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Keywords: Home, School, Connection, Parents, Involvement

Authors:

Nasar Khan: (Corresponding Author)

Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Buner, KP, Pakistan.

(Email: khannasar922@gmail.com)

Faria Ibad Mirza: Lecturer, Department of Sociology, ARID Agriculture University, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan.

Usra Ahmad: Lecturer, Department of Psychology, University of Buner, KP, Pakistan.

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An insight into the Causes of Lack of Home-School Connection in Malakand Division, Pakistan



Nasar Khan (Corresponding Author)¹, Faria Ibad Mirza², Usra Ahmad³

¹ Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Buner, KP, Pakistan.

(Email: khannasar922@gmail.com)

² Lecturer, Department of Sociology, ARID Agriculture University, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan.

³ Lecturer, Department of Psychology, University of Buner, KP, Pakistan.

Abstract

Home-school connection is one of the key dimensions of interest to educational researchers. Home-school connection has not been researched well in the context of Pakistan. Therefore, this study aims to assess the causes of the lack of home-school connection in government-sector schools. This study has been conducted in Thana and Batkhela, Malakand Division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This study is framed as a qualitative exploratory research design. Purposive and convenience sampling techniques have been utilised. Based on saturation, 13 interviews and an FGD were conducted. The sample size for FGD was 7. An interview guide was designed specifically for the current study. Thematic analysis has been used to analyse information, as suggested by Braun and Clark (2019). It is concluded that a multifaceted set of factors impacts home-school connection. Parents tend to focus on involving their children in business and other professions, while avoiding preparing them for government and non-governmental jobs.

Keywords: Home, School, Connection, Parents, Involvement

Introduction

The home-school connection is one of the key dimensions of interest to educational researchers. Many studies, for instance, the National Association of School Psychologists (2012), Epstein (2001), Fan and Chen (2001), Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, Cox, and Bradley (2003), and Menheere and Hooge (2010), report that the home-school connection is significantly associated with children's educational outcomes. These outcomes include, in particular, test and exam grades, social skills, participation in co-curricular activities, and behavioural outcomes.

Unfortunately, there is very much less focus on home-school connection in developing and third-world countries. First, in many cases, schooling is not a priority (particularly among lower socio-economic strata, as cited in Ahmad et al., (2014); second, even when schooling is a priority, there remains a gap between the home (family) and the school. In this regard, so far research show that poverty, lack of knowledge about schooling, lack of parental motivation, job or profession of the parents, school management, teacher interest, communal perception and practices, parental interest in skilled jobs, joining own profession or labor for the children and so many other aspects are important while studying home-school connection (Savacool, 2011; Nojaja, 2002). In addition, to explain it, Jafarov (2015) divided the causes of the lack of home-school connection into three categories: first, parent-related factors; second, school-related factors; third, student-related factors. First, parent-related factors include parental negative school experiences (cited by LaRocque et al., 2011); parents' educational background (see Baeck, 2010); parental belief of the impact of their involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992); income of the parents (Domina, 2005); and family structure (Jordan et al., 2001). Second, the school-related factors include teacher training, the school



environment, and the number of children in the school or class, which are important to consider. Third, student-related factors include age, gender, and cultural context (Cooper et al., 2000); student achievement is also an important aspect. For further details, see Jafarov (2015).

Pakistan is a developing country, and there are many questions about its education system. The quality of schooling in Pakistan is generally low, particularly among the middle and lower socio-economic strata. Middle-class and lower-class families cannot afford high-standard private schools, and therefore, middle-class families prioritise ordinary private schools, while lower-class families must send their children to government schools. Government schools in Pakistan are known for inadequate educational infrastructure (particularly in rural areas), poor teaching quality, a lack of co-curricular activities, and a high dropout rate (Farooq, 2015; Memon, 2007).

Government-sector schooling in Pakistan is of interest to researchers in Pakistan, but the major focus has remained limited to physical infrastructure, lack of facilitation, teaching quantity and quality, dropout, and gendered differences; an important aspect, that is, the home-school connection, has not been researched. Therefore, this study aims to assess the causes of the lack of home-school connection in government sector schools.

