

**Socio-Economic and Cultural
Factors Responsible for Illiteracy in Rural Areas of District Mandi
Bahauddin Punjab, Pakistan**

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Abstract

Illiteracy is a serious social issue of the present era especially in the developing countries like Pakistan. Illiteracy is a social evil. It has very harmful effects on society. An illiterate person is unaware of the causes of his/her creation, does not know anything about his/her rights and duties. He does not understand law of the country and cannot make material progress in the world with the force of education and knowledge. He is unable to get good job in any public or govt. sector. Illiteracy is the "inability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying context (UNESCO). In 1930 the U.S. Bureau of the Census defined as illiterate any person over ten years of age who was unable to read and write in any language. By the next census (1940), the concept of "functional" illiteracy was adopted. Any person with less than five years of schooling was considered functionally illiterate, or unable to engage in social activities in which literacy is assumed.

The present study was conducted to investigate various causes of illiteracy in rural areas of Tehsil Phalia, District Mandi Bahauddin Punjab Pakistan. The sample of 120 respondents was selected by using simple random sampling. The data were collected by interview schedule and it was analyzed by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The study investigated that there were many causes of illiteracy. Poverty, parental illiteracy, lack of educational facilities, social and cultural disputes, unemployment, behavior of teacher and lack of children interest were the main causes of illiteracy. The finding of study depicted that 60% people were illiterate due to poverty. Illiteracy is not only a social evil but also causes many other social evils. It has very

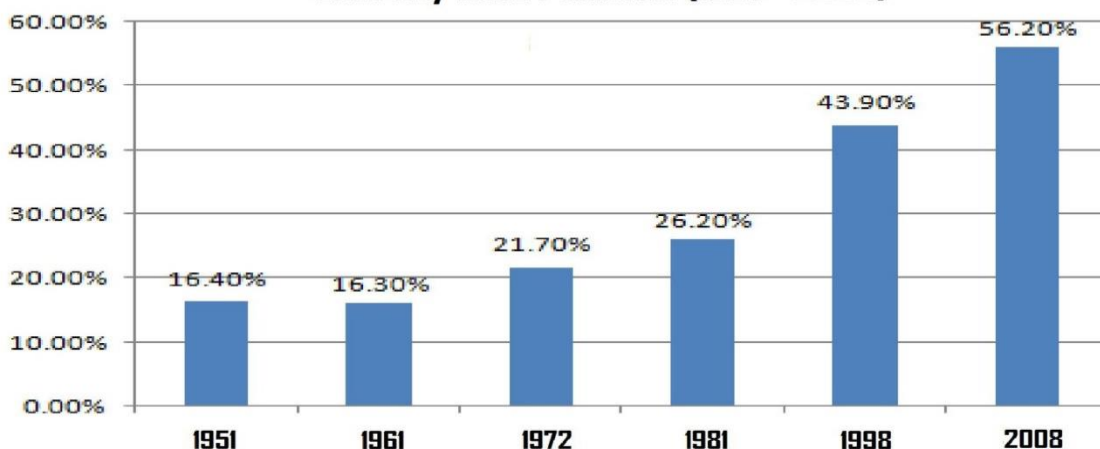
harmful effects on society. Both NGOs and Government should play their vital role for reduction of illiteracy.

Key Words: Illiteracy, Poverty, Schooling, Behavior

Introduction

Pakistan is most populated country of the world standing at the sixth number in term of high population among the world having the population almost 180 million. The whole population of Pakistan consists on various castes, culture and color. The illiteracy is always a serious issue of Pakistan which has the lowest literacy rates in the world. According to the findings of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the illiteracy rate of the Pakistan is 45% and it has the 160th position in countries of the whole world. Education is necessary for every person of society. It should be regard as a need not as want (UNESCO report by archivist online, 2015). Before 1947, Pakistan was a less developed part of India and ruled by the British government lasted about 100 years. During that era, the people of India were not properly aware of the importance of education. The people were mostly belonged to poor families so they do not spend on the education of their children. They only earned for the fulfillment of their basic needs. Even the rich families were not concerned with education. According to UNESCO report, when the first census was conducted in 1950, the overall literacy rate of India was 20% and it was 14% in Pakistan. In 2012 India has 75% literacy rate while Pakistan literacy is 58%. Pakistan Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate is 79.1% for males and 61.5% for females.

