers about the enrollment and absenteeism of students at primary level. The population of the study comprised all the primary school teachers in District Okara, Vehari and Pakpattan. The researchers collected data from the sample of 250 primary teachers to account their fears and apprehension about the enrollment and absenteeism at primary level. As the research is descriptive survey in nature, researchers used a questionnaire and conduct interviews with open ended questions from the respondents for data collection from teachers. To make the questionnaire valid, the researchers prepared items of questionnaire and put them into practice on a small sample of 30 primary teachers. The corrections are made after refinement; ultimately 15 items were finalized for the

questionnaire. Questionnaires were distributed to the primary teachers and also asked open ended questions simultaneously at the spot. The open ended questions are related to the enrollment and absenteeism of students. The data was collected in the month of May and June, 2015. The data collected through questionnaire was put in SPSS 17 and make the analysis of the data. For the purpose of data analysis mean score and standard deviation were used.

4. Data Analysis

The data was collected in the month of May and June, 2015 by the researchers visiting to the respondents of the study.

Table 1: Hurdles in the process of enrollment

S. No.	Statement	Mean	SD
1	Distance from school is a hurdle in the enrollment of students	4.04	1.219
2	Child labor and poverty is a major obstacle in the process of enrollment	4.13	1.241
3	Illiterate community enhances difficulties for enrollment of students	3.79	1.114
4	Enrollment campaign affected by a single teacher in a school	3.73	1.257
5	Lack of physical facilities in school discourage parents and students	3.61	1.266

Table 1 indicates the hurdles in the process of enrollment. The mean score of the data increases from 3.61 to 4.13 and the standard deviation goes from 1.114 to 1.266 that shows views of the respondents of the study that child labor and poverty is the main hindrance in the process of enrollment. Distance from school is another factor that makes a hurdle in the way of enrollment of students in the school. Ill educated and illiterate community enhances the difficulties that come in the process of enrollment. In a single teacher school, enrollment campaign is affected to a great extent. Lack of physical facilities in government schools diverts the consideration of parents and students toward the private schools.

Table 2: Fears of primary teachers about low enrollment

S. No.	Statement	Mean	SD
6	Low enrollment leads to the rationalization of teachers which create difficulties for them.	3.71	1.133
7	Due to low enrollment, teacher's increments stop.	2.95	1.489
8	Teachers are transferred due to low enrollment of students.	3.10	1.387
9	Teachers are fined for low enrollment.	2.94	1.368

In table 2 the high mean score and standard deviation (3.71 & 1.489) respectively shows that low enrollment in the school lead to the rationalization of the surplus seats in the school that is an embarrassing situation for the primary school teachers. Teachers are under depression about the serious threat of stopping their annual increment due to low enrollment. The low mean score and standard deviation (2.94 & 1.133) shows that teachers are fined for low enrollment by competent authorities and low enrollment also become the reason of rationalization for which teachers are confronted with difficulties.

Table 3: Absenteeism of students

S. No.	Statement	Mean	SD
11	Farogh e Taleem fund is the cause of absenteeism of students.	2.91	1.414
12	Health problems are serious issue regarding absenteeism.	3.69	1.180
13	Crop Harvesting increases absenteeism in school.	3.98	1.167
14	Local festivals and Urs is a reason of absenteeism in school.	3.73	1.136
15	Teachers strict attitude become the cause of absenteeism in school.	3.52	1.432

Table 3 points out the anxiety among the primary teachers about the students' absenteeism. The mean score increases from 2.91 to 3.98 and standard deviation increases from 1.136 to 1.432 that shows the collection of farogh-e-taleem fund from students is the main cause of students' absenteeism from school. Crop harvesting season is the key factor that increases the absenteeism of students from school. Local festivals and Urs also play a vital role in the absenteeism of students from schools. Finally, teachers' strict attitude and health care problems causes the absenteeism in primary schools.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The study concluded the different factors that are the key causes of low enrollment and students' absenteeism from primary schools. Child labor and poverty is the main hindrance in the process of students' enrollment in schools. In most of the places, schools are in far furlong areas in the region. Ill educated and illiterate community causes difficulties in the way of students' enrollment. Majority of the students and parent attracted toward the private schools due to the physical facilities and for good results. Primary teachers have many apprehensions regarding low enrollment and absenteeism of students in the school i.e. rationalization, stoppage of increment, teachers' transfer and fine. Teachers are much worried about the absenteeism of students. The key factors in the absenteeism of students are; farogh-e-taleem fund, health problems, crop harvesting season, local festivals and Urs and teachers' strict attitude. Majority of the teachers have the view that farogh-e-taleem fund is the cause of absenteeism for majority of the students because they belong to poor families. When the primary teachers make stress for farog-e-taleem fund, their parents threaten the teachers about leaving the school. Teachers are much stress by the authorities to increase the enrollment of students and lessen the absenteeism of students, otherwise, they will be fined, transferred and they will not be able to get their annual increment.

6. Findings

The present study found that the child labor, poverty, schools have long distances from students' residence, ill educated and illiterate community enhances the difficulties in the way of students' enrollment. The study also found that students and their parent feel attraction toward private schools due to a number of reasons; one of them is the physical facilities. It is found that school funds, harvesting season, local festivals, Urs and teachers' strict behavior causes students' absenteeism in school.

The study found that the harvesting of crops is a major cause of absenteeism in primary schools.

The study also found that teachers are transferred due to low enrolment in primary schools.

7. Recommendations

1. Teachers may try to respond to the problems of student absenteeism by exploring creative techniques to increase class attendance.
2. Parents may need regular guidance and counseling services for the better future of their children.
3. It may require from the authorities and stakeholders to provide effective student support in terms of guidance and counseling.

8. References

1. Ahmad, H. (2012). The impact of public school enrollment on child labor in Punjab, Pakistan. *The Lahore Journal of Economics*, 17(2). pp.1-34.
2. Baluch, M. H., & Shahid, S. (2008). Determinants of enrollment in primary education, Pakistan. *Economic and Social Review*, 46(2). pp.161-20.
3. Khan, A. M. & Yasmeen, S. (2010). Impact of Devolution on Enrollment Rate at Primary School Level in selected Districts of the Punjab. *Journal of Elementary Education*, 21(2). pp. 35- 52.
4. Cook, L. D. & Ezenne, A. (2010). Factors influencing students' absenteeism in primary school in Jamaica: Perspectives of community members. *Caribbean Curriculum*, 17, pp. 33-57.
5. Mobin, K. Shakoor, S. Habib, F. & Qureshi, T (2012). Absenteeism in school going children in Rehri Goth, LandhiTown, Karachi. *Biomedica*, 28, pp. 95-97.
6. Machingambi, S. Wadesango, N. (2011). Causes and structural effects of student absenteeism. *kamla-raj, jsoc sci*, 26(2). Pp.89-97.
7. Bashir, F., Nawaz, S., Ullah, R., Arshad, M., Arshad, M., Bagum, M., Sandila, M. & Raza, J. (2011). Attainment of higher enrollment rates in Pakistan. *Australian Journal of Business and Management Research*, Vol.1 (7), 17-29.
8. Nazir, S. (2012). Trends of students' enrollment in newly introduced technologies in polytechnic institutes during 2000-2007. *International J. Soc. Sci. & Education*. Vol.2 (3). Pp. 294-305.