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PARENTAL CHOICE IN SCHOOLING AND EDUCATION IN BALOCHISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Pakistani education system offers schooling and education through three mainstream channels, i.e., public, private and faith-based religious institutions (Madaaris; single Madrasah), to its masses. This study provides an insight into understanding the significant factors shaping schooling and educational choices of parents for their children in the province of Balochistan-Pakistan. Three semi-urban and rural locations were selected for data collection from two districts – Quetta and Pishin. In addition to the available literature, the qualitative and quantitative data was obtained from household (parents), teachers, institutional administrators, policymakers, religious and community elders and field observations through a mixed-method data collection and analysis approach to understand the phenomenon of school choice. The data revealed that parents were interested in quality formal education, however, the scarcity of such opportunities leads their children feel deprived, and the substandard formal schools compel the parents to weigh alternate opportunities for their children's education. Their school choice decision is backed by several factors such as cost, quality, prospects and benefits, parental socioeconomic status, geographical location and so on. These factors highly influence parents' educational decision-making, and their priorities whether children attend public, private, Madrasah institution, or do not attend a school at all.

This unique study is of great significance for national and international educationists, researchers and policymakers as for the first time a study includes the voices of the people of the least developed province (Balochistan) on parental choice.

Keywords: *Parental Choice in Education; Education in Pakistan; Madrasah Education; Balochistan-Pakistan; Schooling Opportunities in Pakistan*

INTRODUCTION

Researchers claim that education in poverty stricken and heavily populated country like Pakistan provides young people with the opportunity to enhance their living standards through learning (Evans and Boling, 2008). This claim commonly rests on the assumption that everyone has equal access to the same kind of schooling, and that schooling plays a meritocratic role in redistributing social and economic opportunities. Thus, this literature assumes that schools give (or could give) all pupils, regardless of their backgrounds, equal preparation for an opportunity to pursue something 'good' for life.

Unlike in most OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) and more industrialized countries of the world, most Pakistanis still, even after 70 years of independence, struggle with merely gaining access to education. For instance, Government of Pakistan's official statistics show that the overall literacy rate (10+ years) was only 60% (71% for males and 49% for females). The data also reveals

that literacy rates were significantly higher in urban areas (74%) and more prevalent for men (80%). Rural areas and rural women had the lowest literacy rates, at 51% and 38% respectively (PLSM, 2018-19). According to the same source, the primary level Gross Enrollment Rate (GER, age 6-10 years) was 87% (male 92% and female 81%), while the Net Enrollment Rate (NER) was only 66% (53% girls and 68% boys) in 2018-19. The Pakistan Education Statistics Report (2019) rereported 305,763 educational institutions in Pakistan in total, including public, private and religious educational institutions – 62% of them were public while 38% belonged to private sector (including 31,115 Islamic religious educational institutions, i.e., *Madaaris* – singular *Madrasah*). 56% of children were enrolled in public schools and 44% in private institutions. While providing gender-segregated data the report noted that out of the total enrolled children 56% were boys and 44% were girls. At the national level the public sector was the biggest education service provider with overall 87% primary schools. However, at higher level private sector had a gradually increased number of educational institutions. *Madaaris* in Pakistan had an enrollment of a little over 4 million in the country – 58% of the *Madrasah* enrolled students were male while 42% were females (Pakistan Education Statistics, 2017-18).

