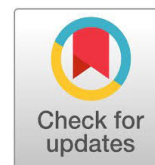
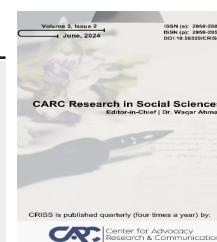




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The Educational Problems, their Causes, and Remedial Measures for the Community-based Schools of Yohanabad, Lahore

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at identifying the educational issues prevalent in the community-based schools of Yohanabad Lahore, pursue the reasons behind them and offer some recommendations, thus, this research form the qualitative exploration type. Gaining feedback from five schools, major problems such as lack of finance, lack of amenities, shortage of qualified teachers, and students' poor preparation in academic processes were identified. Furthermore, the learning achievements and participation level of students and teachers are characterized by high attrition rates, which are caused by low community culture of education, parents' disengagement, and weak school polices. The key recommendations from the study include calling for higher financing prospects, more opportunities for continual training of teachers, changes in organizational remunerations according to performance, and community engagement to highlight the importance of parental involvement in learning. It is important to make radical improvements for community-based schools in Pakistan and focus on the education policies to create positive atmosphere in education institutions and proper development of students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of the community-based schools, which were established with the benign motives of sidelining the illiteracy around the world, is accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 26 (1962) that enunciates right to education as one's fundamental right. The kind of institutions that focus on providing education to the poor children, including those of the brick makers and farmers, is to offer them a chance to have an enhanced

education. However, these schools face so many challenges ranging from administrative challenges to pedagogy problems which affect the education quality. While some institutions have come to see these challenges as unique features of the current environment that cannot be overcome, thus effectively limiting growth and imagination, this study stresses that schools must actively engage these issues. Drawing upon the contexts of community-based schools in Yohanabad, this thesis explores the complexities entailing from multiple angles within administration, teaching-learning practices, and learners themselves. Using evidence from educators, administrators, and stakeholders, the study outlines how schools can overcome their barriers. Additionally, this research aims to go beyond the ordinary academic improvement, bettering not only the academics of community-based schools yet also developing students' co-curricular endeavor, leadership, and other community-focused initiatives to transform the learners not only to be academic achievers yet also responsible and empowered citizens.

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It is noteworthy that community-based schools are mostly founded and funded by organizations such as UNICEF and NGOs and their purpose is to fulfill the educational deficit in communities where there are no schools or inadequate access to education based on formal educational structures, for example in the rural areas of Pakistan. These schools are a source of light for communities like the Christian community in Pakistan; they fight major vices like child labor and illiteracy. These institutions work hard on their funding and infrastructural problems which most of the time are reflected to the students showing signs of congested classroom and session facilities. Although community-based schools currently type fairly advanced shortage of educated personnel and lack international volunteers observed in other countries, Pakistani schools go on insisting and empower their students to study for a better future in spite of their limited means.

The community-based schools stand as one of the important responsibilities in the Pakistan that educate its young generation and strengthen the economic future of the country. On the one hand, this is the quest to ensure that every child was given a chance at a better future; on the other, this missionary activity of education responds to the overall civilizing mission to train the nation for a more productive existence in accordance to the needs of the economy. The role of education in national economic development cannot be overemphasized thus from the understanding of Alwi, Bin Raof and Saleem (2019), educational brings knowledge and skills which is vital for development of a nation. One of the major practical implications of continued industrialization in Pakistan is the country's scarcity of skilled labor force which consequently limits its maximum exploitation of new technology and industrial systems. This leads to the dependence on the importation of skills and expertise, which reduces the employment rate for citizens, brings down their wages, and slows down the overall GDP. In this way, ensuring a comprehensive education for the populace can make Pakistan develop a capable workforce that will enable the nation to take advantage of technological developments and foster economic growth, improve living standards, and create a prosperous futuristic future for the country. Therefore, presumption, care, and growth of community-based schools can be identified as critical needs for Pakistan's all-round progress.

Objective

- Recognize issues in community-based schools.
- Understand why these problems occur and their effects on education.
- Determine solutions to address these challenges.

