



Perspectives of School Dropouts and Contextualising Girls Experience

(An Ethnographic Study of Female Education in Rural Pakistan)

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Abstract: The research explores the paradoxes prevailing within the education system of Sindh province in Pakistan. The occurrence of greater early female student dropout despite government and non-governmental organizations' efforts to meet the country's educational target. Gender disparity in primary schools is at a worse level even though the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan, national education policies, and international commitments ensure girls' equal right to education. Based on ethnographic fieldwork of primary schools in rural Sindh, this paper analyses the gender relationships with female education and dropout issues by using Foucault's theoretical concepts of discourse, power, and gaze (Foucault 1980).

The dropout proportion of girls from schools is a consequence of intricate power relations between genders in Pakistan. The male exercises intense surveillance in subjugating the female, depriving them of their fundamental right to education. These tactics are reflected in two ways. First, females, when they step out of their homes, are under constant gaze of unknown males in Pakistani culture. Female requires permission from her father/brothers to seek education. She is followed by the male gaze to school and back. The male family members decide her educational level, marriage, and domestic roles and responsibilities, ultimately affecting her schooling. Second, in school, she learns in a gendered environment where teachers, school administration, and non-teaching staff members are males.¹ They stereotype her as a member of the weak gender and prefer male students over her during school activities like student council elections, seating arrangements, attendance, co-curriculum activities, and sports.

Keyword: Female education, school dropout, gaze, power, discourse, Pakistan

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is an integral tool of progression especially for developing countries like Pakistan. Over the span of last seventy years, remarkable changes have been observed in Pakistani educational system, yet, there are several gaps especially when it comes to female education in rural areas of Pakistan. Although very significant efforts, i.e., the constitutional amendment² and Educational policies (MoE1992; 1998; and 2009), have been made by the government of Pakistan as well as both international and national organizations such as Education for All (UNESCO 2002) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and now Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to address the issue of enrolment, dropout, literacy, and access to education; however, such efforts have not found great success in attaining universal primary education and elimination of gender disparity. There seem many valid reasons such as administrative and organizational arrangements, negligence and high levels of political intervention in education, corruption, and lack of budgetary allocation (Rehman and Khan 2011). Generally, the undesired outcome of attaining universal primary education, eliminating gender disparity, and reducing the dropout ratio have impacted men and women. Still, women are affected intensively in terms of literacy and participation in the public sector.

¹According to UNESCO, there are 66,890 primary school teachers in rural areas. Some 56,331 (84%) teachers are males and 10,559 (16%) are female teachers (Ali 2011).

²"**25 A. Right to education:** The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by law." Government of Pakistan 2010, p.15

This paper explores how gender relations and the gendered power structure of society influence female education and see what role gender plays in dropout rates or absence from school. Researchers like Khan et al. (2011), Hussain et al. (2011), and Joubish and Khurram (2011) have conducted studies on this subject at the national as well as the provincial level to explore the causes and determinants of low literacy and dropout rates from school. Factors and the nature of causes vary as they are sometimes related to socio-economic instability, demand, supply, educational environment, curriculum, quality education, and administration. However, in conjunction with this, there is a substantial nexus between gender and education, gender and literacy, and gender and dropout. This network of gender relations is manifested at all levels, but at the grassroots level, it is mainly found in rural areas and government schools, especially primary schools. Gender relations are based on the power that determines and subjugates female schooling at primary level. Therefore, this study exclusively investigates the factors affecting primary education of female students in Sindh.

II. RESEARCH SITE AND RESEARCH GROUP

We conducted ethnographic research at Government Boys Primary School, Shahdadtaluk Main Khuda Bux Soomro (KBS). KBD is one of the oldest Government Primary School, which was established in 1887. The school is famous for the quality of education. It is located at the prime central location of Shahdadtaluk. Shahdadtaluk is a Taluka³ of District Qamber-Shahdadtaluk and lies approximately fifty-three kilometers North East of Larkana City. Larkana is one of the divisions of the Sindh province of Pakistan.

The school admitted boys and girls while all staff, teachers, non-teaching (peon and sweeper), and administrative were males. The school's total enrolment was about 2070 students, among whom 1244 were boys and 826 were girls. KBS offered admissions in grades 1 to 5, ages 5 to 10.