In Balochistan (area-wise the largest province), where researcher conducted this study, official Government of Pakistan studies show that the total literacy rate was as low as 40% (54% male versus 24% female), while the total Gross Enrollment Rates were 57%, (67% for boys versus 46% for girls). Likewise, the total Net Enrollment Rate (NER) in the province's primary schools was only 40%, which means that much more than half of young children (between the age 6 to10), particularly girls (almost 1/3 – only 35% enrolled), are still out of schools in the province (PSLM, 2018-19). The situation in the rural areas of the province depicts an even grimmer picture; for instance, in Dera Bugti district the total literacy (10+ years) was only 16% and among females it is merely 1%. In the same district only 10% of children were in the schools and the total NER was as low as 13% in 2013 (PLSM-2013-14; ASER 2014). In Balochistan province-wide NER at Matric level (grade 10, age 14-15) was merely 12% and among girls it was alarmingly low – only 9% (PLSM, 2018-19). As per the figures available from Pakistan Education Statistics Report 2017-18, out of the total available educational institutions 93% were government schools containing 79% of the total population of enrolled students in the entire province. Public sector schools accounted for being the largest educational service provider and enrolling much more students than the private schools. This proportion has always been much higher in rural areas as private schools' outreach is minimal. There were 1882 *Madaaris* in Balochistan, including 10 female-only *Madaaris* with only around 47 thousand female students in the province (Pakistan Education Statistics, 2017-18). However, many young girls below the age of ten normally attend the village mosques for their religious education.

2. Literature Review

A wide range of literature on parental choice in schooling illuminates very interesting debates evolving around the globe in the recent past. Most of the existing choice literature emphasizes experiences in Global North (countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and EU). In the developed world, school choice is one of the most controversial educational reforms (Maddaus, 1990; Boyd & Lugg 1998; Brouillette, 2001). Both sides present quite strong and convincing arguments for and against parental choice policies. Here, the literature argues, parental choice is concerned with the ways that parents respond to the quality of education and the perceived future benefits from a particular school or the type of education (Maddaus, 1990; Brouillette, 2001; Sanders, 2001; Ball, 2003; Morgan and Blackmore, 2007). In addition, parents may also consider the cost of schooling, geographic location of educational institutions, parents' social status and economic capacity to educate their children, disciplinary practices and the social atmosphere at school (Iram et al, 2008; Morgan and Blackmore, 2007; Gibbons et al, 2006; Checchi and Jappelli, 2004; Sawada and Lokshin, 2001).

In less developed countries and impoverished communities, though quality of education may be of concern, scarce resources, limited access to information about the quality of education, and limited options particularly in rural settings mean that most of the population's educational decisions are more likely to be made on the bases of affordability and access. Moreover, in many

Muslim societies, religious beliefs, and prevailing social and cultural norms also play an important role in shaping parents' educational choices.

In Pakistan, "school choice" means something distinct. It is neither offered nor supported by the state or community structures; instead, different school systems serve different kinds of students and families. In so doing, the educational system as a whole reflects and (re)produces class and gender hierarchies that are firmly embedded in all aspects of life.

According to the latest 1973 constitution of Pakistan, the state is responsible for providing up to secondary level education to the entire population of the country. While many researchers have laid out arguments for why educational access remains a problem in so much of the world, several researchers argue that Pakistan has, unfortunately, inherited a systemized, class- and gender-based educational structure since its inception (Farah et al, 2006; Farah, 2007 and Rahman, 2004). The British colonial powers left behind an educational legacy of three distinct streams of education in Pakistan, roughly divided along socio-economic class lines: The *Madaaris*, catered to rural and very poor children; the vernacular-medium (Urdu-medium) public schooling was for working and lower-middle class children; and the English language schools were for the urban middle and upper classes (Farah et al, 2006; Rahman, 2004).

As the total population has increased in Pakistan, the number of modern secular schools and *Madaaris* has also increased, but schools of Pakistan (including public schools, private schools and *Madraaris)* have been severely criticized, particularly after the rise of Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the tragic events of 9/11 in the United States. National literature has described the public school system as conservative, outdated and low quality (Hoodbhoy, 1998; Memon, 2007). *Madaaris* are regarded as being affiliated with sectarian violence, serving as *Jehad* factories, and promoting terrorism (Freedman, 2001; Singer, 2001; Hussain, 2008; Malik, 2008).