Research Questions

- What challenges do community-based schools encounter?
- Why do these issues arise, and how do they affect education?
- How can these issues be addressed?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Antrop-Gonzalez and Jesus (2006) underline the significance of “critical care” in Latino urban community-based schools. This care involves fostering supportive environments and culturally relevant teaching methods. Smith and Sobel (2010) advocate for “place-based education,” urging schools to connect students with their local communities and nature. Both studies stress the role of authentic experiences in enhancing student learning and performance. Research by Chohan and Qadir (2013) underscores high rates of academic failure in urban primary schools in Pakistan. Tatlah et al. (2014) discuss the pivotal role of school leadership, highlighting that transformative leadership positively influences student achievement. Baker and Jones (2015) suggest that parental involvement positively impacts student motivation. On the other hand, Iqbal et al. (2017) and Khan (2018) also revealed a range of systemic barriers in the education sector of Pakistan including the issues of funding and gender. Ali et al., (2019) have also looked at how poverty impacts education and how poor minorities are more affected. Drawing on a sample of secondary students, Murtaza (2021) explores how the primary caregiver's attitudes affect students' achievement and concludes that family relations play a critical role. Nonetheless, the current study extends the knowledge of inhibitors of community-based schools by exploring the complexity of factors that include family background and community and systemic factors that intertwine and contribute to students' poor performance.

There are numerous complexities in implementing changes to the small schools in reforming schools in urban areas. Bureaucratic policies or structural barriers, leadership practices and the lack of cultural understanding of children of immigrants, from school staffs are further described by Antrop-Gonzalez and Jesus (2006). Likewise, Smith and Sobel (2010) pointed out that while there was increased interest in place-based education, the focus on testing, lack of teacher education, and lack of understanding of place-based education hindered both its enhancement and implementation. On the other hand, poverty, inadequate resources, poor instructional approaches, and culture are said to be some of the determinant factors to primary school poor performance by Chohan and Qadir (2013). Furthermore, Tatlah et al. (2014) also urge the focus on school leadership, noting that leaders play a pivotal role in students' success and their leadership is central to the progress of achievement. However, Baker and Jones (2015) highlighted some of the barriers that parents face that limits their contribution towards their children schooling for instance; lack of time, lack of resources, communication, along with other drawbacks such as the parents' bad prior experiences with schooling. The increased competition and decreased public sector funding within the broader educational context in Pakistan needs to be considered as well. Referring to the major challenges that hinder education in the respective countries, Iqbal et al. (2017) and Khan (2018) recognize important problems related to poverty and funding, gender equity, curriculum issues, and corruption. Ali et al. (2019) discuss the matter in more detail regarding the connection between poverty and education proved by the idea that the economic instabilities prevent

children, especially girls, to have educational rights. All these challenges are further compounded by other burning social and political questions such as, social injustice and discrimination, political instabilities, and affect of climate-related disasters which always push poor communities more to the edge. Finally, Murtaza (2021) provides insights into the impact of the styles of parenting, including uninvolved and authoritative; the author establishes that parents play a significant part in determining the academic outcomes of students.

In classroom management and teaching, Antrop-Gonzalez and Jesus (2006) underscore the importance of the critical care approach, which involves integrating culturally responsive decision-making processes in schools, practicing community engagement with families and communities, and recognising and attending to children's social, emotional, and learning profiles. In accordance with Smith & Sobel, 2010, PBE (place-based education) should be adopted because the institutions should begin with the identification of doable local initiatives, subsequently, include them into the curriculum of the institution, and also correspond to the role and expertise of the place. They also emphasize on the necessity of training and professional development of teachers in order to enhance the quality of PBE. Chohan & Qadir (2013) suggest extensive ways to solve academic issues; they also consider the solution in terms of going to the cultural and economical roots, changed teaching methods, girls education, and condition of the schools. According to Tatliah et al. (2014), the transformational leadership is a journey to transformation within schools that comprises of visionary leadership, the creation of collaborative cultures, modelling high expectations and interactive communication. Baker and Jones (2015) emphasise that parent engagement is one of the most crucial components in the process of learning and suggest several kinds of parental support that include emotional support, supportive communication, volunteer work, Shows an interest in the child's education and engagement in school, and involvement in decision-making. In the same manner, Iqbal et al. (2017) stressed that Pakistan needed to increase investment in education, having new governance and curriculum, investing more in training teachers, and equalizing education opportunities for girls and boys. Regarding the poverty reduction and education, Ali et al., (2019) outlined economic community reform, social community reform and environmental community reform. In a similar manner, Murtaza (2021) has pointed out that the positive kind of parenting referred to as democratic not only enhances the motivation of children but also their attitudes towards learning and ultimately their performance.

