DOI: 10.71317/jgst.2.11.2026.1080
Journal of Global Social Transformation
Journal homepage: https://rjsaonline.org/index.php/JGST

Beyond The Classrooms: Teachers' Perspectives on Barriers to Educational Development in High Schools of Multan and Khanewal Districts

Tehmina Sattar[1], Muhammad Imdad Ullah[2], Ruqia Safdar Bajwa[3], Hina Kosar[4]
[1] Ph.D. Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan.
Email: tehminasattar@bzu.edu.pk
[2] Ph.D. Assistant Professor, Institute of Banking and Finance, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan.
Email: imdad.ullah@bzu.edu.pk
[3] Ph.D. Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Psychology, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan.
Email: ruqiasafdar@bzu.edu.pk
[4] Ph.D. Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan.
Email: hinakosar@bzu.edu.pk

ARTICLE INFO

Submission:
October 02, 2026
Revised:
November 29, 2026
Accepted:
November 05, 2026
Available Online:
November 15, 2026

Keywords:
Beyond classrooms, Educational development; Barriers; Teachers' perspectives; High schools, Multan, Khanewal.

Corresponding author:
Muhammad Imdad Ullah
Email: imdad.ullah@bzu.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

Education is an essential institution that is shaped by various socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors. In Pakistan, educational development has always been a challenge, especially at the high school level. This is because barriers related to parents, teachers, schools, policies, and students themselves restrict the provision of education. A sample of 200 high school teachers from Multan and Khanewal districts was selected through a multistage sampling technique. Data were analyzed using SPSS software using univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analyses. The findings show that teachers reported various barriers, including political, social, economic, cultural, and policy-level barriers that hamper educational development in the study area. Teachers also identified policy-level barriers, such as unclear policy objectives (n=86.5%), weak administrative structures, political, religious, and administrative influences (n=85.5%), and insufficient government budget allocation (n=84.5%). Economic barriers included school fees (n=81%) and low parental income (n=74%). In addition, the gender-related barriers were identified as patriarchal structures and socio-cultural norms as restrictive for girls' educational access (n=70%). Furthermore, low teacher motivation with declining education quality (n=73.5%) and teachers' lack of future economic security contributed to institutional concerns (n=77%). The study concluded that policy-level, economic, socio-cultural/gender, institutional, and administrative barriers accounted for 78% of the variance in high schools' educational development in the study area. The study recommends strengthening policy implementation, institutional accountability, financial support, and promoting girls' education as key factors to overcome barriers and increase educational development in the high schools of Multan and Khanewal districts.

Introduction

Education is a multidimensional and fundamental institution of social and national development (Fägerlind & Saha, 2016). It is a foundational factor in human capital formation, social mobility, economic productivity, and reduced social inequalities (Saleem & Nadeem, 2023). Beyond acquiring knowledge and skills, this basic institution enables individuals to participate in social and political

decision-making that contributes to social transformation (Van Pham, 2024). At the national level, an effective education system provides the foundations for economic progress, institutional development, and social mobility (Guo & Li, 2024).

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023), the national literacy rate among the population aged 10 years and above was 60.6%. This rate also shows considerable gender disparities, with males at 68% and females at 52%. According to the 2023 Population and Housing Census, the literacy rate was 61% in Multan district and 60% in Khanewal district. The rural-urban disparity is also evident: rural areas in Multan were educated up to 49% and urban areas up to 74%, while in Khanewal rural literacy was 56% and urban literacy was up to 77% (Hussain & Hassan, 2024; Zahid et al., 2026).

Despite its significance, educational development in Pakistan still faces numerous structural challenges that affect accessibility, quality, and effectiveness (Akram, 2020; Sain, 2023). These challenges extend beyond inadequate school facilities and insufficient enrolment procedures. They also include socio-political and cultural challenges (Halai & Durrani, 2021; Mncube et al., 2023). In addition, weak governance, political instability, poverty, gender bias, inequality, and inadequate public investment are major barriers to educational development in Pakistan (Bukhari et al., 2025). In this structural context, traditional social practices, institutional weakness, unequal educational opportunities, and underinvestment in the education sector were major challenges (Abid et al., 2021; Tasleem & Tasleem, 2024).

Social and cultural inequality further influences educational opportunities through orthodox parental attitudes, inadequate family support systems, rural-urban disparities, traditional gender-based norms, and poverty issues (Ali et al., 2025; Tajammal, 2018). Economic disadvantages include household poverty, rising education costs, and high school dropout rates, which are major factors affecting educational development in Pakistan. In addition, inadequate institutional management, weak teacher training, ineffective curricula, and poor policy implementation also affect educational development in Pakistan (Asghar & Mukhtar, 2020; Purewal & Hashmi, 2015).

Although various governments in Pakistan have launched policies to improve the literacy rate, expand educational access, and strengthen educational institutions, Pakistan's education system still collapses (Khurram, 2025). This is because institutional accountability is consistently questioned, and policy implementation also suffers. However, the issue requires a more comprehensive, integrated model that addresses institutional and structural changes (Bibi et al., 2022; Farooqi & Forbes, 2020).

In light of these arguments, this study examines high school teachers' perspectives on the obstacles hindering development in South Punjab, Pakistan (Nasim et al., 2025). These factors are interconnected and ultimately affect students' access and participation. Moreover, it helps ensure equitable access for all girls and boys in schools (Sattar, 2011). Specifically, the study also examined how educational institutions can be developed by addressing weaknesses and challenges among academic stakeholders such as parents, teachers, students, and institutional heads (Mughal & Aldridge, 2017; Sattar, 2012).

From a sociological perspective, education is not only a mechanism for transmitting knowledge and skills, but also an institution that reproduces and transforms social inequalities and opportunities for social mobility (Fatima et al., 2024; Sattar, 2011). The study also examines how traditional gender norms, poverty, inequality, limited opportunities, economic disparities, and inadequate institutional policies played a key role in the area's educational development (Ali et al., 2025). Therefore, this study examines teachers' perspectives on the barriers to educational development in Multan and Khanewal districts.

Theoretical Framework

The present study presents three theories that explain the structural barriers to educational development in high schools in Multan and Khanewal districts. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) argued that social and cultural reproduction plays an important role in shaping educational outcomes. They explained that factors such as parental education, teachers' support systems for students, unequal distribution of educational opportunities, and socio-economic background shaped educational development in the study area. These factors also determine social disadvantages. Another relevant theory is human capital theory, developed by Schultz (1961), which highlights the importance of investment in education. IT also suggests that poverty contributes to social disadvantages. Educational expenses, limited institutional resources, low awareness of education, and inadequate public funding were major barriers to limited educational development in high schools. The third relevant theory is institutional theory (North, 1990), which argues that political governance, accountability, effective policy implementation, and institutional accountability are major factors in high school educational development.