III. METHODOLOGY

We collected the data through ethnographic fieldwork. Ethnography involved us in the process of observing people and participating in the daily activities of the school. Participant observation remained the key research tool to gather my data. According to Bernard, "Participant observation involves establishing rapport in a new community; learning to act so that people go about their business as usual when you show up; and removing yourself every day from cultural immersion so you can intellectualize what you've learned, put it into perspective, and write about it convincingly" (Bernard 1994, p. 137). We worked very closely with students, teachers, parents, school management, and community members. We adopted multiple roles for rapport building, such as voluntary primary teacher, organizer of extra-curricular events in the school, a volunteer member of the school committee, and a volunteer member of the Parents and Teachers Association.

Besides participant observation, we used informal discussion, semi-structured interviews (05 females and 05 males), focus group discussions (03 females and 02 males), photography, and audio-video recording. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with the following groups of people:

1. Headmaster, Headmistress, and Teachers (females and males)
2. Families (parents of children, male and female)
3. Education Department (SDO⁴, EDO⁵, Textbook board, policy and curriculum wing)
4. Clergies and religious scholars
5. Local community leaders
6. NGOs⁶ (working on education and gender)

IV. DISCOURSE, POWER, AND GAZE:

Discourse is a certain way of speaking and texting which constitutes subjects and objects (Foucault, 1980 and Naseem, 2006). For this paper, I am using discourse as a linguistic practice, a way of speaking, daily exchange of discussion, verbal talk among friends and relatives, teachers and students, parents and children to communicate with each other. It aims to share meaningful messages and influence one person

³Taluka or Tehsil is the second-lowest tier of the local government of Pakistan.

⁴Sub-divisional Officer

⁵Executive District Officer

⁶Non-government Organizations

to another and male to female. Discourse creates gendered subjects through power and gaze. Discourse and power have a strong relationship in terms of Foucault's way of analyzing the subjects. We will reflect this relationship in the proceeding texts while taking the field data as a discourse and analyzing through the concepts such as power and gaze.

Power is a set of relationships and a set of actions embodied in discourse. Foucault uses power in entirely different and multiple ways, such as power is not a thing held by anyone; instead, it is a relation. It is not fixed, instead, it is dynamic. Power works at the smallest level of interactions, in our case, in the primary school as a locale of exploration and power circulation among children. I observed how power transmission worked in relation to gender and how the association of relationships i.e. teachers and children in school, parents at home, and people in the town influenced the girl in the continuity and discontinuity (dropout) of her education.

Foucault introduces the term *Gaze* in his book *The Birth of the Clinic* (1975) but later the term has been quite frequently used in his works predominantly in *Discipline and Punish* (1977). It generally means a glance, look, or seeing but it goes beyond just seeing or looking. In this paper, We are using gaze in two ways: first, gaze as a means of a male penetrating the personhood of a female to subjugate her, and second, gaze as a means of surveillance to keep an eye upon her, her mobility and her actions. I do not mean surveillance just as a physical eye rather an instrument induced upon making her realize that she is "being constantly seen" (Foucault 1977, p. 187).

V. BACKGROUND: EDUCATION AND DROPOUT

The United Nations Development Programme (2020) Human Development Index (HDI) ranked Pakistan on 152 out of 189 countries. The literacy rate among the population of Pakistan 10 years and older is 60%: 71% for males and 49% for females. Rural Sindh has the lowest literacy rates in Pakistan after Balochistan where only 55% of males and 21% of females are literate. (Finance Division, 2019-2020). The latest available School Education Statistics Report of the Bureau of Statistics (2019) suggest that there is a total of 42,383 schools of Primary to Higher Secondary⁷ (12 years education) of which only 5,385 schools are for females. Similarly, there is a total of 150,787 teaching staff in all government schools – Primary to Higher Secondary – of which only 47,365 are females. The difference is enormous which further strengthens gender binary opposition when males perform their dominant gaze. As Skelton (2002, p. 17) writes, "male teachers' attitudes and behaviors were crucial to the construction of a mode of masculinity."