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study employs an interpretivist approach and utilizes several qualitative research methods using purposive sampling. The research process included qualitative data gathering about teachers at the selected school and focus groups with students in grades 8–10. This flexibility, combined with the use of constructive questions, allowed researchers to enter into depths of the school-related problems, understanding their root causes and

potential solutions from both teachers and students' points of view. This involvement created a climate of confidence within the participants, and made it possible for concerns to be voiced and even the challenges faced in school and possible solutions reflected upon.

The use of the student focus groups proved useful in ensuring there was a variety of feedback given especially between students and the faculty whose ages are different. The inclusion of the youth provided the research with fresh ideas and perceptive that post generation x might not have considered. By employing focus group discussions, compared to one-on-one interviews, the author was able to gather data expeditiously and at the same time was able to gain student insights that were wide ranging yet in-depth.

A Thematic Analysis methodology was used by the researcher to compare and contrast the patterns and themes in the interviews respondents concerning educational obstacles, and their possible causes and resolutions. This methodological approach allowed developing and interpreting the ideas and concerns of the faculty and students, thus the use of such approach allow the researcher to make useful comparison of his/her view with the institutional ones.

Data Presentation and Findings

Head Teachers

Community-based schools, including those in Yohanabad, grapple with significant challenges that hinder the delivery of quality education. Foremost among these challenges is the acute shortage of funds. Many principals highlighted the pervasive issue of insufficient financial support, noting that only a handful of schools receive meager backing from larger organizations. This financial constraint severely curtails their capacity to enhance the educational system or even maintain basic standards. This can be seen through the statement of one of the head teachers:

"Every community-based school in Pakistan faces the problem of not having sufficient funds. The schools receiving support from major organizations are few in number. And the funds received, although stable, are modest."– (HT 1)

Compounding the funding issue is the concern over the quality of educators in these institutions. Several principals emphasized that community-based schools often employ teachers who are either unqualified or inadequately trained for their roles. Such a deficit in teaching expertise not only diminishes the potential impact of available resources but also compromises the overall quality of education.

"The quality of education is reduced due to the lack of qualified teachers in community-based schools."– (HT 2)

Additionally, another pressing issue brought to the forefront by these educational leaders concerns the rate of student absenteeism and drop-outs. Continuous student absences disrupt the learning process, with many students failing to grasp essential concepts and falling behind in their academic progression. This chronic issue exacerbates the educational challenges faced by community-based schools, perpetuating a cycle of academic underachievement and

incomplete learning.

“Many students that we cater to perform poorly due to the frequent day offs which prevent them from following along with the syllabus and having the time to properly prepare for their examinations. It also results in them not being prepared to move up to the higher classes.” – (HT 3)

Community-based schools grapple with insufficient funds due to two primary reasons: parental reluctance to pay fees, often stemming from financial hardships, and a lack of external support from NGOs or the government. As a result, these schools often operate with limited resources, unable to offer competitive salaries or professional development opportunities to attract qualified teachers.

“The most foundational reason for these schools being short of funds is the unwillingness of the parents to pay school fees despite the low cost implemented to cater to our students, all of whom come from low-income families. In addition to this, there are no stable external support either from the government or other organizations. This creates a financial gap which is extremely difficult to fill.” – (HT 1)

Consequently, many educators in these institutions lack proper qualifications, further compromising the quality of education.

“Due to the lack of opportunities and funds, teachers at community-based schools are unable to access professional development, making them both unqualified and underqualified. We do not hire more qualified teachers because we cannot afford them.” – (HT 2)

Additionally, the high rate of student absenteeism and drop-outs was attributed to parental neglect or work commitments, leaving children unsupervised and allowing them to skip school without repercussions.

