

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO DECLINING ENROLLMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF AZAD JAMMU AND KASHMIR

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Abstract

Secondary education is critical for academic and personality development, yet public sector schools in Pakistan face persistent declining enrollment. This study investigated the causes of declining enrollment in public sector secondary schools in District Kotli, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, examining factors related to teachers, administration, infrastructure, and socio-economic conditions. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was employed. The population comprised 105 secondary school teachers and 1,050 students enrolled in 9th and 10th grades at government boys' high schools in Tehsil Kotli. Using simple random sampling, 75 teachers and 280 students were selected. Two five-point Likert scale questionnaires (23 items each) were developed, validated by three experts, and pilot-tested, demonstrating high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80$). Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, and mean scores. Both teachers and students strongly endorsed multiple factors contributing to declining enrollment. Teacher-related factors included physical punishment (teachers 82.7%, students 82.8%; $M=4.04, 4.08$), negative teacher attitude (70.7%, 86.8%; $M=3.53, 3.97$), lack of teacher concentration (78.6%, 92.1%; $M=3.81, 4.19$), lack of properly trained teachers (86%, 82.1%; $M=4.00, 3.99$), and lack of pre-service training (84%, 89.6%; $M=4.08, 4.12$). Administrative and political factors included lack of monitoring (77.3%, 87.8%; $M=3.77, 3.99$), poor school planning (80%, 88.2%; $M=3.89, 4.11$), and political interference (72%, 87.2%; $M=3.65, 3.92$). Infrastructure deficiencies included lack of proper buildings (66.7%, 82.8%; $M=3.64, 3.95$) and transportation unavailability (78.7%, 83.9%; $M=3.73, 4.03$). Socio-economic factors included low parental income (86.7%, 84.7%; $M=4.13, 3.92$) and child labor (84%, 89.6%; $M=4.08, 4.12$). Enrollment trend data confirmed declining patterns from 2023 to 2025. The study concludes that declining enrollment results from multiple interconnected factors. Recommendations include promoting non-punitive teaching approaches, providing in-service professional training, eliminating political interference in teacher transfers, and improving school infrastructure including buildings and transportation.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental need of every society and an essential component of economic and social development, contributing significantly to a country's progress (Ministry of Law, 2010). A sound education system is necessary for effective teaching and learning to take place. For better learning and education systems, the enrollment of teachers, parents, and students in educational institutions is essential.

Secondary education is an important sub-sector of the entire education system, though it varies from country to country. It represents the stage where students enter adolescence—the most crucial period in personality development. Secondary education is designed for students in the age bracket of twelve to sixteen years who are enrolled in high school. If quality training at the secondary stage is ensured, it will guide students toward acquiring additional education—either academic or technical—and will have a positive influence on enrollment (Aslam, 2005).

Many reasons have been advanced for declining enrollment in public schools today. Factors closely associated with declining enrollment range from lack of student interest in school, school failure, inability to do school work, poor study habits, lack of participation in curricular activities, low educational level of parents, lack of parental interest in children's schooling, to attraction of outside employment (Faizi & Lodhi, 2010). Iqbal (2008) attributed declining enrollment to broken home environment, low verbal intelligence, lack of teacher participation in student education, lack of parental participation, lack of participation in extra-class activities, reading retardation, and poor overall adjustment.

The main cause of declining enrollment in the public sector is parents' dissatisfaction with public schools. Whatever the specific reasons, the fundamental issue is parents' loss of trust in public sector schools. Failure to deliver quality education has provided the private sector space to thrive. One essential factor determining parents' school choice for their children is examination results—private schools consistently show better results than public sector schools (Khan, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Secondary level education is a very important stage for students. Therefore, it is crucial to provide them with a better education system for their future lives. Public sectors are established for the wellbeing of people, yet these institutions are declining in the field of education. The results of public sectors are not as good as those of private sectors. Consequently, parents are not interested in sending their children to public sectors. Additionally, there is no effective system of parent-teacher meetings in public sector schools. Hence, it is essential to investigate the causes of declining enrollment in public sector secondary schools in District Kotli, Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Objectives of the Study

The study pursued the following objectives:

1. To explore the current status of enrollment in public sector at secondary level in District Kotli AJ&K.
2. To find out the causes of declining enrolment in public sector at secondary level in District Kotli AJ&K.

Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the recent status of enrollment in public sector at secondary level in District Kotli AJ&K?
2. What is the role of society in declining enrollment in public sector at secondary level?
3. What is the role of school in declining enrollment in public sector at secondary level?
4. What is the role of students in declining enrollment in public sector at secondary level?

Delimitations of the Study

Due to limitations of time and resources, the study was restricted to government boys' secondary schools in Tehsil Kotli of District Kotli.

Significance of the Study

This study will help those who seek to ensure the importance of government schools. The research will provide suggestions to teachers and parents to increase enrollment rates in public sectors. It will

help teachers understand their role, take interest in student education, and improve their results. Through this study, parents will become more engaged in their children's education. The findings will also assist planners and policymakers in framing policies that increase enrollment and ensure quality education for all children in public sectors.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Education: Conceptual Foundations

Education is the medium of personal success in life, society, and the world, laying the foundation for personality development (Kumar, 2017). The Ministry of Education and Human Resources of Mauritius (2014) pointed out that education provided by secondary schools can achieve four pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live with others, and learning to be. It should also provide adolescent students with necessary skills to enable easy and smooth adaptation to rapid physical, emotional, spiritual, and social changes (Garcia & Santiago, 2017).

Secondary Education

According to Groundwater (2003), the success or failure of young people depends heavily on secondary education, as significant identity formation activities take place here, having long-lasting influence on young people's lives. According to McFadden (2003), secondary education is an important segment in every person's life, serving as a means to empower students, raise economic status, and reduce infant mortality.

Enrollment

Enrollment is the act of registering at an institution or in a class. Much research on enrollment patterns is based on the "human capital" model advanced by Gary Becker. Hossler and Maple (1993) found that parental education levels have stronger effects on enrollment plans than student ability or income level.

Factors Affecting Secondary School Enrollment

Teacher-Related Factors: Physical punishment creates hostile learning environments

(Government of Pakistan, 2008; Shami & Husain, 2005). Lack of properly trained teachers and lack of pre-service training compromise educational quality (Hussein, Salfi, & Khan, 2011).

Administrative and Political Factors: Weak monitoring and undue political interference in school affairs are primary factors compelling students to leave school (Government of Pakistan, 2009; Jatoi & Hussain, 2010).

Infrastructure Factors: Lack of physical facilities and transportation availability contribute to high failure rates (Government of Pakistan, 1998, 2008).

Socio-Economic Factors: Children from well-off families have more chances to remain in school compared to low-income children (Alderman, 1996). Child labor directly competes with schooling.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was employed in this research to investigate the causes of declining enrollment in public sector secondary schools in District Kotli, Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Participants

The population of the study comprised all 105 secondary school teachers (SSTs) and all 1,050 students enrolled in 9th and 10th grades at government boys' high schools of Tehsil Kotli, District Kotli. Using simple random sampling following Morgan's (1970) table, 75 teachers and 280 students were selected as the sample.

Research Instruments

Two five-point Likert scale questionnaires were developed: one for students and one for teachers. Each questionnaire contained 23 items covering teacher-related factors, administrative factors, political interference, infrastructure, and socio-economic conditions. The Likert scale included: Strongly Agree (SA)=5, Agree (A)=4, Partially Agree (PA)=3, Disagree (D)=2, Strongly Disagree (SDA)=1.

Validity and Reliability

For instrument validity, questionnaires were distributed to three experts from the Department of Education, University of Kotli. Pilot testing was conducted with 25 students and 20 teachers. Reliability was checked through Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.80.

Data Collection

Personal visits were used for data collection. The researcher distributed questionnaires to 280 students and 75 teachers at government boys' high schools in Tehsil Kotli.

Data Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis. Frequency, percentage, and mean scores were employed to analyze perceptions of factors causing declining enrollment.

RESULTS

The results are presented in twelve tables (six factors × two groups). For each factor category, separate tables are provided for teachers and students, followed by an interpretive analysis immediately after each table. A summary table of factor means is also provided at the end.