Andrabi warn of the dangers of *Madaaris* (Andrabi et al, 2012 and Andrabi et al, 2008). The international literature has reframed the entire Pakistani education as violent; for instance, a Washington Post story from January 17, 2010, quoted by Winthrop and Graff (2010), states, "with a curriculum that glorifies violence in the name of Islam and ignores basic history, science and math, the public education system [in Pakistan] has become a major barrier to U.S. efforts to defeat extremist groups". Private schools that are considered liberal and more secular, on the other hand, are seen as institutions serving the needs of only the small upper class and mostly urban population of the country (Rahman, 2005).

3. Purpose of the Study

Purpose of this study was multi-facet; however, to mainly understand the following:

How, when, and why parents make decisions on their children's schooling in Pakistan, especially in Balochistan province – to well understand various significant factors that influence parents' educational decision-making, that kept the children of Balochistan from better educational outcomes.

Parents' educational (or non-educational) priorities for their children, whether they attended public schools, private schools, *Madaaris*, or did not attend any school at all.

What kind of education do these varied types of institutions offer to children belonging to different social classes.

4. Conceptual and Analytical Framework

The critical theories of social reproduction contribute to this paper's analytical framework. Critical theory considers the social, political, and economic contexts and implications of schooling (Wexler, 2009). It considers "issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy, matters of race, class and gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion and other social institutions and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system" (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2011). In Wexler's (2009) words, "Marxist Social Theory is about how the social is structured beyond the sum of the individuals and in an organized and collective history of production process that are complex and internally contradictory". The qualitative researchers who adopt a critical theoretical approach are interested in how social values and organization get reproduced in schools and other educational institutions and how people produce choices and actions in society – which is normally influenced by the available educational institutions. Wexler (2009) further argues that the institutional reproductive work that was once accomplished by religion is now increasingly

accomplished by education. He stresses the fact that schools are not free-floating institutions; instead, they are part of the 'state apparatus' representative of the dominant political system (Wexler, 2009).

Marx (1964) claims that "the ideas of the ruling class are, in every age, the ruling ideas, that is, the class which is the dominant material force in the society is at the same time the dominant intellectual force" (p-78). In the case of Pakistan, it appears to be the case that the people who had access to elite education have ruled the country since its inception. The affluent groups, especially the ones who are more culturally privileged in Pakistani society, such as the *Khans*, *Nawabs*, *Sardars*, *Waderas*, and *Choudhries*, who often serve as politicians, military and civil bureaucrats, always find a way to make the best education for their children available through elite private and public schools. The schooling that they choose reproduces the next generation of the same ruling class and helps them reinforce their advantage – the cycle has been going on for the last 75 years.

Each one of the schooling systems in Pakistan (Public, Private and *Madrasah*) has its own sphere of constituents. While there are significant ideological and institutional differences among these systems, they are primarily differentiated in who they serve by class.

Public schools cater to the needs of the vast majority of the poor and lower-middle-class population in Pakistan (Rahman, 2004; Farah et al, 2006). Public schooling costs are much lower for parents than the costs associated with schooling provided by the private sector. Due to dissatisfaction with public sector institutions (except for a few elite ones, such as the institutions run by the Pakistan Armed Forces, which are not accessible to the common citizens), demand for private sector institutions has increased, and, in response, the number of such institutions has also boosted. As the middle-class removes their children from a state system in which they perceive the quality of education to have deteriorated, and move them into mid-level private institutions, this creates even greater social and class segregation in the society (Narodowski, 2008), as well as fueling elite migration to urban areas with greater numbers of private institutions.

The share of enrollment in private schools increased steadily over the past several decades - more than one-third of the Pakistani population is now being served by the private school sector of the educational system. Private schooling is mainly accessible to the urban, upper-middle-class or the elite class of the society (Rahman, 2005), and this increasing trend is attributed to a 'social process of segregation' (Narodowski, 2008). Over time it has been observed that these are mainly the quality educational institutions that produce the intellectual and political cream of the society who govern society. The elite public and private schools serve the affluent class, making up 3% to 5% of the population (Naseem, 2004). The costs of the elite schools are very high and can only be borne by the families of upper class (Rahman, 2004). With the emergence of low-fee private schools, the urban lower-middle and middle-class parents may opt to move their children to the low-fee private schools with the hope that these schools will provide a better education for their children (Andrabi et al, 2012).