These theories show that socio-cultural, economic, and political barriers shape high school education. These factors also shape educational policies. Together, these theories show that educational development occurs through various structural and institutional barriers.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework identified four major independent variables: social, cultural, economic, and political. Social barriers included parental education, family support, socio-economic inequality, and rural-urban disparities. Cultural barriers included traditional beliefs about seeking education (especially for females), gender norms, orthodox parental ideology about education, and restrictive social processes. Economic barriers included poverty, educational costs, insufficient public investment, and limited institutional resources. The political barriers included political instability, weak governance, inadequate accountability, and ineffective policy implementation. The response variable is educational development, measured through educational access, educational equity, gender-free education participation, quality education, and institutional development (in the context of high schools).

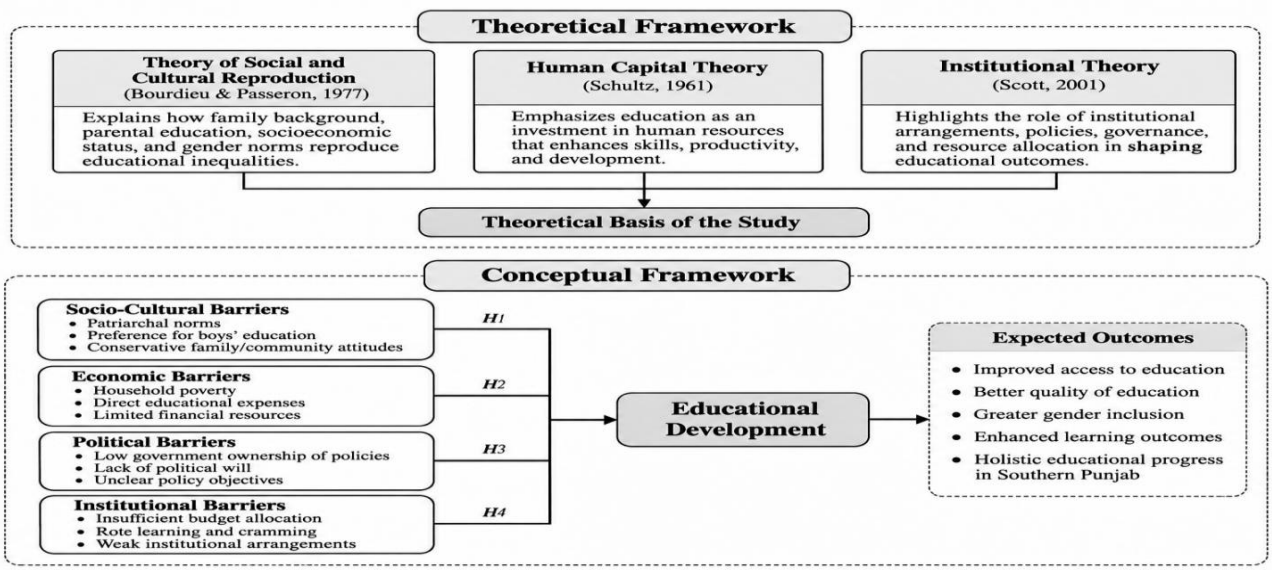

Figure 1. Conceptual model based on the theoretical underpinnings

Methods and Materials

Research Design

The present study used a quantitative research design to examine teachers' views on the major obstacles hampering educational development in Pakistan. The study also used a cross-sectional survey design to collect teachers' responses at a single point in time. This design was mainly used to describe the structure of Pakistan's education system and identify the challenges that became major hurdles to educational development in this context.

Study area and population

The study was conducted in Southern Punjab, Pakistan, because it comprises several districts that reported major challenges in school academic development. Southern Punjab comprises 11 districts across three major divisions: Bahawalpur, Multan, and Dera Ghazi Khan. The first author focused on teachers' viewpoints because they are major stakeholders who can share their educational experiences from an external perspective.

Target population and respondents

The target population comprised male and female teachers who had 10 years or more of teaching experience. Their teaching experience helped the researchers to identify the barriers to development more effectively. Otherwise, young and newly appointed

teachers would have a superficial understanding of the barriers to educational development. Professional experience helped teachers to share their experiences with this research phenomenon.

Sampling procedure and sample size

The study used a multistage sampling technique to select the teachers from high schools in the selected study area. The subsequent stages were included. In the first stage, we selected one division, i.e., Multan Division, from the three divisions of South Punjab using simple random sampling. In the second stage, we purposively selected two districts from Multan Division, i.e., Khanewal and Multan. We selected these districts because Multan and Khanewal had comparatively low literacy-rate growth, i.e., 4.3% (Multan) and 4.8% (Khanewal), respectively. Their selection enabled the researchers to examine the educational barriers in two districts with similar literacy growth rates. In the third stage, the researcher selected high schools from the aforementioned districts. The first author selected schools affiliated with the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE), Multan, using simple random sampling. From 306 affiliated schools, the researcher selected 60 schools from Multan and 40 schools from 214 affiliated schools in Khanewal district. The researcher selected 100 high schools from the list of 520 schools. In the final stage, the researcher selected N=200 teachers through convenience sampling.

Tool for the data collection process

A semi-structured questionnaire with open- and closed-ended questions was used to collect data from high school teachers. The instrument comprised sections on demographics, general barriers, parental- and school-level barriers, cultural- and gender-related barriers, economic barriers, teacher- and school-related barriers, policy implementation barriers, and institutional barriers in high schools of Multan and Khanewal districts.

Difficulties in data collection procedure

During data collection, the researchers faced several problems accessing respondents and obtaining responses to sensitive questions. First, the researchers found it difficult to gather school-related information because some school administrations were reluctant to grant teachers access. The researchers then informed them and showed the permission letter from the EDO and the university ERC for data collection. Second, teachers were also reluctant to share institutional information and their personal views on barriers to educational development in high schools. The researchers then assured them that their identities would be kept anonymous and their information confidential. Third, school administrators said they would receive funds and promotional support to run their schools after the researchers identified the barriers in their study area. The researchers assured them that the funds would be used only for policy-making and recommendations to eliminate those barriers. Therefore, they will get their funding and facilities in the previous pattern.