Factor 1: Enrollment Trends

Table 1a: Teachers' Perceptions of Enrollment Trends (N=75)

Year	SA %	A %	PA %	D %	SDA %	Mean
Do you see a decline in enrollment trends in the year 2023?	36.0%	38.7%	6.7%	17.3%	1.3%	3.91
Do you see a decline in enrollment trends in the year 2024?	33.3%	44.0%	4.0%	14.7%	4.0%	3.88
Do you see a decline in enrollment trends in the year 2025?	42.7%	41.3%	4.0%	8.0%	4.0%	4.11
Category Mean						3.97

Interpretation of Table 1a (Teachers): Teachers confirmed declining enrollment patterns from 2023 to 2025. In 2023, 74.7% of teachers agreed on enrollment levels (M=3.91). In 2024, 77.3%

agreed (M=3.88). In 2025, 84% agreed (M=4.11). The increasing mean score from 2023 to 2025 (3.91 to 4.11) indicates that teachers perceive enrollment decline as a worsening trend over time.

Table 1b: Students' Perceptions of Enrollment Trends (N=280)

Year	SA %	A %	PA %	D %	SDA %	Mean
Do you see a decline in enrollment trends in the year 2023?	17.1%	66.4%	2.5%	9.6%	4.3%	3.82
Do you see a decline in enrollment trends in the year 2024?	25.4%	63.2%	0.0%	8.6%	2.9%	4.00
Do you see a decline in enrollment trends in the year 2025?	30.4%	53.2%	0.0%	13.2%	3.2%	3.94
Category Mean						3.92

Interpretation of Table 1b (Students): Students also confirmed declining enrollment patterns. In 2023, 83.5% of students agreed (M=3.82). In 2024, 88.6% agreed (M=4.00). In 2025, 83.6%

agreed (M=3.94). The consistently high agreement levels (above 83%) across all three years confirm that students are fully aware of declining enrollment trends in their schools.

Factor 2: Teacher-Related Factors

Table 2a: Teachers' Perceptions of Teacher-Related Factors (N=75)

Statement	SA %	A %	PA %	D %	SDA %	Mean
Physical punishment causes declining enrollment	44.0%	38.7%	0.0%	12.0%	5.3%	4.04
Negative teacher attitude causes declining enrollment	22.7%	48.0%	1.3%	14.7%	10.7%	3.53
Teacher attitude toward students causes declining enrollment	38.7%	40.0%	0.0%	14.7%	6.7%	3.89
Lack of teacher concentration on teaching causes declining enrollment	29.3%	49.3%	1.3%	13.3%	6.7%	3.81
Lack of properly trained teachers causes declining enrollment	38.0%	48.0%	1.3%	9.3%	5.3%	4.00
Lack of pre-service training causes declining enrollment	44.0%	40.0%	0.0%	12.0%	4.0%	4.08

Statement	SA %	A %	PA %	D %	SDA %	Mean
Lack of proper lesson planning causes declining enrollment	9.3%	57.3%	0.0%	21.3%	12.0%	3.31
Category Mean						3.81

Interpretation of Table 2a (Teachers): Teachers strongly endorsed multiple teacher-related factors. Physical punishment received 82.7% agreement (M=4.04). Lack of pre-service training received 84% agreement (M=4.08). Lack of properly trained teachers received 86% agreement (M=4.00). Negative teacher attitude received 70.7% agreement (M=3.53). Lack of teacher

concentration received 78.6% agreement (M=3.81). However, lack of proper lesson planning received only 66.6% agreement (M=3.31), indicating teachers perceive this as a relatively less significant factor. The category mean of 3.81 indicates strong teacher agreement that teacher-related factors contribute to declining enrollment.