Madaaris, as explained by Rahman (2004), are considered to be the schools for the poor (Ahmad, 2002; Rahman, 2004). *Madaaris* provide free education to all regardless of class or geography. Most of the *Madrasah* students come from very poor families, who even could not send their children to low-fee private schools. However, only a small exception of families with more money sends their children to *Madaaris*. Generally, these families consider religious education to be an obligation and see modern education as a threat to morality (Malik, 2008; Nelson, 2006). Few of these families (less than 10%) who send their children to *Madaaris* are not economically destitute (Anzar, 2003).

Just like many public and private secular school students, *Madrasah* attendees also maintain a particular cohesive vision of ideal schooling that may involve a principle of division, or defining and differentiating from unlike groups (Bourdieu, 1998). In such thinking, *Madrasah* attendees develop identities and enact strategies that increase their cultural and political capital in relation to other individuals and collectives. There is some evidence that the role of the Pakistani *Madaaris* is to further intertwine religious traditions with the local cultures, thus resulting in a more religiously inclined society (Riaz, 2014).

While expressing his concern over the place and role of educational institutions, we find Bourdieu in agreement with Marx – noting that "the educational system makes more thoroughly than

any other legitimating mechanism … the arbitrary nature of the actual demarcation of its public, thereby imposing more subtly the legitimacy of its product and its hierarchies" (p-496). One of the major critiques of the prevailing educational systems (especially the elite public and private schools) in Pakistan is that they have made a great contribution to the reproduction of the structure of unequal power relationships between classes, as Bourdieu, (1974) would say, by contributing to the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among the affluent classes. Moreover, Pakistani society is very much influenced both by religion as well as education, which interact to play a central role in enabling the maintenance and continuation of the contemporary social structure (Wexler, 2009).

The researcher wishes to investigate how this clear class division among education institutions was constructed, how it was understood, and how it resulted in differentiated "educational choices" in Balochistan—an area in which there has been tremendous interest on the part of political scientists and policymakers in the so-called "choices" that parents make to send their children to *Madrasah* or formal schooling (public or private).

5. Research Methodology

This study is based on a mixed methods paradigm and brings together qualitative and quantitative research methods to get the most out of this fieldwork and data. The study encompasses three major research components: first, analysis of the available literature and research from around the world on parental choice in general, and on Pakistan's education choice in particular. Second, survey of the target area households, gauging their demographics and socio-economic status; and third, acquiring the knowledge on parents', community leaders', teachers', and other local educational stakeholders' attitudes, knowledge and practices regarding school choice.

This research involved a greater number of qualitative elements and a range of approaches that are discussed in the following. The quantitative part was limited to secondary data gathered from the available public and private sector reports and primary data collected through a household survey, which mainly investigated the socio-economic capital and demographics of households in each of the catchment areas. The researcher captured the majority of this data through carefully selected research design and carried out household surveys and in-depth interviews with parents, teachers, institutional administrators, community and religious elders. The researcher also conducted detailed observations at the community, institution and classrooms level in all three educational institutions, i.e., public, private and Madrasah. Moreover, this study also included a few interviews with the policy makers at the district and province level in the sample. This blend of varied types of qualitative research tools offered an effective source of triangulation, ensuring production of more accurate and authentic results of the study. The researcher obtained a comprehensive data set from a planned, mixed-methods data collection approach, believing that the good amount of quantitative and qualitative data from the same villages and families would facilitate this data analysis; hence resulting in solid outcome.

The geographical point of interest of the study was rural areas in two Pak-Afghan bordering districts (Quetta and Pishin) within the Balochistan province of Pakistan (poorest province of the country). Except Quetta city, the entire province is considered to be rural and tribal and traditional (Gov. of Balochistan website; Baloch & Khalid, 1990).