Objectives of the Study:

- To highlight the role of prevailing problems in government sector schools in ignoring the importance of the home-school connection
- To investigate the lack of communal and familial awareness regarding the importance of home-school connection

Methodology

Study Locale: This study has been conducted in Thana and Batkhela, Malakand Division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Nature of the Study: This study is framed as a qualitative exploratory research design, as the researcher sought an in-depth, subjective understanding of the home-school connection.

Sampling: As per the study design, purposive and convenience sampling techniques have been utilised. The sample size has been determined using the saturation point technique, as suggested by Saunders et al. (2019). Based on saturation, 13 interviews were conducted, during which the researcher noted significant repetition of information. The 14th interview was conducted to confirm saturation, which was achieved. The sample size for FGD was 7. Furthermore, schoolteachers, administrators, parents, and community members were sampled, as all are important to this research. Additionally, community members were interviewed through focus group discussions to gain in-depth insight into the issue and to confirm the findings from the interviews.

Tool for data collection: an interview guide was designed specifically for the current study. It provided the researcher with an option to extend the debate on the home-school connection with the participants.

Data Analysis: Thematic analysis has been used to analyse information as suggested by Braun and Clark (2019), as it is one of the most used approaches in qualitative research and is well-suited to analysing data collected through interviews and focus group discussions.

Results from the Interview

Theme One: Perceived Lack of Benefits from Education in Future

It is evident from interviews that, in the current scenario, parents tend to focus on involving their children in business and other professions, while avoiding preparing them for government and non-governmental jobs. Parents argue that educational outcomes in the current setup are insufficient relative to the effort and time required. A parent replied that:

“...I just want my son to pass matric and then help in my business. I don't think that 20-25 years of education for a government job is worth it...”

Another parent enumerated that:

“...when my son completes college-level education, I want to send him to the Gulf countries. I just want him to understand basic reading and writing. I don't want him to stay in Pakistan for making his future...”

Sub-theme One: Parental Educational Background

Analysis of the interview shows that parents with low levels of education take less interest in their children's school. Most parents with low levels of education are one step away from economic hardship and are seeking work or stable sources of income. This work is a barrier to home-school connection, which is stated by participants in the following words:

“...we face issues in connection with parents who are busy earning for the family due to economic difficulties. They focus on not the education of their children, but rather they are more concerned about meeting daily life needs, such as food for the family...”

A participant explored that:

“...the children in government schools have parents with low education, and often they are employed in low-skilled jobs. There is a lack of awareness among such parents due to this factor. The situation of private schools is quite different...”

Theme Two: School-related Factors

Employees in schools are interested in their jobs rather than in the profession. Their interest is impacted by job-related issues. For example, a participant stated that:

“...honestly, I'm doing this job to remain employed. I am an engineer, but due to a lack of engineering jobs in my field, I have joined a government school to search for an engineering-related job. You know about age-related restrictions in government jobs, and remaining in service is important for me. I believe my profession is not teaching, which affects the kids and the quality of education. But this is the problem with this system, and it is not my personal choice or intention to harm this profession and the kids. Lack of motivation for this job results in lack of contact with parents...”

Another participant explained that:

“... Contact with parents is a common practice in private schools, whereas in government schools, there is a high enrollment of students when compared to the number of teachers. It is almost impossible to interact with parents of each student, so we opt to contact and communicate with parents of those kids with significant problems in their studies or with those who are good achievers...”

A participant elucidated that:

“... The facilitation regarding contact with parents is not sufficient, and in the majority of cases, the focus is just to teach at school...”

Theme Three: Trends in Society

The analysis of interviews shows a lack of trend in parents' contact and connection with schools in the study locality. This is especially true in the government sector, where children from low-socioeconomic-background families are enrolled in government schools. A participant said that:

"...this is not part of the educational culture in this locality..."