Table 2b: Students' Perceptions of Teacher-Related Factors (N=280)

Statement	SA %	A %	PA %	D %	SDA %	Mean
Physical punishment causes declining enrollment	47.1%	35.7%	0.4%	1.8%	5.0%	4.08
Negative teacher attitude causes declining enrollment	30.4%	56.4%	0.0%	6.1%	7.1%	3.97
Teacher attitude toward students causes declining enrollment	29.6%	56.8%	0.0%	6.8%	6.8%	3.96
Lack of teacher concentration on teaching causes declining enrollment	35.7%	56.4%	0.0%	6.4%	1.4%	4.19
Lack of properly trained teachers causes declining enrollment	41.4%	40.7%	0.0%	11.4%	6.4%	3.99
Lack of pre-service training causes declining enrollment	35.0%	54.6%	0.4%	7.5%	2.5%	4.12
Lack of proper lesson planning causes declining enrollment	33.6%	48.6%	0.4%	13.2%	4.3%	3.96
Category Mean						4.04

Interpretation of Table 2b (Students): Students showed even stronger agreement than teachers across all teacher-related factors. Lack of teacher concentration received the highest student agreement (92.1%, M=4.19)—the highest of any factor in the entire study. Physical punishment received 82.8% agreement (M=4.08). Lack of pre-

service training received 89.6% agreement (M=4.12). Negative teacher attitude received 86.8% agreement (M=3.97). The category mean of 4.04 (compared to teachers' 3.81) indicates that students are more acutely aware of and affected by teacher-related problems than teachers themselves recognize.

Factor 3: Administrative Factors

Table 3a: Teachers' Perceptions of Administrative Factors (N=75)

Statement	SA %	A %	PA %	D %	SDA %	Mean
Lack of monitoring causes declining enrollment	25.3%	52.0%	0.0%	20.0%	2.7%	3.77
Poor school planning causes declining enrollment	32.0%	48.0%	2.7%	12.0%	5.3%	3.89
Inappropriate evaluation system causes declining enrollment	10.7%	65.3%	4.0%	13.3%	6.7%	3.60
Category Mean						3.75

Interpretation of Table 3a (Teachers): Teachers showed moderate agreement on administrative factors. Poor school planning received 80% agreement (M=3.89). Lack of monitoring received 77.3% agreement (M=3.77). Inappropriate

evaluation system received 76% agreement (M=3.60). The category mean of 3.75 indicates that teachers recognize administrative deficiencies as contributing factors, though with slightly lower intensity than teacher-related factors.

Table 3b: Students' Perceptions of Administrative Factors (N=280)

Statement	SA %	A %	PA %	D %	SDA %	Mean
Lack of monitoring causes declining enrollment	26.4%	61.4%	0.0%	9.3%	2.9%	3.99
Poor school planning causes declining enrollment	38.6%	49.6%	0.0%	7.9%	3.9%	4.11
Inappropriate evaluation system causes declining enrollment	35.5%	47.0%	0.0%	12.5%	5.0%	3.95
Category Mean						4.02

Interpretation of Table 3b (Students): Students demonstrated significantly stronger agreement on administrative factors than teachers. Poor school planning received 88.2% agreement (M=4.11). Lack of monitoring received 87.8% agreement

(M=3.99). Inappropriate evaluation system received 82.5% agreement (M=3.95). The category mean of 4.02 (compared to teachers' 3.75) indicates students perceive administrative deficiencies more acutely than teachers do.

Factor 4: Political Factors

Table 4a: Teachers' Perceptions of Political Factors (N=75)

Statement	SA %	A %	PA %	D %	SDA %	Mean
Political interference causes declining enrollment	29.3%	42.7%	2.7%	14.7%	10.7%	3.65
School-level politics causes declining enrollment	36.0%	41.3%	4.0%	14.7%	4.0%	3.91
Category Mean						3.78

Interpretation of Table 4a (Teachers): Teachers recognized political factors as significant contributors. School-level politics received 77.3% agreement (M=3.91). Political interference

(government-level) received 72% agreement (M=3.65). The category mean of 3.78 indicates that teachers perceive political dynamics as moderately strong factors affecting enrollment.

Table 4b: Students' Perceptions of Political Factors (N=280)

Statement	SA %	A %	PA %	D %	SDA %	Mean
Political interference causes declining enrollment	23.6%	63.6%	0.0%	6.8%	6.1%	3.92
School-level politics causes declining enrollment	35.0%	52.5%	0.0%	7.9%	4.6%	4.05
Category Mean						3.99

Interpretation of Table 4b (Students): Students showed stronger agreement on political factors than teachers. School-level politics received 87.5% agreement (M=4.05). Political interference

received 87.2% agreement (M=3.92). The category mean of 3.99 (compared to teachers' 3.78) indicates that even young students are acutely aware of and affected by political dynamics in their schools.