The researcher selected two villages/small towns in the rural areas of Quetta district. Since Pishin is almost 94% rural, the site selected, however, was only about 27 kilometers from Pishin town; therefore, it had, to some extent, access to Pishin town (the capital of Pishin district with more variety of educational institutions). Taken together, the three sites represent the most common settings for schooling in the province and the country: very rural, without easy access to town, rural, but with access to town if the family is wealthy enough to afford regular transportation, and suburban, which in Balochistan are primarily the areas in and around Quetta. These three research sites represented a blend of population of rich and poor, rural and semi urban, with a variety of educational institutions, including public, private and madrasah.

In total more than 70 households were surveyed in each of the villages during the first round. The second round of data collection consisted mainly of in-depth interviews with the parents. These interviews were based on purposive sampling. On average 25 parents with children going to school

(Public, Private and/or *Madrasah*) in each village were interviewed during the household survey round and were identified as willing to participate in the study. Additional interviews in each village were conducted with village elders, teachers, school and *Madrasah* administrators (at local level) and government and *Madrasah* officials at the district, province and the national level. Multiple data collection tools including, semi-structured quantitative and qualitative interview protocol with the household heads and open-ended, in-depth interview guides with parents, institutional administrators, teachers, and policy makers were used. The researcher also conducted institutional and classroom observations (20 to 30 hours of observations per school in each district); post-observation reflections; and field notes for research location.

5.1 Data Analysis

The data was organized in excel spreadsheets on their respective location folders and some tables (for instance, on community demographics, availability of community resources, etc.), using simple spreadsheets, were designed. In the second round of the data analysis, the researcher derived some tabulation using simple statistical formulas and inferences for various desired variables, deducting and analyzing a contrast among various variables.

Since qualitative data collection is naturalistic and fluid in nature, therefore, the distinction between the data collection and analysis is less evident (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2009). The analysis of qualitative data is cyclical (Schutt, 2011). This characteristic of the qualitative data analysis process makes it a continuous process, one which requires that the researcher continuously keep track of the data (Creswell, 2009). As the data increases in volume, the researcher gains a more in-depth understanding of the situation, based on the emerging patterns; this understanding allows a researcher to confirm or disconfirm a particular hypothesis or theory (Patton, 2002). Keeping this perspective in view, the researcher considered the constant comparative data analysis method (proposed by Glaser, 1965) helpful because of the on-going nature of the analysis of the data received from the relevant literature as well as the field during our research process. According to Glaser (1965), the constant comparative method can be described as an evolving process progressing from one stage of analysis to the other as the data comes in and the patterns develop. Schutt (2011) considers this a constant comparative procedure that highlights the arrangement of factors that had to be present across multiple cases to produce a specific outcome from the available data. The researcher started with a comparison of incidents applicable to each category of the data through integration of categories and their properties. The researcher followed the outline of Glaser and Strauss's constant comparative procedures.

The data analysis moved step by step – starting from individual and group units and moving to the broader themes and concepts. The analysis highlighted the key issues that hinder people's access to better educational opportunities in the target locations. Since data set involved people's experiences, the critical events and incidents in the lives of study subjects constituted self-contained descriptive units of the analysis; for instance, how the nationalization and denationalization of the education impacted the views of the community, particularly the older generation who were either themselves students or were sending their children to schools in that era. In Pakistani society, especially in Balochistan, individual's lives are influenced by events, policies, and political processes; hence, the analysis also illuminates the administrative, bureaucratic, and political processes that affect the lives of people the researcher encountered in this research.