Data Coding and Analysis

After data collection, the first author organized and coded the data in SPSS. The numerical values were assigned to different categories to facilitate the data entry and statistical interpretation. The analysis used univariate analysis to identify teachers' perceptions of various barriers that hinder educational development in high schools. Next, the teachers applied the one-sample binomial test, which showed that teachers' endorsement of a particular barrier was significantly higher than 50%. Later, the first author applied the multiple regression analysis, which indicated the relationship between the predictor and response variables.

Results and Discussion

Table I; Demographic correlates of respondents (N = 200)

Demographic characteristics	Category	Frequency/Percentage
Age	Less than 40 years	156 (78.0)
	41–50 years	34 (17.0)
	Above 50 years	10 (5.0)

Gender	Male	122 (61.0)
	Female	78 (39.0)
Family type	Nuclear	22 (11.0)
	Extended	62 (31.0)
	Joint	116 (58.0)

Demographic correlates of respondents

Table I shows that n=156 (78.0%) teachers were under 40 years of age, while n=34 (17.0%) were 41-50 years old. A significant minority, i.e., n=10 (5.0%) teachers, were above 50 years of age. The gender variable revealed that n=122 (61.0%) were male teachers, while n=78 (39.0%) were female teachers. The family type variable showed that n=116 (58.05%) teachers belonged to the joint family system, while n=62 (31.0%) were from the extended family type.

Table II;Teachers' perceptions of the general barriers to educational development in high schools (N = 200)

General barriers	Majority teachers selected this response category	Frequency/Percentage
Causes of low literacy rate in Pakistan	Policies not suited to local educational needs	51 (25.5)
What is the major challenge faced by the education sector	Unable to mobilize adequate resources	52 (26.0)
What is the major gap responsible for the education sector's weak performance?	Corruption	75 (37.5)
What is the major cause of the implementation gap	Favoritism	44 (22.0)
Which of the following factors regarding the direct cost of schooling is most important	School fees	162 (81.0)

General barriers in educational development of high schools

Table II presents teachers' views on the main barriers to educational development in South Punjab, Pakistan. In this regard, n=51 (25.5%) respondents agreed that weak policymaking and unsuitable educational policies are the biggest causes of low literacy rates in Pakistan. In addition, n=52 (26.0%) teachers argued that the education sector's major challenge is its inability to mobilize adequate resources. Corruption was the main gap behind the education sector's weak performance, as reported by n=75 (37.5%). The argument was extended to a lack of educational development, with n=44 (22.0%). Additionally, n=162 (81.0%) teachers argued that the major academic barrier was the direct cost of schooling, specifically high school fees.

Table III;Teachers' perceptions about the parental and school-related barriers to educational development in high schools (N = 200)

Parental and school-related barriers	Frequency/ Percentage	Frequency/ Percentage	Frequency/ Percentage
	Strongly agree/	Neutral	Strongly disagree/

	Agree		Disagree
Improved parental education positively affects children's schooling	130 (65.0)	28 (14.0)	42 (21.0)
Physical violence by teachers contributes to high student dropout	54 (27.0)	41 (20.5)	105 (52.5)
Overcrowded classes prevent students from receiving adequate education	70 (35.0)	68 (34.0)	62 (31.0)
When school distance is greater, it contributes to low enrollment	60 (30.0)	64 (32.0)	76 (38.0)
Parents show insufficient interest in daughters' education, causing a low enrollment rate of girls	127 (63.5)	28 (14.0)	45 (22.5)

Social and family-related barriers in educational development of high schools

Table III shows that teachers encountered various social and family-related barriers that hamper educational development. In this regard, n=130 (65.0%) teachers agreed/strongly agreed that improved parental education affects children's schooling. Then, the teachers were asked whether physical violence against students (especially in government schools) contributes to their high dropout rates (agreed/strongly agreed teachers: n=54, 27.0%). The next school-related factor was overcrowded classes, which prevent students from receiving an adequate education. In this regard, n=70 (35.0%) teachers agreed/strongly agreed. The other academic factor was that a longer school distance is related to the low enrolment rate. For this statement, n=60 (30.0%) teachers agreed/strongly agreed, while n=76 (38.0%) teachers disagreed/strongly disagreed. It was also evident that parents show insufficient interest in their daughters' education, which contributes to the low enrollment rate. In this regard, n=127 (63.5%) teachers agreed/strongly agreed, while n=45 (22.5%) disagreed/strongly disagreed.

Table IV;Teachers' perceptions regarding cultural and gender-related barriers to educational development in high schools (N = 200)

Cultural and gender-related barriers	Frequency/ Percentage	Frequency/ Percentage	Frequency/ Percentage
	Strongly agree/ Agree	Neutral	Strongly disagree/ Disagree
Gender-role stereotypes restrict female students' enrollment in high schools	119 (59.5)	45 (22.5)	36 (18.0)
Cultural beliefs and practices deprive female students of access to high schools	114 (57.0)	42 (21.0)	44 (22.0)
Religious leaders' negative propaganda about young female education restricts them from high schools	136 (68.0)	23 (11.5)	41 (20.5)
Biased gender-based socialization encourages girls to be modest, submissive, and compliant, and restricts them from getting a high school education	121 (60.5)	48 (24.0)	31 (15.5)

Patriarchal social structures restrict young females from getting access to high schools	140 (70.0)	34 (17.0)	26 (13.0)
Conservative family and community attitudes restrict female students from getting access to high schools	132 (66.0)	32 (16.0)	36 (18.0)
Preference for boys' schooling over girls' schooling is the major factor that restricts girls' education	123 (61.5)	38 (19.0)	39 (19.5)
The cultural norms related to purity, modesty, and veiling restrict access to girls' education	105 (52.5)	45 (22.5)	50 (25.0)
Socio-cultural norms attached to girls also restricted their access to high schools	140 (70.0)	52 (26.0)	8 (4.0)

Cultural and gender-related barriers in educational development of high schools

Table IV presents teachers' viewpoints on cultural and gender-related barriers to educational development at the high school level. In this regard, n=119 (59.5%) teachers agreed/strongly agreed that gender-role stereotypes prevent female students from enrolling in high schools. In addition, n=114 (57.0%) teachers agreed/strongly agreed that cultural beliefs and practices deprive female students of access to high schools. In addition, the cultural context of South Punjab is driven by religious teachings. In this regard, n=136 (68.0%) respondents agreed/strongly agreed that negative propaganda by religious leaders about young girls' education is the major barrier restricting their access to high school education. In addition, n=121 (60.5%) teachers agreed/strongly agreed that biased gender-based socialization encourages girls to be modest, submissive, and compliant, which restricts their access to education. Teachers also strongly agreed that patriarchal social structures restrict young females' access to higher education (n=140, 70.0%). In addition, conservative family and community attitudes (agreed teachers: n=132, 66.0%) and a preference for boys' education also restrict girls' access to high schools (agreed teachers: n=123, 61.5%). The arguments of cultural and gender-based barriers also restricted girls' education. For this statement, 105 (52.5%) teachers agreed. The data also revealed that n=140 (70.0%) teachers agreed that socio-cultural norms attached to girls' education restricted their enrollment rate in the given structural area.

