

# **Socio-Economic Factors for Out-of-School Children**

## **(A Case Study of Taluka Hala, District Matiari, Sindh)**

Zohra Khatoon  
Mumtaz Khowaja  
Ameer Ali Buriro

### **Abstract**

*This study is conducted to analyse the school enrolment status of the rural areas of taluka Hala, district Matiari, providing facts and figures about the condition of schools in the area, socio-economic conditions of the population living in the area, number of school going and Out-Of-School children in the area. Some focus is also given to work out school dropout in the region. The study also provides perception of parents and teachers about high number of Out-Of-School children in the area. The analysis discloses the underlying factors for low school enrolment in the area. The study is based on measurement of four key parameters, “4-As”, Availability of schools in the region, Accessibility of schools to the communities, Affordability of the parents and Awareness about the education. The major finding of the survey is that, economic factor is a key factor behind the low school enrolment of the children in the area. Many Out-Of-School children help their parents to earn money for their wellbeing.*

**Keywords:** Out-Of-School children, school dropout, never enrolled children, literacy rate

### **Introduction**

The development of the world is not possible without education. According to United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2012) global monitoring report, if all children are given to equal access to education, the global per-capita income can be increased to 23% over the next 40 years. In order to get the real picture on the education, the UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics established Global Initiative on Out-Of-School Children to address the urgent need for robust, reliable data and support the development of strategies to improve access to education across the globe. According to the statistical data published by UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), the number of Out-Of-School children was about sixty one million in 2010. After Sub Saharan Africa, second largest home for Out-Of-School children is South and West Asia where sixteen million children are considered to be Out-Of-School. Looking at South Asia region, Pakistan has the highest number of Out-Of-School children containing 34.4% of the country's primary school age population that makes about 6.6 million children. One in every four children is Out-Of-School-children in Pakistan in the age group of 5-11 years (UNESCO, 2008). In a report published by Federal Bureau of Statistics on *National child labor*, the estimated number of children aged 5-14 years is about 40 million in Pakistan, out of them 3.3 million are working children. Gender based dropout is also high in poor communities in the country. According to Cynthia Lloyd, et al. (CB Lloyd, 2009), in Pakistan, not all young women face the same educational weaknesses of the country. Urban class young women belonging to high salaried families are fortunate to finish their education goals. But in low income families situation is different. One of the major issue is security of the girls. Parents worry about the safety of

their girls. Ashiq Hussain et al (Ashiq Hussain, 2011) studied the causes of high dropout rate at the primary level in Pakistan. The role of educated parents in educating the children also cannot be over ignored. Educated and literate parents can contribute in the overall level of education of the nation. Behrman et al (Behrman, 1999) conducted a report in India.

In this study it can be seen that economic factor is a dominant factor behind out of school children phenomena. Rajan Roy (Roy, 2000) concludes that by utilising data from Pakistan, there is a positive association between hours of child labour and poverty. He further describe that there is a negative association between child schooling and poverty. Availability of schools is also effects dropout factors. J. Holmes (Holmes, 1999) reports that in Pakistan, the distance to the nearest primary school bears no relation to boys' years of schooling but the distances to middle and secondary school are significantly and negatively related to educational attainment especially for girls.

UNESCO categorize Out-Of-School children into three distinct categories comprises of, first, children who have enrolled in school but left school at some stage, second, children who are not yet enrolled in school but will join school in near future and third, children who never enrolled in school. According to a report published in 2011 bi-Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), in Sindh province, there is about 29.5% of province's school going population is Out-Of-School. The report observes this number is larger than other parts of the country (Asma Bajwa, 2011). In Sindh, Kashmore and Thatta districts have the highest percentage (56%) of Out-Of-School children. Overall Sindh province is facing major challenges in promoting enrolment especially in rural areas. There are many Out-Of-School children throughout the region (estimated at approximately 2.3 million aged 5-9) (2013); moreover, those who are able to attend school often drop out, while learning outcomes tend to be weak. This thesis focuses on enrolment trends in Sindh, with a particular focus on rural areas of Matiari district.