Out of those who enroll at the primary level, nearly 73% of children aged 5 to 16 drop out before they complete secondary school (Mughal, Aldridge, & Monaghan, 2019). Recent data have revealed that only Nigeria has more out of school children than Pakistan. Pakistan was ranked second in the world in terms of out-of-school children (Rafique et al., 2020). The situation in Sindh seems alarming in terms of children who are either not going to school or leave school in the middle of their schooling. Hyderabad, the second-largest city of the Sindh province has almost 40% of children not enrolled in schools (Ali, 2015). Around 6.4 million children are out of school in the Sindh province of Pakistan even though Singapore's entire population is lesser than this figure (Correspondent, 2019). The child dropout issue is not specifically concerned with any student's specific grade but rather the dropout occurs right after admission through the proceeding grades and years. During our fieldwork, admitting a child was not an issue in government schools. Generally, students were admitted throughout the year without any strict rules such as pre-examination tests, pre-requisite school uniforms, stationery or textbooks, and even admission or monthly school fees. Besides, schools provided the students' textbooks free of cost. Such flexibility allowed students and parents to enroll their children but at the same time, there was a high flow of dropouts.

Several researchers have conducted studies on dropout and out-of-school children (Khan et al. 2011; Hussain et al. 2011 and Joubish and Khurram 2011). The existing literature has neglected power and discourse that we have used as an alternative way of exploring dropout and female literacy. Consequently, we offer an additional but quite distinctive discussion, which will explain the current gender and education situation and dropout or out of school rates in Sindh and Pakistan. Particularly in

⁷Pakistani educational system is divided into various levels/grades/classes such as Early Education, Primary (grade 1 age 5), Middle, Secondary, and Higher Secondary (Grade 12 age 17). Middle schools also cover Elementary schools.

the rural areas, gender relations, especially the father in-home, teacher, and boy students in school and the males surrounded by the schools and on the way back and forth to school, have left a serious effect on girls' schooling. There is a very strong relationship between a girl's education and a male's gaze. During our fieldwork, we noticed a strong correlation between dropout rates and gender during intensive discussions with parents, teachers, and students and during my observation of the overall environment of the classroom, school, and town.

These statistics are mentioned to get an impression; however, we are more interested in the qualitative depth of the issue: dropout. We will be using our field notes (FN) as a discourse to reflect gender relations in the classroom, school, and home.

VI. FEMALE EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN AND POWER OF DISCOURSE AND GAZE: ANALYSIS

Discourse creates subjects, disciplined subjects inscribed by powerful tendencies making a male and female perform certain roles falling into the accepted norms and values of the society, such as man as the breadwinner whereas woman as a housewife. Discourses are systems of statements that construct objects and subjects. Popular discourse circulated in the classroom setup such as 'چپ کر' *'sit silently'*⁸; 'کلاس کان باہر نہ وج' *'don't go out of the classroom'* and 'رہنویا' *'cover your head'*, etc., are not just words of a boy (class monitor⁹) but reflect the authoritative power exercised in the classroom as reflected in the classroom discourse:

Boy 'Amjad' says to a girl, 'رہنویا کی پائی؟' 'Why don't you cover your face properly?'

Girl 'Rehana' replies, 'چو؟ تون جو کھڑو کم' 'Why? It's not your business.'

Boy 'Sikander' (Monitor) says to girl 'Asma', 'باہر چو ٹی وجی؟' 'Why are you going outside? Sit silently otherwise I will tell the teacher.'

Each class has a monitor and all monitors were boys at KBS. These monitors became in-charge of the classroom if the teachers were away or absent. Monitors acted as *de facto* teachers. Upon our inquiry during an informal chat with the teachers, we were told that boys are physically strong. They are very good at controlling the pupils: silencing them, organizing them on their seats, controlling their movements in the classroom, and forcing them to readout from their textbooks. Generally, the teacher selects a boy assuming that he is better in his studies and could manage the classroom in his absence. The teacher announces in the classroom a boy's role as a monitor whenever the teacher is away or absent. In case if the teacher is away for some time from the classroom, the monitor looks after the classroom. If the male and female students make noise or get up from their seats or leave the classroom without permission, the monitor reports the names to the teacher. The teacher sometimes punishes them in different ways i.e. by scolding, making a child stand up, slapping, or even using the stick.