“As most parents are working parents, there is no one to keep the students in check which results in them bunking school. Many parents also willingly allow their children to skip school.” – (HT 3)

To address the challenges faced by community-based schools, several solutions were proposed. Firstly, schools should implement strict fee collection policies and actively promote their institutions through fundraising and advertising to bolster funds.

“Schools need to follow strict procedures for fee collection and consequences which would prompt parents to pay school fees. They should also promote their schools with the aim of receiving external funds.” – (HT 1)

Additionally, there's a pressing need for schools to champion teacher professional development by actively encouraging educators and participating in such initiatives themselves. This includes the government and educational organizations expanding opportunities for professional growth.

“Before encouraging the teaching staff, the school heads themselves should pursue professional development as to become role models and provide their teachers with proper guidance that they need. Then they should encourage the teaching staff to also pursue development. Furthermore, the teachers should also be given more opportunities for professional development, being catered to by the government

and the educational institutes that they work for.” – (HT 2)

Lastly, there's a crucial need to enhance parental involvement in their children's education. Schools must educate parents about their vital role in supporting their children's academic journey to ensure student success.

“Once the child starts school the parents think their responsibility has ended. This causes them to be inattentive and irresponsible towards their child's education. Parents must be taught the significance of their role.” – (HT 3)

Teachers

Teachers in community-based schools have raised significant concerns about foundational gaps in early education. Many educators have observed that students frequently lack essential reading and writing skills by the time they transition to higher grades. This deficiency compels teachers to divert from the standard curriculum, dedicating valuable time to bolstering foundational skills rather than advancing the intended syllabus. As one teacher noted, the absence of a solid educational foundation in younger years forces educators to prioritize remedial education, hampering the seamless progression of students through their academic journey.

“We often find that the students that we receive have failed to build a proper foundation in the lower classes. They are unable to properly read or write. This forces us to spend time on fixing this instead of on our own syllabus.” – (T1)

Complicating matters further is the persistent issue of high teacher turnover in community-based schools. The frequent departures create staffing challenges, leaving remaining teachers to fill roles beyond their expertise. This staffing shortfall often results in instructors being assigned subjects they are unfamiliar with, further jeopardizing the quality and consistency of education. Such circumstances underscore the multifaceted challenges faced by educators and students alike in these institutions.

“High teacher turnover forces the hand of the administration to appoint inexperienced teachers to teach subjects they are not qualified for. This further lowers the quality of education at the institution.” – (T2)

Teachers in community-based schools identified several issues affecting the quality of education. They pointed out that parental pressure and lenient school management policies often result in students being promoted without mastering foundational concepts. This, combined with the presence of underqualified or unmotivated teachers, leads to significant academic gaps in students' learning.

“There is an absence of a set criteria for promoting students to the higher classes. Every child is promoted despite their performance due to parental pressure and the lenience of the management. The low qualification of the teachers at the lower grade levels also results in the failure of ensuring that students are building proper academic foundations.” – (T1)

Additionally, the frequent turnover of teachers was attributed to low salaries and perceived disrespect from school administration, with educators feeling undervalued and unappreciated in their professional roles.

"The low salaries cause many teachers to leave. This is also accompanied by mistreatment from management cause them to feel disrespected and underappreciated which causes high teacher turnover." – (T2)

Ensuring a robust academic foundation for students requires several key measures. Institutions must prioritize hiring qualified and competent staff, ensuring they possess the necessary skills and dedication to prevent academic gaps. Additionally, management should establish unambiguous promotion policies solely based on academic proficiency, guaranteeing that promotions are not influenced by external pressures. Teachers play a pivotal role in this process; they need to be diligent and committed in their teaching approach, ensuring students derive maximum benefit from their lessons.

"It needs to be ensured that the institutions develop and implement a strict criterion which make sure that when students are promoted, they possess the required academic skills. It also needs to be ensured that qualified teachers are qualified. The teachers themselves also need to realise the importance of their role and fulfil their roles with sincerity and commitment." – (T1)

A teacher emphasized the school's responsibility in maintaining academic standards, suggesting that both the administration and teachers must be proactive in upholding the quality of education.