In brief, the data analysis process on parental choice in education involved various steps, moving from simple to more complex – from individual codes to broader concept categories and themes. Moreover, the researcher attempted to use the 6-Cs (context, cause, condition, covariance, consequences, and contingencies) approach to measure the suitability and appropriateness of the codes and concepts.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

The author's inquisitiveness on schooling and educational choices led him to explore literature, which he would characterize as falling into two camps. One of them discussed the notion of parental choice written with a western market perspective, where market and available information regarding schooling and education play major roles in shaping parental perspectives, hence parents making schooling and educational decisions accordingly. The second camp discussed

parental decisions that were constructed due to compulsion not the actual 'choice'. It was found that in the first case, the literature which was mainly produced in the developed world, was argumentized based on some empirical research and evidence. However, while examining the existing literature on parental choice that was discussing schooling and educational choice in third-world countries like Pakistan, based their conclusions on secondary source data, relying on numbers rather than the attitudes, practices, and on-the-ground realities of local population. Indeed, this study significantly attempts to fill in that literature gap.

To respond to the international literature and practices on "choice", this study concludes that in Pakistan' parental "choice" is entirely under auspice of the family, without any state involvement, enforcement or provision. Parental choices, for the most part, are shaped in the light of the total set of incentives resulting from the interplay of all the dominant institutions in the given context (Bano, 2010). However, these decisions mostly revolve around the issues of accessibility and outcome from such educational institutions; unlike in the developed countries, where state offers choice and parents choose certain type of education and particular brand of schools, mainly based on the school environment and academic quality and achievement. Indeed, parents in research locations did think of other characteristics, such as quality, if, and when they have options to choose from. Nonetheless, the majority of the people in the research locations did not have many options; additionally, none of these institutions was fully satisfying the needs and meeting the expectations of the majority of the people.

Another important investigation topic of this research was to understand the Pakistani education system as a whole, particularly the concept of *Madrasah*. The literature on *Madrasah*, again was divided into two groups – one group produced literature that spoke for *Madrasah* and considered it as the only source of education for the poor and deprived. Mosques and *Madaaris* are educational outlets for all the segments (wealthy/poor, rural/urban and boys/girls); everyone can easily have access to their services. Nevertheless, they are considered the hope for the impoverished and destitute. These findings are in line with the results of Lodhi, A.S. (2013), on pecuniary issues with respect to religious education, 16 percent of the boys and 3.4 percent of the girls attending religious schools come from households that can neither afford public nor private schools.

On the other hand, some regarded *Madrasah* as an institution promoting militancy, terrorism and fundamentalism, and recruiting *Jehadis*. International media and writers associated *Madrasah* education with militancy; while South Asian, particularly Pakistani intelligentsia regarded *Madrasah* education as outdated and irrelevant to the needs of the contemporary Muslim society.

The overall Pakistani education systems have been under severe criticism from within the country as well as from the outside. Although, international scholars and media started writing and speaking about Pakistan's education system after the rise of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the tragic incidents of 9/11(Bano, 2010 and 2012); the literature from within the country started to critique it almost a decade after the independence of the country in 1947. Post-independence, Pakistani masses expected for a substantial change of leaving behind the British class-based educational legacy (Farah, et al. 2006; Rahman, 2005), as promised by the then political leaders. In fact, Pakistan's independence movement caught its strength basically from two main slogans, i.e., Pakistan will be an Islamic republic and a democratic state where all its citizens will be equally treated. Unfortunately, people did not see a huge change, and the class-based policies resulting in inequalities persisted; hence Pakistan's today's masses continue receiving varied treatment on the basis of their social hierarchy, political positions and affiliations, geography, wealth, gender and ethnicity (Dashti, 2007; Rahman, 2005). Therefore, dream of development and prosperity of Pakistani citizens is yet to be realized.

All the parents – including educated and uneducated, rich and poor, urban and rural, male and female – unanimously agreed upon the importance of education and considered it as an important component of their personal and societal life. Moreover, all of them wanted to educate their children from one or the other source keeping in view personal preferences, concepts and objectives. However, the majority of parents in rural areas considered education up to grade 10th enough for their daughters, while for boys there were no restrictions noted. However, because of the scarcity of resources – particularly in rural

setting and amongst the poorer families, the "educational choice" even for their male-children also remained restricted to the state-provided low-standard public, or low-quality private and *Madrasah* institutions.