Table V; Teachers' perceptions regarding economic barriers for educational development in high schools (N = 200)

Economic barriers	**Frequency/ Percentage**	**Frequency/ Percentage**	**Frequency/ Percentage**
	Strongly agree/ Agree	**Neutral**	**Strongly disagree/ Disagree**
Limited household income restricts children's access to higher education (especially girls)	138 (69.0)	36 (18.0)	26 (13.0)
Large family size increases competition for household resources, ending in favoring boys' education over girls' education for high school	126 (63.0)	39 (19.5)	35 (17.5)
Low parental income limits children's access to high school enrollment	148 (74.0)	30 (15.0)	22 (11.0)
Lack of academic materials and financial-based facilities in schools, such as fans, classrooms, learning materials, etc., also restricted the access of students to high school	138 (69.0)	23 (11.5)	39 (19.5)

Lack of future economic security for teachers also contributed to their weak performance	154 (77.0)	21 (10.5)	25 (12.5)
Weak financial assistance in the form of budget allocation for the betterment of schools by the government undermines the enrollment rate of students	118 (59.0)	53 (26.5)	29 (14.5)

Economic barriers in the educational development of high schools

Based on results from Table V, n=138 (69.0%) teachers agreed/strongly agreed that limited household income restricted children's access to higher education. Teachers noted that girls were the main victims of limited access to high schools. In addition, n=126 (63.0%) teachers agreed/strongly agreed that large family size increases competition for household resources, which favors boys over girls in accessing and enrolling in high schools in Multan and Khanewal districts. In addition, n=148 (74.0%) teachers also agreed that low parental income limits children's access to high school enrollment. The data also revealed that n=138 (69.0%) teachers agreed/strongly agreed that a lack of academic materials and finance-based facilities in schools restricted students' access to high schools. These facilities include classroom academic materials, fans, better classroom structure, pens, benches, desks, dice, etc. In addition, n=154 (77.0%) teachers agreed/strongly agreed that a lack of future economic security also contributes to weak performance in schools and low-quality education. The data also showed that teachers agreed/strongly agreed that the government's inadequate financial assistance, such as budget allocation, undermines high school enrollment (n=118, 59.0%).

Table VI;Teachers' perceptions regarding school and teacher-level barriers to educational development in high schools (N = 200)

School and teacher-level barriers	**Frequency/ Percentage**	**Frequency/ Percentage**	**Frequency/ Percentage**
	Strongly agree/ Agree	**Neutral**	**Strongly disagree/ Disagree**
Poor school management and inadequate academic materials contribute to low student enrollment	96 (48.0)	39 (19.5)	65 (32.5)
Ghost schools distort assessments of school performance	80 (40.0)	47 (23.5)	73 (36.5)
Low teacher motivation contributes to low-quality education	147 (73.5)	22 (11.0)	31 (15.5)
Gender bias in teacher appointments reduces female teacher motivation	140 (70.0)	15 (7.5)	45 (22.5)
Teacher absenteeism contributes to low student enrollment	29 (14.5)	28 (14.0)	143 (71.5)
Weak teacher performance related to inadequate lecture delivery in class contributes to low student enrollment	27 (13.5)	38 (19.0)	135 (67.5)
Lack of qualified teachers discourages parents from enrolling their children enrollment	45 (22.5)	47 (23.5)	108 (54.0)
Teacher training is uncoordinated, fragmented, and inadequate, which causes them to concentrate less on their lectures	81 (40.5)	52 (26.0)	67 (33.5)

Weak examination system in schools encourages cheating and obstructs skill development of students and quality education	117 (58.5)	29 (14.5)	79 (39.5)

School and teachers' level barriers in educational development of high schools

Table VI presents teachers' views on teacher- and school-related barriers in Khanewal and Multan districts. The results showed that n=96 (48.0%) teachers agreed that poor school management and inadequate provision of academic materials are major school-level barriers to educational development in high schools. In addition, teachers agreed or strongly agreed that ghost schools also distort assessments of school performance (n=80, 40.0%). In addition, n=147 (73.5%) teachers also argued that low teacher motivation contributes to low-quality education in the study area. The argument extended to teacher-level barriers, where n=140 (70.0%) teachers agreed or strongly agreed that gender bias in teacher appointment reduces female teachers' motivation. The table also shows that teachers disagreed that their high absenteeism rate contributes to low student enrollment (n=135, 67.5% disagreed with this statement). In addition, teachers also disagreed/strongly disagreed that weak performance or inadequate lecture delivery in class is the major reason for low enrollment. The subsequent barrier in the table was that a lack of qualified teachers discourages parents from enrolling their children. For this statement, n=108 (54.0%) teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed, arguing that there is no link between teachers' high qualifications, their hiring, and students' enrollment. In addition, n=81 (40.5%) teachers strongly agreed that when teachers' training is uncoordinated, fragmented, and inadequate, they concentrate less on their lectures. Moreover, they argued that this is why high schools provide low-quality education. The table also showed that n=117 (58.5%) teachers agreed or strongly agreed that weak examinations in high schools encourage cheating and unfair means to solve papers, which became a major hurdle to quality education.

Table VII*;* Political and policy implementation barriers for educational development in high schools (N=200)

Political and policy implementation barriers	**Frequency/ Percentage**	**Frequency/ Percentage**
	To a greater extent/to some extent	**Not at all**
Policy failure hampers educational development	170 (85.0)	30 (15.0)
Weak planning prevents education policies from achieving their academic targets	160 (80.0)	40 (20.0)
Weak implementation of planning prevents education policies from achieving their academic targets	162 (81.0)	38 (19.0)
Unclear policy objectives prevent quality education	173 (86.5)	27 (13.5)
Insufficient resources prevent education policies from achieving their targets	169 (84.5)	31 (15.5)
Limited commitment to improving literacy rate contributes to policy failure	163 (81.5)	37 (18.5)
Insufficient national budget allocations weaken education policy	169 (84.5)	31 (15.5)
Inaccurate dropout data weakens educational planning	168 (84.0)	32 (16.0)
Inadequate government intervention negatively influences education policy-making	149 (74.5)	51 (25.5)
Orthodox political, religious, and ethnic influences affect policy failure	171 (85.5)	29 (14.5)