Literacy Rate Pakistan (1951 - 2008)



Pakistan literacy rate is grown from the time of its creation. Every new generation of Pakistan is more literate than its ancestor. This increase in literacy rate is not more rapid as compare to our neighbors. In 1950s the literacy rate of Iran is less than Pakistan. The Shah of Iran Shah Reza Shah Pahlavi from 1941 to 1979 had given the more importance to education. The Shah spent considerable portion of his country's oil income for the improvement of education, health and infrastructure. Iran increased the spending on education in era of Shah Rule. In Pakistan during the government of President Mushsarraaf, the literacy rate increased about 13% but the overall literacy rate is about 56%. Recently it is investigated that Pakistani students spend more time on their studies as compare to Indian students. They stay in schools, colleges and universities for long time as compare to Indian students (UNESCO). Numbers of surveys have been conducted on world illiteracy. First survey was held in 1950 and its findings published in 1957. According to this survey, at least 44% of the world's population was illiterate. Another study on illiteracy was conducted in 1978. The findings of this study illustrates that the illiteracy rate has gone down to 32.5%.

In 1990, illiteracy rate of whole world had declined to 27%. In 1998 another study show a decrease in illiteracy rate about to 16%. In 1998 a report published by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) forecast that illiteracy rate of the whole world would boost in the 21st century. The reason was that only one fourth children of the whole world were going to school at the end of the 20th century. The less developed nations of Africa, Asia, and South America were faced the highest illiteracy rate in the world. In developed nations like Australia,

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Japan, North Korea, and many other nations of Europe and North America were faced lowest illiteracy rate. According to UN definition of illiteracy, illiteracy rate of the United States and Canada is about 1%.

In certain less developed areas such as the rural South in the United States, the illiteracy rate is very high (United Nations Research, 1995). According to the Federal Education Ministry of Pakistan Official statistics give an anxious situation of education in Pakistan. The overall literacy rate is 46%, out of these 46%, girls literacy rate is 26 percent. These 46% included the person who can only put signatures. Only 26 per cent people properly read and write. Out of these 26% the 12% are women. There are 163,000 primary schools in Pakistan. Only 40,000 provided to girls. Out of these 15,000 are in Punjab Province, 13,000 in Sind, 8,000 in North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and 4,000 in Baluchistan. In Pakistan for girls 14, 000 lower secondary schools and 10,000 higher secondary schools. The seven million girls under 10 year age go to primary schools, 5.4 million between 10 and 14 year age go to lower secondary schools, and 3 million go to higher secondary schools. About 1.5 million go to higher secondary schools and 0.5 million girls are goes to colleges and universities. There are only six districts in Punjab that have above 70% literacy rate. They are Lahore, Gujranwala, Rawalpindi, Chakwal and Gujrat. Most of the improvements have been seen at the primary level. Still a lot of work needs to be done in order to bring a bigger change. Similarly, out of a total the situation is particularly dreadful in rural areas (UNESCO).

Social and Cultural Obstruction

There are many reasons but most relevant is social and cultural obstruction. One of the most unacceptable sides is that in some places particularly northern tribal area, the education is banned particularly education of girls is strictly banned due to so many reasons. The most common reason is religion. So called religious leaders misguide the illiterate Parents. They tell them formal education for girls is banned in Islam. This is an unpleasant and wrong idea of Islam. Islam is the foremost religion in Pakistan. 96% population of Pakistan belongs to Islam (Haq, 2014).

The circumstances are the most dangerous in NWFP and Baluchistan. In these provinces female literacy rate is between 3% and 8%.

Feudalism

The other reason of low literacy rate in Pakistan is feudalism. Many government organizations and non-governmental organizations have struggled to improve literacy rate in these areas. For this purpose, many recognized and unrecognized schools in these areas are established. The feudal lords are main obstacles in this way they even cannot have any concerned with religion but they also create hurdles because they are not in the favor of literacy. If people become educated they get awareness about their right and duties. It is dangerous for feudal raj. Landlords and tribal chief are members of major political parties so they get support from the government to implementation of such decisions which are in the favor of these people. "I want to go to school to learn but I cannot because my parents do not allow me to do so," said 9-year old Palwasha, who has visited the biggest city of Pakistan, Karachi, with her parents and seen girls like herself going to school. She lives in a village located in Dir district (NWFP), where education for girls does not exist. "We have only one school for boys," she said, adding, "One of my friend goes to school, but she is now in Peshawar (capital city of NWFP)" (Latif, 2010).