As the different studies suggest, at present a large number of children are Out-Of-School system in Pakistan especially in rural Sindh. There are a few studies conducted in different districts of Sindh province. The present research is designed to explore the main determinants and characteristics of children who never enrolled in the school and dropout children from primary level in rural areas of taluka Hala mostly due to various reasons. The main area of concern is the educational coverage for all. The research focus is concerned to the inclusion factor of the all communities.

### **Objectives of the study**

The overall objective of the study is to point out the issues and analyse the underlying factors belonging out-of-school children phenomena. By identifying the reasons for large number of out-of-school children, it is feasible to identify those factors in order to improve the school enrolment in rural areas of Sindh province and provide more targeted solutions to ensuring these children are enrolled in schools and achieve a minimum basic level in literacy.

### **Research Questions**

- What is the existing condition of the schools and school-going children in Hala taluka?
- What percentage of school age children is Out-Of-School in the area under study?
- What are the major causes of low enrolment and school dropout ratio in the area under study?
- What are the perception and the problems raised by parents about the out-of-school children in the area?

### **Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on the Out-Of-School children issue through key factors which are assumed to be the major determinants for school enrolment. *Affordability, Awareness, Availability and Accessibility*. Affordability can be defined as the measurement of the capacity of parents to send their children to school. Affordability of parents involves direct and indirect economic factors on school enrolment. Awareness of parents is a test parameter about their perception of education and educating their children. This factor also discloses underlying and unseen reasons and hidden factors involving social factors regarding to stop children from school education.

Availability could be defined as the total required facilities to enroll students for desired learning outcome, this may include school infrastructure, school furniture, teachers availability, teachers qualifications (quality), availability of learning material books, class room visual aids, board marker etc. Accessibility is defined as the available resources with greater degree of accessibility. This may include indicators like, school location, cultural barriers, or any other issue due which a portion of school going kids is prevented that can be social exclusion, this refer to opportunity cost of out-of-school children.

### **Significance of the study**

This survey based study focuses children belonging to the rural area of taluka Hala district Matiari, who never enrolled in schools and children dropouts from primary level due to various underlying reasons. Further to this, to formulate draft recommendations for enhancing enrollment rates and prevent drop outs children from rural village public schools of Hala Taluka. The observations and statistics of the study can be extrapolated to the rural areas of Sindh province and help to make policies to enhance school enrolment in the rural areas of Sindh province.

### **Research Method**

To analyse the determinants of Out-Of-School children, mixed research model is adopted by implying both quantitative and qualitative approach containing door to door survey. The purpose of the survey was to identify number of school going and Out-Of-School children of the area. In order to find out reasons and identify underlying issues behind the Out-Of-School children phenomena, a set of questionnaire were being filled by the households in the area. The obtained data is then analysed using SPSS software package. In order to understand the perception and views of parents are also collected using a separate set of questionnaire.

### **Sample size**

The data is collected on random sample selection of respondents selected from the different villages of taluka Hala. Hala Taluka is an administrative subdivision of Matiari District in Sindh province of Pakistan. As per census conducted in year 2000, approximately 1.6 million people lives in the taluka comprises one Municipal Administration and 6 Union Councils. The rough estimate of population in the selected villages is approximately 26000. There are total 220 households were interviewed in the survey belonging to 12 different villages.