Factor 5: Infrastructure Factors

Table 5a: Teachers' Perceptions of Infrastructure Factors (N=75)

Statement	SA %	A %	PA %	D %	SDA %	Mean
Lack of proper school building causes declining enrollment	30.7%	36.0%	6.7%	20.0%	6.7%	3.64
Lack of proper infrastructure causes declining enrollment	22.7%	56.0%	1.3%	12.0%	8.0%	3.73
Lack of transportation availability causes declining enrollment	22.7%	56.0%	1.3%	12.0%	8.0%	3.73
Category Mean						3.70

Interpretation of Table 5a (Teachers): Teachers acknowledged infrastructure deficiencies as contributing factors. Lack of proper infrastructure received 78.7% agreement (M=3.73). Transportation unavailability received 78.7%

agreement (M=3.73). Lack of proper school building received 66.7% agreement (M=3.64). The category mean of 3.70 was the lowest among all factor categories for teachers, indicating they perceive infrastructure as relatively less critical than other factors.

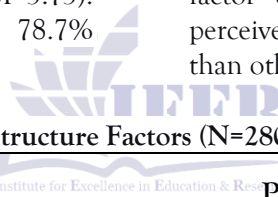


Table 5b: Students' Perceptions of Infrastructure Factors (N=280)

Statement	SA %	A %	PA %	D %	SDA %	Mean
Lack of proper school building causes declining enrollment	33.9%	48.9%	0.4%	12.1%	4.6%	3.95
Lack of proper infrastructure causes declining enrollment	39.3%	44.6%	0.4%	11.4%	4.3%	4.03
Lack of transportation availability causes declining enrollment	39.3%	44.6%	0.4%	11.4%	4.3%	4.03
Category Mean						4.00

Interpretation of Table 5b (Students): Students demonstrated much stronger agreement on infrastructure factors than teachers. Lack of proper infrastructure received 83.9% agreement (M=4.03). Transportation unavailability received

83.9% agreement (M=4.03). Lack of proper school building received 82.8% agreement (M=3.95). The category mean of 4.00 (compared to teachers' 3.70) indicates that students directly experience physical facility deficiencies and are more negatively affected by them than teachers recognize.

Factor 6: Socio-Economic Factors

Table 6a: Teachers' Perceptions of Socio-Economic Factors (N=75)

Statement	SA %	A %	PA %	D %	SDA %	Mean
Low parental income causes declining enrollment	46.7%	40.0%	0.0%	6.7%	6.7%	4.13
Parental unemployment causes declining enrollment	36.0%	42.7%	0.0%	12.0%	9.3%	3.84
Large family size causes declining enrollment	53.3%	29.3%	0.0%	12.0%	5.3%	4.13
Parental illiteracy causes declining enrollment	9.3%	57.3%	0.0%	21.3%	12.0%	3.31
Child labor causes declining enrollment	44.0%	40.0%	0.0%	12.0%	4.0%	4.08
Category Mean						3.90

Interpretation of Table 6a (Teachers): Teachers strongly endorsed socio-economic factors. Low parental income received 86.7% agreement (M=4.13). Large family size received 82.6% agreement (M=4.13). Child labor received 84% agreement (M=4.08). Parental unemployment received 78.7% agreement (M=3.84). Parental illiteracy received 66.6% agreement (M=3.31). The category mean of 3.90 indicates teachers recognize socio-economic conditions as powerful determinants of enrollment.