Poverty

Poverty is another cause of low literacy rate. Poverty causes the child labour because when the basic needs like food is not meet how a poor person can think about education. According to a report of UNICEF in Pakistan 17.6 % children are doing different jobs to sustain the life of their families. Certainly, child labor is common in Pakistan. Girls are affected by child labour because number of female child worker is greater as compare to male child workers. Now a days people send their children's to schools, because in these days better education facilities are available in big cities and towns like Karachi, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Islamabad, Hyderabad, Gujranwala, Peshawar, Quetta and Faisalabad.

All Around Effort to Provide Education for Girls

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Some religious groups, political parties and NGOs are working actively to do so despite all barriers. The government of Nawaz Sharif had introduced the scheme of non-official education for women in the whole country. For this purpose the government had introduced PM Literacy Commission. The duty of that commission was the arrangement some 100,000 non-official schools for girls. Due to political instability in Pakistan, that program did not work longer. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and President Zia ul-Haq also worked for girl's education. 1,500 non-formal schools were established in the era of these two governments. These are still working in rural areas to some extent.

Media

Media always take part in encouraging people to send their girls to schools. In Pakistan almost 70% population live in villages so the situation is very critical. Identifying literacy as a right brings in a number of benefits. The nature of these benefits depends on families, communities and nation's choices. Certainly, it is usually deemed that, in recent societies. Literacy provides ability to participate in decision-making, empowerment, lively and inactive participation in narrow and worldwide social problems.

Poor Allocation for Education in the Budget

Educational sector of Pakistan is neglected in the era of every government. Only 2.1% of whole GDP is given to the educational sector in almost every year budget. This share of budget allocated for educational sector is very inadequate. With this budget constraint, we cannot fulfill our educational requirements and will not be able to compete with the developed nations. In Asia, Turkey spent half of their budget on education. That is a huge amount (Saqib & Ahmad, 2014).

Terrorism

Terrorism is another cause of low literacy rate. Pakistan has faced terrorism for the last 25 years. The terrorist targeted the schools, colleges and universities for their attacks. The whole educational system is distorted in the conflict areas. In Swat, due to terrorism around 51% women and 53% men leave their education incomplete. Numbers of students died in terrorist

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attacks. Numbers of schools are destroyed due to terrorism. In Swat operation almost 80 schools of males and 120 of females were destroyed. In Swat almost 64% population lives in villages and their survival is depending on agricultural sector. During the terrorist attack the agricultural sector was completely destroyed. That's why these people also become poor and cannot continue the education of their children.

Child Labour

Child labour is also very common in these areas. But in urban areas the mostly people are job holders so the income level is high as compare to rural areas so literacy rate is high in urban areas. Since low education level attached with socio-cultural favoritism is a restriction to women empowerment, the best way to liberate women is to representation adult non-literate women, to feasible literacy abilities that will improve their abilities and efficiency. Empowerment of women through introduction to literacy is seen as the mechanism board to other forms of empowerment, and as the pivot around which development turn around. Women empowerment through education is acceptable because it will serve as a solution for take to pieces “intergenerational cycle of illiteracy” (Muodumogu, 2007, p.194).

Social Disputes

Another issue which causes illiteracy in Pakistan especially in the rural areas of Pakistan is social disputes. Social disputes badly affect the literacy rate. People always remain busy in conflict and they do not pay their proper attention on the education of their children. The young generation also follows the traditional norms and values of their elders. Most of the people cannot spend money on the education of their children because they very hardly fulfill their basic needs of life such as food dress and residence etc.

Unemployment

In Pakistan most of the people are unemployed. It is very hard for them to survive in the society so they do not have enough money which they can spend on the education of their children. There are many areas of Pakistan where feudalism also causes illiteracy. Feudal Lords do not allow the tenants for getting education and making their standard of life better. So

feudalism is a larger factor which causes illiteracy especially in the area of Sindh and Baluchistan.