Limited internal and external collaboration contributes to policy failure	98 (49.0)	102 (51.0)
Shortage of qualified personnel contributes to educational policy failure	100 (50.0)	100 (50.0)
Limited private-sector participation contributes to policy failure	148 (74.0)	52 (26.0)
Political instability contributes to educational policy failure	108 (54.0)	92 (46.0)
Weak administrative structures undermine policy implementation	171 (85.5)	29 (14.5)
Lack of transparency and accountability to the academic stakeholders contributes to policy failure	168 (84.0)	32 (16.0)
Lack of systematic planning contributes to policy failure	160 (80.0)	40 (20.0)
Lack of government support contributes to policy failure	154 (77.0)	46 (23.0)

Political and policy implementation barriers for educational development of high schools

Table VII showed that n=17 (85.0%) teachers agreed to a greater extent/some extent that policy failure hampers educational development in high schools in the study area. In addition, n=160 (80.0%) respondents agreed to a greater extent/some extent that weak planning prevents ~~the~~ education policies from achieving their academic targets. In addition, n=162 (81.0%) respondents agreed to a greater extent/some extent that weak implementation of planning prevents education policies from achieving their academic targets. Later, n=173 (86.5%) teachers also agreed to a greater extent/some extent that unclear policy objectives prevent quality education. The statement about insufficient resources also revealed that n=169 (84.5%) agreed to a greater extent/some extent that insufficient resources prevent education policies from achieving their targets. The other argument related to the policy-level barriers was that limited commitment to improving the literacy rate contributes to policy failure. For this statement, n=163 (81.5%) teachers agreed to a greater extent/some extent. Additionally, n=169 (84.5%) teachers agreed to a greater extent/some extent that insufficient national budget allocations weaken the education policy. Other policy-level barriers included inaccurate dropout data weakening educational planning and inadequate government intervention negatively influencing education policy-making. For these statements, n=168 (84.0%) and n=149 (74.5%) teachers agreed to a greater extent/some extent, respectively. The other policymaking barrier was orthodox political, religious, and ethnic influences, which contributed to policy failure (agreed to a greater extent and to some extent: n=171, 85.5%). In addition, n=98 (49.0%) teachers agreed, to varying degrees, that limited internal and external collaboration contributes to policy failure in the given structural context. Other reported policy-level barriers included a shortage of qualified personnel, which contributed to educational policy failure, and limited private-sector participation, which contributes to policy failure. In this regard, n=100 (50.0%) and n=148 (74.0%) teachers agreed to a greater extent/some extent. Another policy-level barrier was political instability, which contributed to educational policy failure (agreed to some extent/to a great extent; teachers: n=108, 54.0%). Another relevant factor was weak administrative structures, which undermine policy implementation (n=171, 85.5%); teachers agreed to some extent to a great extent. Teachers also reported another policy-level barrier: a lack of transparency and accountability to academic stakeholders, which resulted in educational policy failure (n=168, 84.0% agreed with this stance). An extended argument by n=160 (80.0%) teachers was that a lack of systematic planning contributes to policy failure. In addition, n=154 (77.0%) teachers argued that a lack of government support contributed to policy failure.

Hypotheses Testing

Table VIII; One-sample exact binomial test of teachers' responses regarding the major barriers to educational development (N=200)

Hypothesis	Barriers to educational development	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	95% CI	Adjusted p-value
H1	Inadequate budget allocation from government to high school levels	169	84.5	78.8–88.9	<.001

H2	Conservative attitude of the family and community	132	66.0	59.2–72.2	<.001
H3	Low parental education	130	65.0	58.2–71.3	<.001
H4	Weak examination system that encourages cheating in exams	117	58.5	51.3-65.4	<.001
H5	Low socioeconomic status of parents	138	69.0	62.3–75.0	<.001
H6	Direct cost of schooling (including school fees, transportation, uniforms, and academic materials)	168	81.0	55.6–68.9	<.001
H7	Weak administrative structures for adequate planning of high school education	102	51.0	44.1–57.8	.832

Note: CI = Confidence Interval

Hypothetical testing model

The researchers conducted one-sample exact binomial tests to assess teachers' perspectives on differential barriers to development in high schools (Table VIII).

The first hypothesis stated that H1: Insufficient government budget allocation to high schools is perceived as the major barrier to educational development in high schools in Multan and Khanewal districts. The results showed that n=169 (84.5%) teachers identified insufficient government budget allocation as an important barrier. Therefore, the hypothesis is significant, as the teachers' endorsement was significantly higher than the 50% benchmark and the 95% confidence interval i.e., 78.8- 88.9; with Holm-adjusted: $p < .001$). The hypothesis stated that when the government's budget allocation to high schools is low, they will lack basic academic materials. Moreover, the cost of teacher training and students' school fees also increases, raising the dropout rate and lowering education quality.

The second hypothesis stated that H2: conservative attitudes of family and community are perceived as the major barrier to educational development in high schools in Multan and Khanewal districts. The results showed that n=132 (66.0%) teachers identified conservative family and community attitudes as an important barrier. The results are statistically significant, with a 95% confidence interval of 59.2- 72.2 with Holm-adjusted $p < .001$. The hypothesis stated that the conservative attitude of family and community caused gender bias in the enrollment of boys and girls. In the conservative study areas of Multan and Khanewal, the conservative attitude of the family and community became the major cause of the low enrollment rate of girls and their deprivation of access to high schools.

The third hypothesis stated that H3: low parental education is perceived as the major social barrier in educational development in high schools in Multan and Khanewal districts. The results showed that n=130 (65.0%) high school teachers endorsed this barrier. The results are statistically significant, with a 95% confidence interval of 58.2- 71.3 with Holm-adjusted $p < .001$. The hypothesis stated that low parental education is directly and significantly linked to inadequate educational quality among high school students. Parents with lower literacy in the study area did not consider high school education mandatory for their children.

The subsequent hypothesis stated that H4: a weak examination system encourages cheating in exams is perceived as the major social barrier in educational development in high schools in Multan and Khanewal districts. The results showed that n=117 (58.5%) teachers agreed with this barrier. The results are statistically significant, with a 95% confidence interval of 51.3- 65.4 with Holm-adjusted $p < .001$. This hypothesis suggests that high schools in the study context have a weak examination system that encourages cheating. In this way, low-quality education provokes poor academic performance among students, which in turn results in a lack of educational development in the given study context.