Table 6b: Students' Perceptions of Socio-Economic Factors (N=280)

Statement	SA %	A %	PA %	D %	SDA %	Mean
Low parental income causes declining enrollment	27.9%	56.8%	1.1%	8.6%	5.7%	3.92
Parental unemployment causes declining enrollment	40.0%	45.4%	0.7%	12.9%	1.1%	4.10
Large family size causes declining enrollment	33.2%	50.7%	0.0%	13.6%	2.5%	3.99
Parental illiteracy causes declining enrollment	33.6%	48.6%	0.4%	13.2%	4.3%	3.96

Statement	SA %	A %	PA %	D %	SDA %	Mean
Child labor causes declining enrollment	35.0%	54.6%	0.4%	7.5%	2.5%	4.12
Category Mean						4.02

Interpretation of Table 6b (Students): Students showed strong agreement on socio-economic factors. Child labor received the highest student endorsement (89.6%, M=4.12). Parental unemployment received 85.4% agreement (M=4.10). Large family size received 83.9%

agreement (M=3.99). Parental illiteracy received 82.2% agreement (M=3.96). Low parental income received 84.7% agreement (M=3.92). The category mean of 4.02 confirms that students are fully aware of how family economic conditions constrain educational opportunities.

Summary Table: Factor Means (Teachers vs. Students)

Factor Category	Teachers Mean	Students Mean
Enrollment Trends (2023-2025)	3.97	3.92
Teacher-Related Factors	3.81	4.04
Administrative Factors	3.75	4.02
Political Factors	3.78	3.99
Infrastructure Factors	3.70	4.00
Socio-Economic Factors	3.90	4.02
Overall Mean (All Factors)	3.82	4.00

Interpretation of Overall Results: The overall mean scores of 3.82 (teachers) and 4.00 (students) across all factors indicate strong agreement that multiple interconnected factors contribute to declining enrollment in public sector secondary schools. Students consistently rated factors higher than teachers across all categories, suggesting that students are more acutely aware of or affected by these issues. Socio-economic factors received the highest teacher rating (M=3.90), while teacher-related factors received the highest student rating (M=4.04). Infrastructure factors received the

lowest teacher rating (M=3.70) but strong student endorsement (M=4.00), indicating that students directly experience physical facility deficiencies more intensely than teachers recognize. The convergence of teacher and student perspectives across nearly all factors validates the multifaceted nature of this educational challenge.

DISCUSSION

The results of this research indicate that dwindling enrollment in public sector secondary schools is the outcome of an interrelated network of factors

spread across teacher quality, school leadership, political interference, shortcomings in school infrastructure, and socio-economic background of students. The alignment of teacher and student opinions in almost all issues is proof of the complex nature of this problem and the simultaneous need for comprehensive solution.

Teacher-Related Issues

The high level of support for teacher-related factors, physical punishment (82.7% teachers, 82.8% students), negative teacher behavior (70.7% teachers, 86.8% students), lack of teacher concentration (78.6% teachers, 92.1% students), insufficient training (86% teachers, 82.1% students), and inadequate lesson planning (66.6% teachers, 82.2% students), demonstrate that teachers' quality and conduct significantly influence students' schooling experiences and decisions about staying in school.

Physical punishment was singled out as very important, with the two groups almost completely agreeing. This corroborates studies revealing that corporal punishment creates a tough environment for learning, disrupts the relationship between teachers and students, and leads students to stop going to school (Government of Pakistan, 2008; Shami & Husain, 2005). Students who are physically punished or have seen such punishment, see school as a place where they will be afraid and humiliated rather than a place they will grow and be given more chances. Therefore, it is quite reasonable to drop out of school.

The big student agreement on lack of teacher concentration (92.1%) and negative attitude (86.8%) means that students really can tell when teachers are not engaged and when a teacher's mood is not good. Students see teachers who look like they don't even want to be there, don't have their stuff ready, or are just plain rude, as saying that the students' education doesn't really matter. The difference in the level of agreement between teachers and students about lesson planning (66.6% vs. 82.2%) shows that teachers may not realise to what extent students notice lack of a good lesson plan.

Administrative and Political Factors

Administrative issues such as lack of monitoring (77.3% teachers, 87.8% students), improper evaluation system (76% teachers, 82.5% students), and poor school planning (80% teachers, 88.2% students) are major contributors to systemic failures in educational governance. Similar issues of weak monitoring and neglectful attitude of administration have been identified by Government of Pakistan (2009) and Jatoui and Hussain (2010) as the root causes of educational problems.