Words and terms like *sitting silently*; *don't go out of the classroom*; and, *cover your head* represents the authority of a teacher delegated to a student in the above context. In one way, there is a hierarchy of power in gender relationships delegated from one person to another such as teacher to student and father to son, and from mother to daughter. During our fieldwork, it was often a male-to-male transfer of power (teacher-to-student) in school. Once the teacher left the classroom and the monitor took over the control, then he started gazing upon every child. This hierarchy of power and gaze circulation works for both genders but its effects are different on girls and boys. These effects are the outcome of the authority of power and gaze delegated from one person to another such as the teacher to monitor. One becomes in-charge and the other follows instructions; one holds the authority delegated from teacher to student and the other remains docile. I often observed teachers saying that girls are submissive, weak, easy to control whereas boys are in-charge, controllers, strong and protective. Such gender relationships are derived from various spaces but in our project specifically school and house.

We have given an example of gender, power, and gaze in the classroom setup specifically involving the males. However, gender relationships change at home. Girls become active upon their return from school to do domestic chores and assisting mothers and sisters. Their activeness comes while shifting from one space to another and in my case from school to home. Activeness not in terms of decision-making related to education, rather it is related to cleaning the home, cooking meals, washing utensils, and serving the

⁸Authors' translation

⁹Teachers used 'monitor' at KBS so I am using the same in my paper. The monitor is also called 'perfect' and 'Class Representative (CR)' etc.

meal to the family members. Compared to women, men run shops, do daily wage labor, or work in shops and private and government offices. Boys either join their fathers or play with friends in the street and playground after school. In the domestic space, there is also a transfer of authority such as from mother to daughter or from elder sister to younger sister as it was in the school and classroom between male teachers to male students. At home, if the mother is cooking or cleaning the kitchen utensils, she usually asks her daughter to join her. Sometimes, she asks her to cook and do the other domestic chores. This transfer of authority involves power but it does not hold the same power as males do in school. Rather, power and authority circulated among females are secondary to males and most of the time practiced in domestic chores. It has a very limited influence on male members of the family. However, one female influences the other female because of her position in the home such as mother over daughter or the senior female member over younger female member. Accordingly, everyone in the school and family looked at gender relations and interactions differently.

The other significant element in power is a relationship of gaze and hierarchy. The hierarchy of power is very much interlinked with the gaze. During my fieldwork, it was not just a headmaster or a teacher who dominated the children or a teacher who managed the classroom rather there was a hierarchy of gazes as well in the educational setup. There is what Foucault calls 'inspecting gaze' and there is gender-specific gaze. Inspecting gazes are circulated as per the portfolio one holds in educational departments such as District Education Officer (DEO), Sub-divisional Educational Officer (SDEO), supervisor, headmaster, teacher, and students. These positions allow individuals to perform their responsibilities and ensure the educational system is enacted and teachers are teaching their students in respective schools. This general gaze under review is more like a formal structure of an educational system where one individual is under the surveillance of the other. This is a similar example of surveillance of which Foucault talks about panopticism (p. 195) in his book *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison* (1977). Inspecting gaze in a formal structure based on hierarchy ensures the surveillance of individuals from DEO to school students. This power-based hierarchy of gaze within the educational setup works to keep the check and balance of educational provision and educational quality. It is based on bureaucratic power, the power to write annual reports, block someone's salaries, sack teachers, issue show-cause notice in case the teachers are absent or the school is closed during working days.

There was a gender-based gaze. It was practiced more in an informal setup compared to inspecting gaze, it was fluid and it was almost widespread in homes, in the streets, schools, playground, and classrooms. Those who contributed to this gaze were headmasters, teachers and students (boys and girls), parents (father and mother) and neighbors, relatives, and local people. It was quite evident that there was a significant nexus specifically with our project in terms of gender and dropout. In many of the cases, a male family member of a girl accompanies her to protect her from the male gaze. We quote from our field notes:

مرد استاد: شروع جي سالن ۾ انڊينس بهتر هوندي آهي پر جيئن ئي هو هڪ درجي مان ٻي درجي ۾ اچن ٿيون. تهنياڻيون تعليم حاصل ڪرڻ دوران تمام گهڻن مسئلن سان منهن ڏين ٿيون.