The subsequent hypothesis stated that H5: low socioeconomic status of parents is perceived as the major social barrier in educational development in high schools in Multan and Khanewal districts. The results showed that n=138 (69.0%) respondents agreed on this barrier. The results are statistically significant with a 95% confidence interval of 62.3- 75.0 with Holm-adjusted $p <$

.001. This hypothesis showed that when parents are poor, they prefer that their children earn for the home rather than receive a high school education. Parents calculated the indirect cost of schooling by assessing children's future earnings and the time lost to education.

The next hypothesis stated that H6: the direct cost of schooling is perceived as the major social barrier in educational development in high schools in Multan and Khanewal districts. The results showed that n=168 (81.0%) teachers agreed on this barrier. The results are statistically significant with a 95% confidence interval of 62.3- 75.0 with Holm-adjusted p < .001. This hypothesis showed that the direct cost of schooling, such as school fees, transportation, uniforms, and academic materials, is the major barrier to educational development in the given research area. This direct cost of schooling especially affects parents who already have low socio-economic status.

The subsequent hypothesis H7 states that weak administrative structures for adequate planning are perceived as the major social barrier to educational development in high schools in Multan and Khanewal districts. The results showed that n=102 (51.0%) teachers agreed on this barrier. The results were non-significant, with a 95% confidence interval of 44.1-57.8 and a Holm-adjusted p-value of 0.832. This shows that high school teachers gave a non-significant response that weak administrative structures are imperative for adequate planning for high school students in the study area.

Table IX;Multiple regression analysis regarding the major barriers to educational development (N=200)

Independent variables	β	p-value	Decision
Policy-level barriers	−0.36	< 0.001	Significant
Economic barriers	−0.28	< 0.001	Significant
Socio-cultural/gender barriers	−0.24	< 0.001	Significant
Institutional barriers	−0.19	< 0.001	Significant
Administrative barriers	−0.05	0.328	Non-significant

Note. β = standardized regression coefficient.

Dependent variable: Educational development in high schools

Model Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model statistics	Values
R^2	0.78
Adjusted R^2	0.77
F-statistic	139.62
Degrees of freedom	5, 194
Model significance	p < 0.001
Sample size	200

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Decision
H1	Policy-level barriers → Educational development	Supported

H2	Economic barriers → Educational development	Supported
H3	Socio-cultural/gender barriers → Educational development	Supported
H4	Institutional barriers → Educational development	Supported
H5	Administrative barriers → Educational development	Not supported

Multiple regression analysis regarding major barriers to educational development

Table IX shows that policy-level barriers have the strongest negative relationship with educational development in high schools (β = −0.36, p < 0.001). This suggests that weak policymaking, inadequate implementation strategies, and inconsistent government priorities are key factors reducing educational development in the study area. Similarly, the results showed that economic and institutional barriers also have a significant and negative relationship with educational development in the study area. These negative relationships mean these barriers negatively affect educational development in the high schools of Khanewal and Multan. Economic barriers accounted for 28% of the variance, while institutional barriers accounted for 19% of the variance in educational development. This means that low socio-economic status of parents, inadequate financial facilities given to the academic domain, along with insufficient teaching materials, non-coordination between the government and high school officials, and insufficient academic facilities were the major obstacles in educational development. Because the p-value exceeds the conventional significance level of 0.05, administrative barriers did not independently explain variation in high school educational development in the study area.

The model summary explained the multiple regression results. It is evident from the Coefficient of Determination (R2) that these predictors, including the policy-level barriers, economic barriers, socio-cultural/gender barriers, institutional barriers, and administrative barriers, accounted for 78% of the variance in educational development of high schools in the study area.

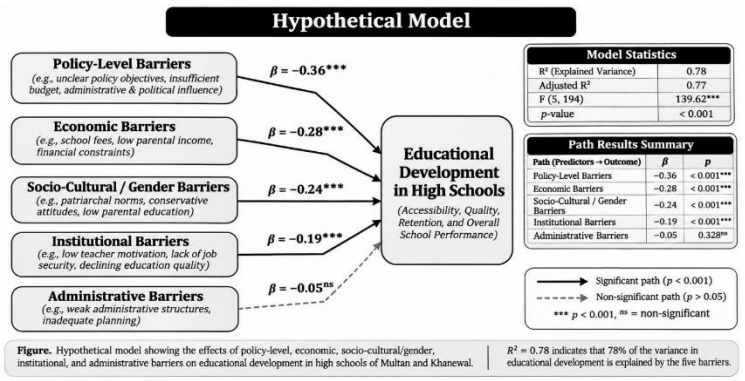

Figure. Hypothetical model showing the effects of policy-level, economic, socio-cultural/gender, institutional, and administrative barriers on educational development in high schools of Multan and Khanewal. | R^2 = 0.78 indicates that 78% of the variance in educational development is explained by the five barriers.

Discussion

The present study's regression results indicated that policy-level barriers (β = −0.36, p < .001), economic barriers (β = −0.28, p < .001), socio-cultural and gender-related barriers (β = −0.24, p < .001), and institutional barriers (β = −0.19, p < .001) have a significant negative relationship with the educational development of sampled high schools. In validating these findings, previous studies from the international context also endorsed that barriers in policymaking and implementation (Chanimbe & Dankwah, 2021), economic level (Liu et al., 2009), socio-cultural and gender-related factors (Arafat et al., 2021), and institutional factors (Afonyaa-Harry & Akpan, 2025) are the major causes of educational deprivation in the given study contexts. Collectively, the explanatory model accounts for 78% of the variance in educational development (R^2 = .78; adjusted R^2 = .77). As the present empirical evidence shows, these factors together create hurdles in educational development rather than isolated barriers. Studies from Pakistan by Karim & Abbas (2025) and Sattar et al. (2011) support this empirical finding.

These findings show that policy-level barriers are the most influential, affecting educational development in high schools in the study area by 36%. In validation, UNESCO's (2024) Global Monitoring Report also supported that effective educational leadership

clarifies institutional expectations, professional development, and learning outcomes. It also highlighted unclear educational objectives, weak coordination among academic stakeholders and school systems, inadequate resources, and accountability gaps as major obstacles to educational development in Pakistan. Another study conducted by Leithwood et al. (2020) and two studies conducted by Khurram (2025) and Kakar (2023) in the Pakistani context also validated these findings.