Political interference had a great influence and thus was identified as a major cause that received great support. There were government-level interference (72% teachers, 87.2% students) and school-level politics (77.3% teachers, 87.5% students) as the main political factors that influence the schools. Students' highly awareness of political dynamics suggests that they are able to perceive political dynamics in their schools and they get affected by them.

Infrastructure Factors

The lack of proper buildings (66.7% teachers, 82.8% students), poor infrastructure (78.7% teachers, 83.9% students), and unavailability of transportation (78.7% teachers, 83.9% students) are infrastructural deficiencies that hinder access to education. The evidence here is consistent with ASER's (2014) report on the condition of facilities in AJ&K schools. Students tend to agree with teachers to a greater extent on the inadequacy of the school buildings since they are the ones who experience overcrowding, discomfort, or even unsafe situations where they are learning

Socio-economic factors

Factors such as poverty, unemployment, large family size, parental illiteracy, and child labor were all recognized as major socio-economic factors (86.7% teachers, 84.7% students), (78.7% teachers, 85.4% students), (82.6% teachers, 83.9% students), (66.6% teachers, 82.2% students), and (84% teachers, 89.6% students), respectively) that unfortunately limit educational opportunities due to the fundamental constraints imposed by economic conditions. The child labor

issue that got a very high rating (students 89.6%) symbolizes the direct struggle of economic survival with education.

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the causes of declining enrollment in public sector secondary schools in District Kotli, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The findings demonstrate that enrollment decline results from multiple interconnected factors spanning teacher quality, administrative practices, political interference, infrastructure deficiencies, and socio-economic conditions. The overall mean scores of 3.82 (teachers) and 4.00 (students) across all factors indicate strong agreement that these factors collectively contribute to declining enrollment.

Teacher-Related Factors: It is concluded that physical punishment creates hostile learning environments that drive students away. Negative teacher attitudes communicate that students and their education are unimportant. Lack of teacher concentration on teaching means students receive inadequate instruction. Insufficiently trained teachers cannot deliver quality education. Poor lesson planning reflects inadequate preparation.

Administrative and Political Factors: Without monitoring, poor performance can go on without anyone noticing. Inappropriate evaluation systems might not be able to measure true learning accurately. Failure in school planning leads to incoherent educational programs. Political interference hampers school functioning, creates instability, and influences teacher placement and transfers.

Infrastructure Factors:

A lack of proper school buildings means that students have to learn in overcrowded, uncomfortable, or even unsafe conditions. Schools become unappealing due to poor infrastructure, absence of electricity, drinking water, boundary walls. Transport not being available mainly affects the students from the rural areas.

Socio-Economic Factors:

Low parental income is a major reason why the family cannot afford the cost of education. Parental unemployment leads to economic pressure, forcing children to work. Large family size causes spreading of limited resources among many children. Child labor not only directly competes with schooling but also affects the education of other children.

Overall Conclusion:

The alignment of teacher and student perspectives confirms these findings. If we do not systematically address these multifaceted issues, public sector secondary schools will continue to lose students to private alternatives, which will threaten educational equity and the development of the nation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

For Teachers

Teachers should use love in their teaching and not use punishment or any kind of violence to discipline children. If they want to increase student participation in learning, teachers need to continually focus on the lesson and be supportive and active during the entire teaching process. Besides gaining new skills through training, teachers should also conduct detailed lesson planning that shows they respect their students' time.

For School Administrators

School leadership

should make sure that they really have tight monitoring systems. They should also not hesitate to change evaluation systems so that they are very fair and transparent. Besides preparing school improvement plans, there is also a need to protect schools against the negative effects of politics so that schools can be exempted from these disruptions.

For Policymakers

Policymakers

should dedicate resources and funds for training of teachers (both pre-service and in-service), upgrading school infrastructure (construction of

buildings, facilities, transportation), making political interference a thing of the past through the enactment of protective policies, assisting vulnerable families with social protection programs, and implementing child labor laws.

For Parents and Communities

Parents

have to understand that education is very important and, therefore, children's schooling should be considered as their first priority. Besides getting in touch with the school through parent-teacher meetings, they are also expected to support children's learning. Communities on the other hand, should together raise their voices for more and better teachers, facilities, and resources in local schools.

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