اسان جو سماج غليز ٿيڻ ڪو آهي ڇو ته عزت و احترام نالي ڪاشيءَ نه رهي آهي. نياڻي ته هميشه خوف ۾ هوندي آهي ڇا به هوءَ اسڪول جي ڳهر اچي. ان جو مقصد ائين نه آهي ته ڪو ڪرو مسئلن سان منهن نٿو ڏين پر ڪو مسئلن سان به منهن ڏين ٿو ۽ هو پنهنجي والدين ۽ استادن سان به اظهار ڪري ٿو. ڪافي ماڻهو شايد مون سان سمهت نه ڪندا پر حقيقت هي آهي ته نياڻي هميشه ذهني طور تي پريشان هوندي آهي. مون کي ته ائين لڳندو آهي ڇڏڻ به هو اسڪول کان گهر يا گهر کان اسڪول ويندي آهي. جڏهن ڏهن ڪم ڪم جو شڪار هوندي آهي.

سڄو سماج نبيڪڙ جيو پيو آهي. هر جڳهه تي، گهڻين ۾، روڊن تي اسڪول ۽ ڪاليج پير سان ڇوڪرا بيلهو ڏندا آهن. اهي نياڻين کي گهرو رڌندا آهن ۽ عجيبه ريجملا چوڻا آهن ته جيئن ڇوڪرا پاڻهن سان دوستي ڪري.

آئون تو هان کي پنهنجو ذاتي تجربو ٻڌايائو. اڪثر منهنجي ڌيءَ پنهنجي پياري سان گروپي سوڙت ۾ ويندي آهي. پر جيڪڏهن منهنجي ڌيءَ کي دير ٿي ويندي آهي ته هوءَ اسڪول جي ڳهر کان گهر اچي ٿي ته مون کي چوڻو پوندو ته اهو مون کي اسڪول ڇڏڻ کان گهرو ڏندا آهن ۽ مون کي چوڻو پوندو ته اهو مون کي اسڪول ڇڏڻ کان گهرو ڏندا آهن. مان يامنهنجو پٽ ان کي اسڪول ڇڏڻا آهن.

جيڪڏهن منهنجي ڌيءَ اسڪول جي ڳهر سان خوف ۽ غير محفوظ محسوس ڪري ٿي ته ائين به ٿيندو آهي ته اسڪول جي محسوس ڪنديون هونديون. جيڪڏهن تو هان ڏسو ته نياڻيون هميشه اسڪول کان واپسي دوران گروپس ۾ اينديون آهن. سڄ پڇ سانين عبدالرزاق اوهان کي حقيقت ٻڌايائو ته اهڙي صورتحال سان

مونن ڏٺيون آهن جنهن جيڪر يڪجهو الدين پنهنجي نياڻين کي اسڪول جي ڳهر کان روڪي ڇڏندا آهن. والدين پنهنجي نياڻين کي چوڻا آهن ته تون هتي ڏٺيون نياڻين ۽ معاشرو خراب آهي. مون کي ائين لڳيو ته ڪافي نياڻيون ان خوف کان نياڪو لڇڙ ڇڏنديون آهن ته متان خاندان جي بندنامي ٿئي. والدين ته هڪ ڪري پنهنجن نياڻين کي اسڪول نه موڪلندا آهن.

“Teacher (Male) A: Attendance during primary years is much better but as the girl qualifies for proceeding grades, she faces a lot of issues. Our society has been corrupted (read lack of manners and ethics) and values and norms have vanished. A girl student is always in fear when she comes out of her home. I don't mean that boys don't face issues but for boys, it is easy to handle and talk to their father and teachers. Many people may not agree with me but I have observed that a girl is in constant anxiety. She is in a trauma-like situation