The recent study findings also explained 28% of the variance in educational development. International evidence shows that poverty and the direct and indirect costs of education are major barriers to educational participation, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. World Bank (2018) explains that access to schooling does not automatically guarantee meaningful learning because financial constraints, inadequate institutional resources, and weak educational provision can restrict students' educational opportunities. The present findings also support this perspective by showing that household poverty and the costs of school attendance are important constraints in the study area. Empirical evidence from the international context, from the World Bank (2018) and UNESCO (2020), supports these findings. In addition to this, Manzoor et al. (2024) and Sattar (2012) endorsed that poverty and inadequate educational resources are barriers. The direct cost of schooling, especially school fees, and a shortage of basic facilities in girls' education were major barriers to educational development in Pakistan's high schools.

The study also identified socio-cultural barriers to educational development in the study areas' high schools. The regression results indicated a significant negative relationship between socio-cultural and gender-based barriers and educational development. In this regard, these barriers account for 24% of the variance in educational development. The findings demonstrated that gender inequality in education is not the consequence of inadequate school infrastructure, traditional gender roles, or unequal household decision-making structures. In patriarchal social arrangements, girls' educational opportunities are shaped by expectations around domestic responsibilities, modesty, family honor, and societal perceptions. Therefore, the gender bias, along with orthodox traditional cultural patterns, deprives girls of their educational rights, especially access to education and educational attainment in high schools. These findings are endorsed by international studies, which validated that bias in parental attitudes toward girls' education, perceived economic burden, and cultural expectations for restricting girls' education were the major barriers that deprive girls of access to education. International studies by Dahal et al. (2023), Purewal & Hashmi (2015), and Psaki et al. (2018) also supported these factors. Empirical evidence from Pakistan by Ali et al. (2025) and Agha et al. (2021) also showed that domestic responsibilities, patriarchal family structures, safety concerns, gender discrimination, and religious and tribal influences restricted girls' access to high school education in Multan and Khanewal.

Another major factor is institutional barriers that hinder high school development in Multan and Khanewal districts. The predictor has a significant negative relationship with educational development. Multiple regression analysis showed that these barriers accounted for 19% of the variance in educational progression in the study area. UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report (2024) also supported these findings, as did Toropova et al. (2021). These international studies argued that school leadership, teacher coordination, professional capacity building, and a supportive institutional environment can overcome institutional barriers. When these factors do not work well, they negatively affect high school development. Evidence from Pakistan also supported these findings and highlighted the role of school leadership in teachers' motivation in Lahore high schools. The findings also identified supportive leadership, institutional autonomy, and professional development as major factors that hamper education sector development in the study area. They also highlighted that a lack of professional development for teachers, along with delayed salaries, future financial insecurity, and institutional concerns, were major institutional barriers hampering educational development in high schools in Pakistan (see studies conducted by Akram et al., 2026; Kiran et al., 2022).

Another important factor behind the insignificant findings was the role of administrative barriers in high school educational development. In this regard, the multiple regression results were also insignificant ($\beta = -0.05$, $p = .328$). These findings showed that teachers did not provide a sufficiently strong statistical endorsement of the administrative barrier related to educational development. The results showed that administrative constraints in the study area overlap with broader governance and policy implementation problems. In this regard, the teachers experienced inadequate planning, institutional weakness, and weak accountability. A previous study in Pakistan by Shah et al. (2023) supported this finding.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, underdevelopment in high schools in Multan and Khanewal is a multidimensional issue shaped by interconnected socio-cultural, economic, political, and institutional barriers. Teachers' perspectives revealed that unclear policy objectives, weak administrative structures, inadequate government budget allocations, and policy failures were major obstacles to the educational development of high schools in the research area. In addition, the study identified low parental income, the direct cost of schooling, conservative attitudes in the family and community, lack of professional training, low teacher motivation, and future economic

insecurity. It also emphasized that increased public investment, gender-responsive initiatives, policy implementation, and stronger institutional accountability were essential to promoting sustainable development in the study area.

The teachers made the following recommendations to mitigate barriers in the education sector.

1. Increase educational investment through budget allocation to improve school infrastructure, academic resources, and institutional facilities.
2. Launch awareness programs that address gender equality to facilitate girls' education.
3. Provide financial assistance to cover the direct costs of schooling, such as school fees, uniforms, and fee concessions, to reduce the financial burden on students' families.
4. Provide resource materials for the classrooms, such as furniture, books, desks, and benches. It should also go beyond classrooms by providing sanitation and drinking water facilities.
5. Teachers should be provided with academic facilities so that they can deliver their lectures with professionalism.

References

1. Abid, S., Ali, S. M., & Ali, I. (2021). A basic right denied: The interplay between various factors contributing to school dropouts in Pakistan. *Frontiers in Education, 6*, Article 682579.
2. Afonyaa-Harry, J. A., & Akpan, A. J. (2025). Overcoming barriers to educational policy implementation in rural schools. *Int. J. Strateg. Leadersh. Educ. Soc. Sci.(IJLESS), 1*, 32–52.
3. Agha, N., Rind, R., & Issani, M. (2021). Analysis of factors contributing to girls' dropout from secondary schools in rural Sindh, Pakistan. *The Women – Annual Research Journal of Gender Studies, 13*.
4. Akram, H. (2020). Education governance in Pakistan: A critical analysis of challenges. *Journal of Social Sciences Advancement*, *1*(1), 38–41.
5. Akram, S., Sohail, F., Chaudhary, D., Shafqat, A., Hameed, U. R., & Saeed, M. K. (2026). The role of school leadership in teacher motivation in public secondary schools of Lahore District, Pakistan. *Discover Psychology, 6*, Article 4.
6. Ali, N., Younas, Z., & Butt, I. H. (2025). Breaking barriers: The impact of gender norms on girls' access to high school education. *Social Sciences Spectrum, 4*(2), 487–497.
7. Arafat, A., Ahmad, N. A., & Ismail, S. F. S. (2021). Socio-cultural gender norms and economic barriers in the context of rural high school girls' dropout in Bangladesh: A qualitative study. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)*, *6*(8), 436–447.
8. Asghar, Z., & Mukhtar, S. (2020). Interactive effect of school principals' leadership styles and teacher characteristics on curriculum implementation at public secondary schools of Punjab. *UMT Education Review, 3*(1), 95–119.
9. Bibi, T., Awan, K., & Mahmood, M. (2022). Review of provisions of national education policies, development of education and challenges. *Pakistan Journal of Educational Research, 5*(2).
10. Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J.-C. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society and culture* (R. Nice, Trans.). Sage Publications.
11. Bukhari, S. T., Rafiq-uz-Zaman, M., & Bano, S. (2025). Analyzing the impact of education policies and their implementation on the school education system in Punjab, Pakistan. *Inverge Journal of Social Sciences*, *4*(1), 98–110.
12. Chanimbe, T., & Dankwah, K. O. (2021). The 'new'Free Senior High School policy in Ghana: Emergent issues and challenges of implementation in schools. *Interchange*, *52*(4), 599–630.
13. Dahal, T., Topping, K. J., & Levy, S. (2023). Patriarchy, gender norms and female student dropout from high schools in Nepal. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 53*(6), 1005–1023.
14. Fägerlind, I., & Saha, L. J. (2016). Education and national development: A comparative perspective. Elsevier.