Plethora of literature and the primary data from the field collected for this study revealed that each one of the educational tracks in Pakistan (public, private and *Madrasah*) has its own circle of constituents and its own logics and relationships with the other systems. While there are significant ideological and institutional differences among these systems, they are primarily differentiated by who they serve, differences that can be explained by class, geography, and religiosity (Rahman, 2004; Farah, 2007; Zia, 2003). This study also shares the same results as noted by Rahman (2004) and Farah et al. (2006) that public schools were there to fulfil the basic educational needs of the vast majority of the poor and lower-middle-class population, mostly rural-based, because of their low costs and being more accessible as compared to the private institutions. While an overwhelming majority of the more educated, urban-based and with better socioeconomic status parents opted for low-fee private schools for their children. Girls' education was favored more when both the parents were educated. Less than 1% parents sent their male-children to private schools outside their respective districts. More than 90% of the *Madrasah*-going children belonged to the lowest SES among their respective villagers and their parents considered *Madrasah* because of being poor and fulfilling their religious obligation to educate their children; however, there were a few parents who chose *Madrasah* education exclusively for religious reasons.

To sum up, this study argues that education is supposed to provide the foundation to reduce miseries and augment social cohesion. However, the contemporary educative framework in Pakistan has become a reflective of social and economic classes and geographic divide and is perpetuating inequalities through the various types of education and educational institutions that it offers. This study also describes the greatly divided nature of the education system in Pakistan, particularly in the research locations in Balochistan. Where in these two (secular and religious) sectors offer discrete field of education; therefore, these institutions present very distinct set of practices and experiences to its constituents, which, the researcher argue, may potentially result in production and reproduction of a class-based society with varied societal roles, employment opportunities and hierarchies. Pakistan's elite public and private schools are serving the purpose of only two to three percent minority elite population; however, this elite segment of the society occupy more than 65% of the high-profile jobs, large business enterprises and overall wealth. These elite schools are reproducing a generation that compliments the already existing elite class, because they are structured in such a way that a poor and lower middle-class parent, particularly from rural areas, representing the largest Pakistani population, cannot even think of sending his/her child. For instance, their monthly fee is sometimes as high as yearly income of a common citizen in the province. Their lower-tier known as the low-quality or low-fee private schools, though do not provide very distinct experiences to its student body; may still result in creation of class distinctions and segregation in the poor and uninformed (regarding educational qualities) rural setting.

The faith-based educational institution – *Madrasah* – though accessible to poorer segments of the society, unfortunately, mostly only provide religious education in the province and are insufficient in providing quality educational services to all the segments of the society, particularly girls. Female-only *Madaaris* are uncommon phenomenon in rural Balochistan; therefore, girls' dropout is at the maximum after the age of 10-12 years.

In short, in the context of Pakistan, parental "choice" in Pakistan is handicapped - poor and rural masses are discriminated by the private sector, girls are discriminated by the religious sector and the public sector does not offer quality education which restrains the rural, poor and girls climb the social ladder upward.

7. Recommendations

It is recommended that enhanced resource allocation may improve access and quality of education to a large extent followed by establishing thousands (particularly girls-only) schools to reach out to the more rural, poorer and deprived villages. It is further recommended that if the government provides some extra resources; financial and technical resources, and legal protection, *Madrasah* administration may be able to fill low (at least primary) level educational gaps in Pakistan,

particularly in the far-flung rural hamlets, because they have much broader catchment area than the state run public or private educational institutions. It is recommended that *Madrasah* and government officials sit around and devise an effective educational strategy, integrating Islamic and modern education so that it will work, in the best interest of masses by hiring female teachers. The idea, as suggested by a *Madrasah* administrator, seemed interesting to consider the *Madaaris* not as rivals or negative competitors, however, as assets and leverage helping improve educational enrollment and attainment in rural Balochistan. This initiative would need a deeply thought and well-constructed approach to develop an effective partnership minimizing at least urban rural disparity with comparatively better access (and quality) than the private and public sector.

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