A participant explained that:

"...children from families with a poor socio-economic background don't receive the same support when compared to private schools. The reason is the lack of focus and ability of parents to understand the importance and even interest of the practice of home-school contact..."

Theme Four: Socio-demographic Factors

Findings show that familial background, such as the number of siblings, economic status, the parents' profession, and school-related factors, impacts the home-school connection. A participant illustrated that:

"...parents who have more than 4 or 5 children don't take a significant interest in the schooling of their children in this area. Additional contact with school is sort of a burden for them..."

Another participant argued that:

"...fathers who work at shops or are involved in labour usually don't have time to come here (i.e., school). Because they are busy in labour and must provide their families with basic needs such as food, there is no time for visiting the school..."

A participant stated that:

"...children who are supported by mothers and their fathers are abroad (i.e., migrants) are not in contact with school..."

Results from Focus Group Discussion

Findings from the focus group discussions align with findings from interviews. There are several causes of a lack of home-school connection, where the most important indicator is socio-demographic factors relevant to the family. For example, a father who works as a labourer is unable to assist their children by contacting their school. The majority of children in government schools are from poor socio-economic backgrounds, and the families often don't have a focus on their education, as increased focus on education is directly linked with a lack of home-school connection. A participant explained that:

"...we work in a government school, and you know that the parents belong to poor socio-economic backgrounds. They are not aware, and they lack interest in the schooling of their kids..."

The discussion also showed that there are many problems with school management and the teacher-hiring system. A participant explored that:

"... the majority of teachers hired recently in schools are from diverse backgrounds, and they are not teachers by profession. They were in search of jobs and were hired. This is leading to problems in the educational sector and is impacting the teaching standards, including home-school connection..."

Discussion

Parents tend to focus on involving their children in business and other professions, while avoiding preparing them for government and non-governmental jobs. Parents argue that educational outcomes in the current setup are insufficient relative to the effort and time required. Guo & Zhao (2025) and Khan et al. (2017) support these findings by asserting that parental involvement is key to educational success. Parents who are less interested in engaging their children in governmental jobs tend to focus less and contact schools minimally. Ahmad et al. (2014) also assert that lack of parental motivation is a key factor in home-school connection.

There is a lack of trend in parents' contact and connection with schools in the study locality. This is especially true in the government sector, where children from low-socioeconomic backgrounds are enrolled in government schools. Bond et al. (2025) argue that socio-economic deprivation affects parents' involvement in their children's education. Ahmad et al. (2014) also noted a lack of trends in contact with teachers as responsible for the lack of home-school connection.

Parents with low levels of education take less interest in their children's school. Most parents with low levels of education are one step away from economic hardship and are seeking work or stable sources of income. Harms et al. (2023) note that parents living in poverty are stressed about other issues in their lives, leading to a lack of focus on their children's education, including the home-school connection.

Employees in schools are interested in their jobs rather than in the profession. Their interest is impacted by job-related issues. Ahmad et al. (2024) support this finding by revealing that teachers are not satisfied with their job, as the majority take it as a routine engagement and don't consider it their first choice as a profession. This impacts the quality of education, where home-school connection is one dimension.

Socio-demographic factors are important with respect to the home-school connection. Familial background, such as the number of siblings, economic status, the profession of the parent and school-related factors, impacts home-school connection. Lou et al. (2024) validate these findings by exploring how parents' age, profession, single-parent status, and income levels affect their involvement in their children's schooling.

Conclusion

It is concluded that a multifaceted set of factors impacts home-school connection. Parents tend to focus on involving their children in business and other professions, while avoiding preparing them for government and non-governmental jobs. There is a lack of trend in parents' contact and connection with schools in the study locality. Parents with low levels of education take less interest in their children's school. Employees in schools are interested in their jobs rather than in the profession. Socio-demographic factors are important with respect to the home-school connection.

Study Limitation

This study was unfunded; therefore, the sample size is limited by budget constraints. Large-scale quantitative studies can provide a better illustration of the causes of the lack of home-school connection in Pakistan. Further, the researcher's positionality could have affected the depth of the information, as is common in qualitative research.

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