15. Farooqi, S., & Forbes, T. (2020). Enacted discretion: Policy implementation, local government reform and education services in Pakistan. *Public Management Review, 22*(8), 1217–1239.

16. Fatima, K., Ullah, N., & Zafar, J. M. (2024). Identification of dropout reasons in public girls' secondary schools in South Punjab, Pakistan. *International Journal of Trends and Innovations in Business & Social Sciences, 2*(2), 183–192.

17. Global Education Monitoring Report Team. (2024). *Global education monitoring report 2024/5: Leadership in education—Lead for learning*. UNESCO.

18. Guo, Y., & Li, X. (2024). Regional inequality in China's educational development: An urban-rural comparison. *Heliyon*, *10*(4).

19. Halai, A., & Durrani, N. (2021). School education system in Pakistan: Expansion, access, and equity. In *Handbook of education systems in South Asia* (pp. 665–693). Singapore: Springer Singapore.

20. Hussain, S., & Hassan, I. (2024). Exploring the scope of self-enumeration among young adults in Pakistan's census of 2023. *Journal of Development and Social Sciences, 5*(2)(S), 234–243.

21. Kakar, R. (2023). School education in post-18th Amendment Balochistan: A political economy perspective. *The Pakistan Development Review, 62*(4), 467–492.

22. Karim, N., & Abbas, M. (2025). Transforming Pakistan's education system: Opportunities, innovations, and persistent challenges in the 21st century. *Policy Journal of Social Science Review*, *3*(10), 364–379.

23. Khurram, A. (2025). *Implementation of education policy in Pakistan: A systematic literature review* (Working Paper No. 2025:08). Pakistan Institute of Development Economics.

24. Kiran, A., Arshad, F., & Rizwan, S. (2022). Relationship between teachers' professional development and their teaching performance at secondary school level. *Pakistan Journal of Social Research, 4*(3), 215–227.

25. Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management, 40*(1), 5–22.

26. Liu, C., Zhang, L., Luo, R., Rozelle, S., Sharbono, B., & Shi, Y. (2009). Development challenges, tuition barriers, and high school education in China. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, *29*(4), 503–520.

27. Manzoor, R., Tabassum, R., Ahmed, V., Rauf, A., Zahid, J., & coauthors. (2024). Gender analysis of education budgets in Pakistan: Case studies of Punjab and Sindh. *Journal of Education, 204*(2), 380–391.

28. Mncube, D. W., Ajani, O. A., Ngema, T., & Mkhasibe, R. G. (2023). Exploring the problems of limited school resources in rural schools and curriculum management. *UMT Education Review*, *6*(2), 1–31.

29. Mughal, A. W., & Aldridge, J. (2017). Head teachers' perspectives on school drop-out in secondary schools in rural Punjab, Pakistan. *Educational Studies, 53*(4), 359–376.

30. Nasim, F., Idrees, S., Ashraf, S., & Moin, M. (2025). Leadership under pressure: Contextual barriers and capacity-building needs of school heads in South Punjab. *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 13*(2), 305–314.

31. North, D. C. (1990). *Institutions, institutional change, and economic performance*. Cambridge University Press.

32. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. (2023). *7th population and housing census 2023: National census report*. Government of Pakistan.

33. Perry, L. B., Rowe, E., & Lubienski, C. (2022). School segregation: Theoretical insights and future directions. *Comparative Education, 58*(1), 1–15.

34. Psaki, S. R., McCarthy, K. J., & Mensch, B. S. (2018). Measuring gender equality in education: Lessons from trends in 43 countries. *Population and Development Review, 44*(1), 117–142.

35. Purewal, N., & Hashmi, N. (2015). Between returns and respectability: Parental attitudes towards girls' education in rural Punjab, Pakistan. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 36*(7), 977–995.

36. Sain, Z. H. (2023). Revitalizing education in Pakistan: Challenges and recommendations. *International Journal of Higher Education Management, 9*(02).

37. Saleem, H., & Nadeem, O. (2023). The Role of Education in Social Mobility: Pathways, Barriers, and Policy Implications. *Journalism, Politics and Society, 1*(04), 157–164.

38. Sattar, T. (2012). A sociological analysis of economic impediments of development in education sector: A case of Southern Punjab (Pakistan). *International Journal of Accounting and Financial Reporting, 2*(1).

39. Sattar, T., Yasin, G., & Afzal, S. (2011). Socio-political and economic barriers of development in education sector of Southern Punjab (Pakistan). *British Journal of Economics, Finance and Management Sciences, 3*(1), 51–71.

40. Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. *The American Economic Review, 51*(1), 1–17. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1818907

41. Shah, S. A. M., Batool, S., & Zahoor, Z. (2023). Administrative disparities and executive challenges for head teacher in school operations at secondary schools of rural areas of Sindh, Pakistan. *Journal of Positive School Psychology, 7*(2), 1099–1106.

42. Tajammal, F. (2018). *Gender Inequalities in Education: A Case Study of the Girls' Stipend Program in Punjab, Pakistan* (Doctoral dissertation, Manchester Metropolitan University).

43. Tasleem, Z., & Tasleem, Z. (2024). Analysis of the education policies of Pakistan: Identifying factors behind its shortcomings and failure to achieve goals. *Journal of Public Policy Practitioners, 3*(1).

44. Toropova, A., Myrberg, E., & Johansson, S. (2021). Teacher job satisfaction: The importance of school working conditions and teacher characteristics. *Educational Review, 73*(1), 71–97.

45. UNESCO. (2020). *Global education monitoring report 2020: Inclusion and education—All means all.* UNESCO.

46. Van Pham, S. (2024). The influence of social and emotional learning on academic performance, emotional well-being, and implementation strategies: A literature review. *Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 9*(12), 381–391.

47. World Bank. (2018). *World development report 2018: Learning to realize education's promise.* World Bank.

48. Zahid, M., Kousar, S., Aziz, A., & Muzaffar, M. (2026). Analyzing the spatial population density and available health facilities in Lahore, Pakistan. *Sociology & Cultural Research Review, 5*(1), 971–983.



2026 by the authors; Journal of Global Social Transformation (JGST). This is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).