"The management should showcase more appreciation and respect for the teachers. This sort of relationship will not only encourage teachers to stay at the institution longer but also establish an atmosphere of growth." – (T2)

Students

Community-based schools face significant challenges that hinder effective education, as highlighted by two focus groups. The first group underscored the severe lack of essential facilities like science labs and libraries, which impedes students' comprehension of scientific processes. Without visual aids and hands-on experiences, many students resort to rote memorization, limiting their critical thinking skills.

"Many community-based schools lack practical facilities such as laboratories and libraries. Because of this, the understanding of the subject is limited for us as the experiments that are being taught, we are unable to see in practice. This has an even deeper effect on the students who depend on seeing for better understanding. Due to this, the only option left is rote memorisation as the books are the only sources of knowledge for us." – (FG1)

The second group pinpointed the adverse effects of frequent teacher turnover on their academic progress. Constantly changing teachers disrupts learning continuity, often leading to rushed syllabi and gaps in understanding. Additionally, students lamented the lack of support from their parents and community, who frequently discourage pursuing education, perpetuating a cycle of limited aspirations and diminished educational outcomes.

"Many teachers leave in the middle of a school year and this disturbs academics for us. It also causes us to lose time and at the end we have to rush through certain chapters which leaves

us with only a partial understanding of them. In addition to this, our education is affected by the discouragement we receive from the community as well as from our own parents. Having failed to create a future through education, they tell us we will have the same results. Daughters will be married off and it is better to have son earn rather than waste money on their education. This disheartens the children and often results in the students completely giving up on education." – (FG2)

Community-based schools face challenges primarily due to financial constraints and limited space. These schools often operate with minimal funds, prioritizing essential educational materials like textbooks over additional facilities such as laboratories and libraries. Many are situated in compact structures, further limiting their ability to expand or provide expansive amenities. Additionally, there's a prevailing sentiment among both schools and parents that extra-curricular activities detract from academic focus, thereby relegating them to a secondary priority. As one student from the focus group noted, these activities are perceived as distractions rather than enriching components of education.

"One major reason for the lack of facilities is the small size of the campuses accompanied by the lack of finances. The lack of extra-curricular activities is due to the mindset that they are distractions and unnecessary. Many institutions and communities fail to realise their importance." – (FG 1)

Another significant concern highlighted by the focus groups revolves around the frequent turnover of teachers. The underlying issue appears to be the inadequate salary structures prevalent in community-based schools. This financial limitation, coupled with societal attitudes towards education, results in an environment where educators are undervalued. Many parents and community members, potentially influenced by their own limited educational backgrounds or low-wage employment, may not fully grasp the transformative potential of education. This lack of appreciation for the value of schooling creates a cycle where teachers are undercompensated and undervalued, leading to instability in staffing and educational delivery.

"We believe that low salaries cause many teachers to leave. We are discouraged by the society because they truly believe that education is useless and by advising against it, they believe that they are doing what is good for their youth. They hold that their failure will be experienced by their children as well." – (FG 2)

The first focus group emphasized the importance of enhancing school facilities, such as laboratories, and incorporating educational trips to bolster students' academic understanding allowing a move away from rote memorization. A student from this group stressed the need for practical and experiential learning to deepen comprehension.

"One way of having facilities despite small campuses is by creating multipurposed classrooms. This would assist in achieving better results by enhancing our understanding. Educational field trips would help students grasp a practical understanding of the subjects and assist a move away from rote memorisation." – (FG1)

Meanwhile, the second group proposed solutions to address teacher turnover by advocating for contractual

agreements to ensure educators remain throughout the academic year. Additionally, they recommended community engagement initiatives, including conferences, to raise awareness among the parents and the wider community on the significant role of education in shaping brighter futures for students and enhancing overall community literacy rates.

