
Situation with Female Education in Pakistan

Education has been universally acknowledged as an important aspect of life. It is recognized by the United Nations (UN) in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) under article 26: "Everyone has the right to education" (Universal Declaration of Human Rights). However, education is not readily accessible to young girls in Pakistan as it is in more developed countries. Pakistan struggles with gender inequality, political instability, violent insurgency, and poverty. Together, these distract the government from performing its obligation to provide essential services such as education. Despite both boys and girls being legally allowed to receive an education, Pakistan was ranked "the second worst country in the world for gender equality" in 2017 (Central Asian Institute). It currently "has the world's second-highest number of out-of-school children (OOSC) with an estimated 22.8 million children aged 5-16 not attending school, representing 44 per cent of the total population in this age group" (UNICEF).

While both boys and girls are missing out on their education, girls are affected worse. Nationwide, 32 percent of girls are out of school compared to 21 percent of boys among primary school aged children in Pakistan (Human Rights Watch, Pakistan). Most drop out in primary school. Only 13 percent of girls remain in school by the ninth grade (Human Rights Watch, Pakistan). Government data for 2017 shows that the gap between the number of boys and girls in education from primary to secondary school, roughly 10 percent, has barely changed since 2013 (Malik and Reality Check team). However, there are significant differences between the provinces. Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa show both the highest enrollment of girls and an improvement in their enrollment since 2013, compared to Sindh and Baluchistan with both the lowest enrollment of girls and a decline in their enrollment since 2013 (Malik and Reality Check team).

The difference in disparities can be linked to multiple causes. Pakistan has a culture deeply rooted in patriarchy, which is often accompanied by gender inequalities favoring men. It is more prevalent in Pakistan than it is in more developed nations today. There are several areas with no local schools for girls. In Baluchistan, there are more than twice as many schools for boys than there are for girls (Human Rights Watch, Shall I Feed My Daughter). Often, the higher the level of education, the more segregated by gender and the farther away the school. Girls are also locked out of school because they are locked in poverty. Baluchistan, for example, has "minimal levels of industrialization and the highest levels of poverty" in Pakistan (Universal Management Group). The government of Pakistan determined nearly "60 million Pakistanis – 6.8 to 7.6 million families – were living in poverty," nearly one-sixth of the country's population (Human Rights Watch, Shall I Feed My Daughter). As a result, young girls are driven to work beginning from a young age in order to support their families rather than go to school.

Corruption is pervasive in Pakistan and spread out through the government school system. The 2017 Transparent International Corruption Percentage Index ranks Pakistan as 117 out of 180 countries, yet it has shown improvement since 2013 (Transparency International e.V). Education in Pakistan is underfunded. The government legally guarantees the right for all boys and girls between five and 16 to attend school; however, the government only spends 2.9 percent of the GDP for education compared to 5.5 percent in the United Kingdom, and 3.76 percent for the military compared to 1.77 percent (World Bank). The United Nations

recommends four to six percent (Human Rights Watch, Pakistan). Within the schools themselves there is bribery and a lack of quality education. Teachers must pay to obtain a government teaching position, teachers rarely show up if at all, and inspectors care more for their own entertainment than for the children's education (Human Rights Watch, Pakistan). This results in a lack of passion and reduced quality of education. Parents, and children, feel they are wasting time and pull out of school.

The violence and conflict within Pakistan also have significant impact on girls' education making security another barrier. Families and girls do not feel safe going to or being in school due to insecurities including sexual harassment, kidnapping, crime, conflict, and attacks on education (Human Rights Watch, Shall I Feed My Daughter). The situation is worsened by armed conflict and targeted attacks on schools related to insurgency, and ethnic and religious conflict.