while she is on her way to attend school and while she is returning home. The entire structure of our society has been polluted. There are men standing on the streetcorner and by the roadside and near school and college. They stare at girls, pass remarks and sometimes ask her for friendship. Let me share with you my example. Usually, my daughter joins her neighborhood friends and they go to school in groups. However, if she gets a bit late, she feels insecure to go alone. She pleads with me, 'Abbu (Father), I want to go to school with you. I don't want to go to school alone.' Honestly, I also don't let her go to school alone. My elder son or I accompany her. I understand if my daughter feels fear and unprotected then there would be many other girls experiencing similar situations. If you observe, girls always return home in groups. Frankly speaking Saeen¹⁰ Abdul Razaque, I am telling you the truth that this is one of the serious issues that the girls are facing and this situation offers parents a valid reason forbidding a girl from attending school. Parents argue with girls that society has become bad and say 'you are now grown up. You should stay home and help your mother with domestic chores rather than attending school'. Generally speaking, many girls stop going to school before it becomes an issue for the family. Many parents don't send their daughters."

This protection becomes a means of surveillance where a male relative of a girl and most of the time her father or brother, keeps an eye around the surroundings especially upon a girl. Since there are many malicious male members of the society, standing on the roadside, at the corner of the school, and roaming near to the school, the brother or father observes the girl all the way to see if she makes any gesture or is insulted. This surveillance does not only work when a male member joins her but it creates two different kinds of discourses that aim to discipline her: 1, family members start inducing her to be an obedient daughter, to avoid raising her head, to cover herself well, not to look anywhere, not to smile on the way; and, to always go back and forth directly from home to school; and 2, she starts believing in this kind of discourse. This resembles what Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish* as the way in which the central technique of disciplinary power – constant surveillance – which is initially directed toward disciplining the body, takes hold of the mind as well to induce a psychological state of 'conscious and permanent visibility' (Foucault 1977, p. 201). The construction of an obedient daughter and good girl become very important factors for her to follow as instructions. Such construction of meaning related to obedience, goodness, and observance of purdah is not just for one or another girl but rather it is overwhelmingly practiced. This defines a female subjectivity and what makes a good girl? To be silent, obedient, modest, with head covered and one who helps the mother in domestic chores. Whereas compared to girls, the boys' subjectivity in terms of what makes a good boy shows that the boy should speak up, help teachers in the classroom, help father in the shop and work, play games outside and be a monitor. Such practices associated with being a good girl, i.e. school to home, head down, not talking to anyone on the way, and covering body and face properly are normative practices. Being watched by someone or having someone complain about her immodest behavior would lead to difficulties. As the teacher said in the above quote, 'she is always in fear'. That fear is an outcome of an attitude of mind of being *looked at, watched, and observed* all the time. As Foucault (1977, p. 187) writes, "It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being always able to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection." She always tries to be modest and acts accordingly. She knows that there are many people, good and bad, but she is afraid that if something happened that contravenes her instructions, someone will report her parents against her. Even though she is sure that she has not done anything wrong, it is a matter of family concern. We quote from our field notes:

ماء: جڏهن مان اسڪول ويندي هونئس ته منهنجا مٿمائيٽ ان ڳالهه کيسنو نه سمجهندا هئا. انهن جو چوڻ هو ته نياڻين کي اسڪول نه وڃڻ گهرجي. انهن ته منهنجي اسڪول وڃڻ تي تمام گهڻو عتر اذڪيو ته تنهنجي ڌيءُ ڪنهن سان پڄي نه وڃي. جيئو ٿيڪ منهنجو بابا مون کيهڪ لفظ نه چيو پر جڏهن مون اهو ٻڌو ته مون اسڪول وڃڻ بند ڪيو. منهنجي خاندان کي ڪو ٻرو ڀلو چوي مون بهتر سمجهيو ته اسڪول نه وڃي.

Mother 'A' shares, "When I started going to high school, my relatives disliked it. They said that a girl should not go to school. They strongly objected to the idea and warned my father that his daughter would elope one day with someone. Although my father didn't say a word to me, when I heard it I ceased going to school. I thought it's better for me to abandon school before my family is accused."

One female respondent who personally faced an inconvenient situation shared that girls neglect gestures from men and consider them insulting and taunting. They remain silent to avoid trouble.