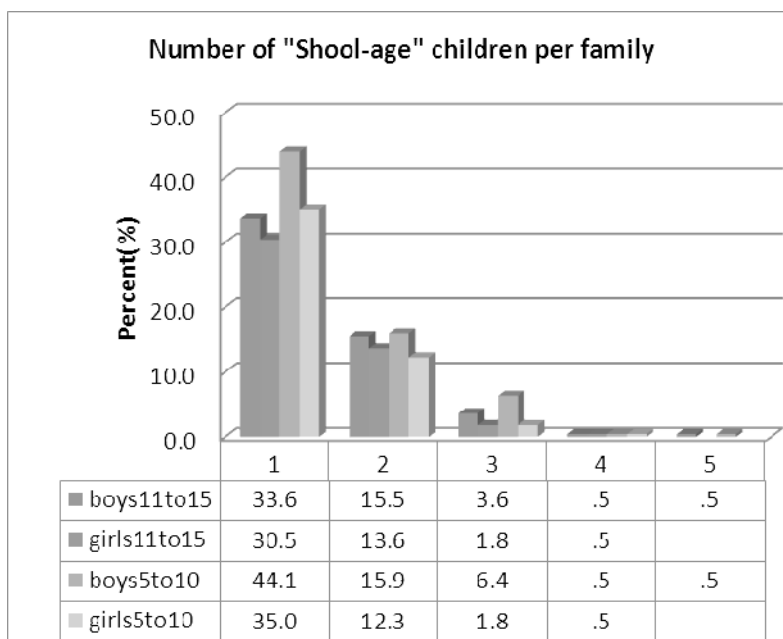
### **Results and Discussion**

The major aim was to find out and work out underlying factors effecting overall school enrolment and drop out ratio in the villages under study. For this to resolve, two sets of surveys were conducted. In order to determine parents' consciousness, attitude and perceptions of education for their children, one survey was directly conducted amongst the households. The second survey was conducted at schools, in order to assess school facilities.

This section analyzes and reveals the outcomes of the surveys and interviews, addressing key questions put forth in the terms of reference of the study.

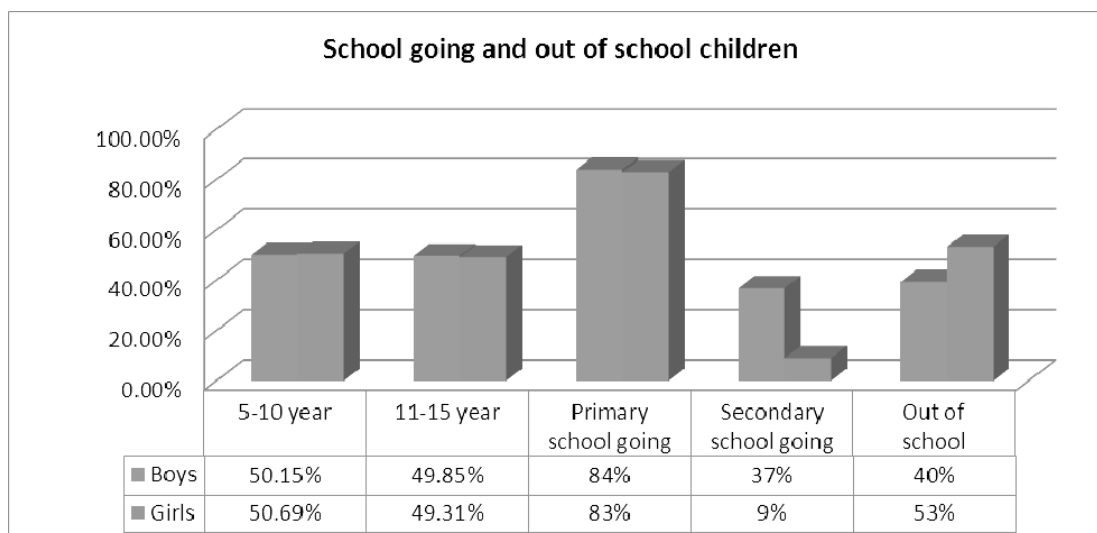
### School enrolment status of the children

In this section school enrolment trend for both secondary and primary school level of the children in the community under study is represented. The data is obtained using random survey conducted in the area from the households.



**Figure 1:** Percentage-wise number of children per family, both boys and girls aged 5 to 15.

The total number of children per family under study is represented in Figure 1. The graph represents number of children per family, boys and girls, aging 5 to 15 years. It can be seen that most of the families are consist of one and two children. The number of children is divided into two categories, one group is 5 to10 year age and other is 11 to15 year, in order to separate primary school going children and secondary school going children whereas Out-Of-School children belong to both categories.



**Figure 2:** School going and Out-Of-School children. Both boys and girls aging 5-15 years.

Figure 2 compares the primary and secondary school going boys and girls verses total number of boys and girls belonging to the age group 5 to 15 years. This age group is considered school going in Pakistan. From it can be seen that the population wise number of boys and girls children is almost same in both primary and secondary school age group. Though the primary school going percentage is not satisfactory and not near to 100%, but gender discrimination is not observed. Both genders have approximately 84% school going ratio. From the figure it can be seen that, at the secondary level, the enrollment ratio for the boys and girls declines sharply. Only 37% of secondary school age group boys go for secondary education level, which is more than 50% of the Primary school ratio. The scenario is more alarming for the girls as can be seen in the figure less than 9% of girls of age group 11 to 15 years, go to secondary school. Low enrollment at secondary school level shows the discontinuation of education in the community.