Domestic Violence, Gender Discrimination

Another issue which decreases the literacy rate is domestic violence. Due to it the parents always remain in tension and frustration and they cannot pay their full attention on the education of their children. There are many other causes of illiteracy in Pakistan such as gender discrimination low interest in education etc. Gender discrimination is also causes low literacy rate. The people of rural areas do not send their girls to school for getting education. The rural people mostly prefer their male children and they do not give equal rights to their female children. The girls always remain busy in their domestic works. They have no opportunity to getting education. This leads the low rate of literacy in the society. There are many children who do not have any interest in education. They do not realize that what the importance of education. They do not feel that education is necessary for them to survival in the society. So they are not properly aware from the importance of education. They are the follower of the traditional norms and values of their elders. They do not get education by which literacy rate decreased.

Research Questions

- Association between income of family and Illiteracy
- Association between parents' education and Illiteracy

Objectives of the Study

- To investigate various socio-economic and cultural factors paving way for illiteracy.
- To suggest some valuable measures to prevent this problem from society.

Methodology

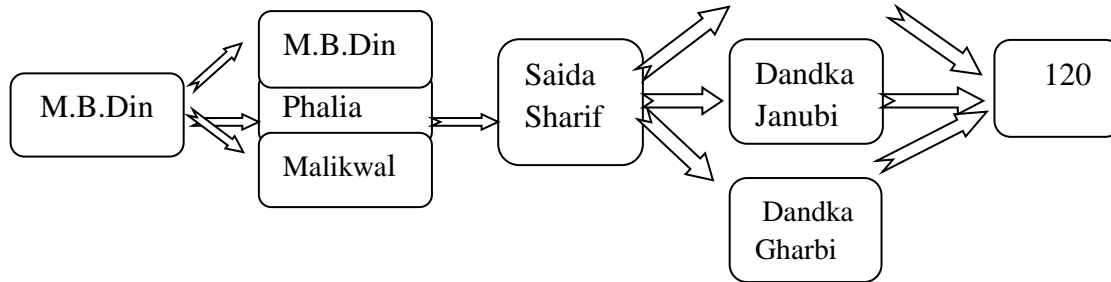
The present study was carried out in Tehsil Phalia District Mandi Bahauddin Punjab Pakistan. The main objective of the study was to explore various socio-economic factors paving the way for illiteracy in rural areas. The universe for the present study was three villages of Union Council Saida Sharif, Tehsil Phalia district Mandi Bahauddin. The home survey was

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taken. Simple random sampling technique was used for the selection of 120 respondents (40 from each village) for the present study. The data were collected by designing a well-structured interview schedule. In order to fetch the data into comparable form, percentages of many categories of data were used in the Current study.



Data / Result Presentation and Analysis

Table # 1 Distribution of respondents regarding monthly income

Monthly income	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 10000	53	44.2
10001-20000	49	40.8
20001-30000	13	10.8
30001 and above	5	4.2
Total	120	100.0

Living standard of a person highly depends on income. Education is a symbol of living standard. It is also affected by income of a person. In the above discussion, income of a family divided into four categories. The 44.2% respondents were low income their monthly income was less than 10000. The 42.8% of the respondent's income fall within 10001 to 20000. The 10.8% of the respondent's income was lying in the category 20001-30000. Only 4.2% had 30001 and above income. So it is clear that poverty and low income of the family were the major causes of illiteracy in the rural areas.

Table # 2 Distribution of respondents regarding education of parents

Parents education	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	100	83.3
Literate	20	16.7
Total	120	100.0

Parents have a great influence on the children. They play as the role model for the children. Mostly illiterate parents did not know that the education was very worthy. That's why they preferred skill over education (Balhotra, et. al 1997). This table shows that 83.3% parents of respondents were illiterate. So parents' illiteracy is also a major hurdle in the way of education in rural areas.

Conclusion

The major reason of illiteracy was parents' illiteracy and low income of family. It is need of the hour to control illiteracy because without education, development of rural areas is hard to achieve. Government and NGOs should play their role for the promotion of education.

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