I quote:

¹⁰Sir

عورت استاد: نيائين جو وڏي ۾ وڏو مسئلو منهنجي نظر ۾ مردن جو رویو آهي. مون پنهنجي ذاتي طور تي اسڪول ايندي ويندي ڪافي پريشانين سان مونهن ڏٺو. مان ته ٻڌائين ٿيسگهان عورت جي مٿان ڇا ڪرندي آهي جڏهنڪو مرد ان کي ڇٽائيندو آهي. يا غير مناسب لفظ جهڙو ڪجهڙا ڪجهڙا ڪري ٿو. اسين هميشه ڪنڌ هيٺ ڪري ٿا ڇو ته جيئنڪو مسئلو نه ٿئي. ان ڪري جو اسان جو معاشرو عورتن کي گهر جي عزت ۽ احترام طور ڏسندو آهي.

"Teacher (Female) 'A' shares, "One of the biggest problems that girls are facing is men's attitude. I personally faced a serious issue while walking back and forth to school. I have no words when someone (man) keeps staring at me even if I am not looking at him or passing indecent remarks like 'Suhra Saen' or 'Sarkar'. We always keep our heads down to avoid them because women are considered 'honor' and 'respect' in our culture."

Girls remain most vulnerable from both sides, parents as well as the strangers. Parents regard girls as symbolizing the family honor and when someone passes such unacceptable looks, it threatens the family. This significantly puts a girl at risk as she has to quite carefully go to school and return from school without an occurrence of any contact with a man.

The subjugation of women through the discourse of *Honour* and *Respect* allows males to perpetuate the power of masculinity in two ways. First, the girl's body and sexuality become very significant for parents and relatives due to the cultural context of meanings associated with gender with regard to honor and respect. To protect the honor of the family, disciplinary methods remain enacted. She is disciplined, secluded, protected, and kept under the scrutiny of the gaze. Apparently, school is a non-home entity associated with the public arena where there are corrupt people around polluting the society as remarked by one respondent. There is a danger that she might be trapped if she establishes a relationship with a man and the honor of a family will be impaled. Hence, it is quite imperative to protect her. In case if the family honor is not protected well and not gazed at and looked after properly, people in the village and town consider such practices as unacceptable social norms. People consider such families as honourless and with not enough courage to protect their family honor. This social pressure forces parents to follow societal norms and socialize their children accordingly. The second is in the way a man, a free man, an outsider as mentioned in field notes uses tactics such as using terms like *Suhra Saen* and *Sarkar*. These tactics do not only penetrate into the personal life and privacy of the *individual (female)* without her consent but also cause a danger for her to be seen by her family members, relatives, and family friends. The danger is that she is seen by the public and they interpret this as dishonoring. That is why the family watches her. It resembles what Foucault says, the gaze is alert everywhere (Foucault 1977, p. 195) which ultimately impacts her in various ways. One of the impacts is mobility restriction and thus the abandonment of schooling. Most often school and college girls are stopped from continuing schooling and asked to remain home.

VII. CONCLUSION

Sindh was the first province of Pakistan to initiate an Education Bill in 1947 (Qureshi et al. 2007). Currently, there is widespread illiteracy, a high dropout rate, a large number of ghost schools, and poor quality of education in the province. However, various efforts have been taken by the government such as Nationwide Literacy Programme 1986-90 and Nai Roshni Schools 1986-90, Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) supported schools, and non-formal education. Similarly, international and national NGOs initiated projects in achieving international commitments in the education sector. But efforts by the government as well as NGOs have been inadequate in bringing about the desired change to education in Sindh as outlined in the policies and EFA and MDGs & SDGs. Gender relations have gravely influenced female education. The gender relationships of especially the powerful men have created barriers at the wider societal level in achieving higher female literacy.

Therefore, it is important to understand the hegemonic power structures of the society in order to address female education issues including dropout. The gaze is about protecting the authority of the school, of the elders, and of the males. It is performed in a way that subjugates females in various spaces including class, school, and home. Institutional discourse plays a significant role along with the power of the masculine gaze in constructing the subjectivity of a good, modest, and respectful girl through disciplinary methods. It is about constructing the honor of the family with the male as patriarch. Apparently, there are many reasons and issues with primary education in general and female education in particular. Gender relationships play a vital role in education in Sindh. The consequences of this

hegemonic male-dominated societal structure can vary, for example from physical punishment, continuous degradation, ostracism, or making her a docile body. It ultimately forces the girl to not only dropout of school but also deprives her of future opportunities.

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