“When hired, teachers should be bound by a contract that requires them to stay at the institution for a set time. The schools should also plan conferences aimed at educating the community on the pivotal role of education in helping their youth move towards success.” – (FG2)

Discussion

The research findings resonate with the concept of critical care in education proposed by Antrop-Gonzalez and Jesus (2006), emphasizing the importance of parental involvement in the education system. While the original framework mainly targeted students, families, and the community, this study extends the focus to the staff, particularly highlighting teachers' need for encouragement and respect. Collaborative leadership in schools is suggested as a solution, ensuring teachers feel valued and included in decision-making processes. A significant finding underscores the adverse impact of limited in-class and extra-curricular activities on students' achievements. This observation aligns with Smith and Sobel (2010), who promote the integration of place-based education programs in the curriculum. Recommendations from students, such as visits to local museums and historical sites, reflect the need to foster a deeper connection between students and their communities. Additionally, the research identifies a concerning lack of foundational education at the elementary level, echoing concerns raised by Chohan and Qadir (2013). While both studies highlight ineffective teaching methods as a contributing factor, this research delves deeper into issues such as teacher qualifications, parental pressure, and school policies that contribute to this gap.

The study also emphasizes the pivotal role of effective school leadership, aligning with Tatlah et al.'s (2014) assertion that good leadership is crucial for student success. Leadership gaps in community-based schools are linked to various educational challenges, including inadequate academic foundations for students and high teacher attrition rates. Moreover, the research corroborates Baker and Jones' (2015) emphasis on the positive influence of parental involvement on academic achievement, although it expands this perspective to include community support. The findings highlight the need to raise awareness among parents and communities about their roles in supporting educational outcomes. Several research findings align with Iqbal et al.'s (2017) observations, particularly concerning teacher training and high dropout rates attributed to poverty. Khan's (2018) concerns about funding, infrastructure, rote memorization, and teacher training in community-based schools are also echoed. Similarly, Ali et al.'s (2019) focus on poverty as a root cause of educational challenges finds support in this study. However, while Ali et al. primarily address poverty as a standalone issue, this research

suggests that improving the educational system could indirectly uplift impoverished communities by offering better opportunities to the youth. Finally, Murtaza's (2021) emphasis on parental attitudes and their influence on academic achievements is echoed in this study, albeit with a distinct focus on institutional interactions and parental support within the educational context.

Limitations

This study delved into the intricacies of community-based schools located in Yohanabad, Pakistan, specifically targeting students from grades 8 to 10 and their corresponding educators. It deliberately excluded data from students in grade 7 or below, as well as other departments within these educational institutions. Such a focused approach, while offering specific insights, might not capture the broader nuances present in other similar schools. Furthermore, the research spanned only a year, which posed limitations on the extent of interviews and focus groups that could be conducted. Given its qualitative nature, the study heavily relied on individual perspectives and opinions, making its findings more interpretative than empirically definitive. This qualitative framework implies that the conclusions drawn are not rigid or universally applicable. Instead, they serve as flexible observations that can be further refined, augmented, or even reconsidered in light of subsequent research or findings.

4. CONCLUSION

This study pinpointed the educational challenges faced by community-based schools in Pakistan and offered solutions to enhance the education quality for underprivileged children. While these solutions need adoption by schools, it's crucial to continually update them. As society evolves and new research emerges, these solutions should be reassessed. This research, while comprehensive, doesn't cover all educational issues, leaving room for further studies by other researchers. Additionally, similar studies can be carried out in different countries, each with its unique challenges and solutions due to varying cultures and traditions.

Recommendations

The solutions derived from this research are as follows:

- To fix the issue of funds, parental cooperation in fee payment should be encouraged and conduct promotional events for fundraising.
- As the lack of parental attention and involvement leads to high student drop out, parents should be made aware of their pivotal role in their child's education.
- To train teachers, they should be actively encouraged, and investment should be made in the form of free training programs and scholarships.
- To ensure a strong academic foundation, institutions should establish strict academic standards, and resist pressure from parents for leniency.

- To reduce high teacher drop-out, minimum wage should be raised, and a positive work environment should be promoted.
- By Increasing funding, utilizing available space, and building classrooms that are multifunctional, institutions can provide necessary facilities to students.
- The problem of inadequate in-class and extra-curricular activities can be solved by integrating academically beneficial activities into academics to deepen understanding and foster critical thinking.
- The issue of parental discouragement can be resolved by educating the community on the benefits of education and opportunities it provides to the youth.

Conflict interests

The authors has declared that no competing interests exist.

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