According to the data overall 60% of boys are school going both in primary and secondary schools and in overall 53% girls are Out-Of-School mostly contributed by secondary school age group. From the data described above, it can be concluded that only 54% of total school age children are enrolled in the schools and remaining 46% are to be considered Out-Of-School children. This number is comparable with the results published by ASER **Invalid source specified**. (2013) for Kashmore and Thatha, the two rural districts, habitat of the highest number of Out-Of-School children with about 56% of their school going population never enrolled in school.

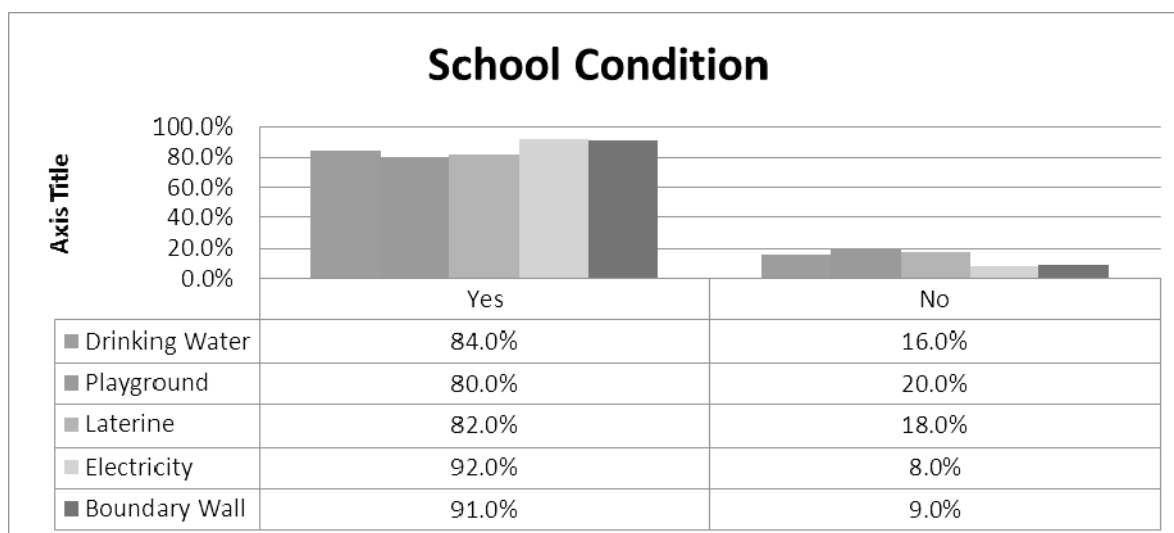
### **Underlying factors**

In this section and following sections, we discuss the findings describing the reasons of low enrolment of children in the schools in the area under study. Here perception of parents will be presented regarding to not sending their children to school according to pre-set parameters as discussed earlier.

### **Availability and Accessibility**

Availability and accessibility can be defined more deeply what is understood by these less educated community members. For instance a common community member perceives school as only a building and with a teacher employed in it but to qualify a building to become a school, a lot of other things are required for instance school building with toilets, boundary walls, furniture, electricity, fan, board, books and other necessary goods to ensure the learning outcome of students on national standards. The school may be unavailable if major factors like teacher or building is missing but even if teacher and building is available and other factors which are essential learning resources are missing, schools cannot be completely endorsed to be available.

Accessibility of school is defined as equal access of all communities living in school vicinity regardless of community, clan, religion, faith, cultural background, gender etc. Accessibility of a school can be also reduced due to many other factors including, schools lying at larger distance from villages or may be in another case scenario conflicts between neighboring villages can also reduce children enrolment and attendance in the schools. In Figure 3, the overall condition of schools is summarised as described by the parents. In this figure and table it can be seen that above 80% of school are equipped with basic facilities like electricity, drinking water facility, latrine, playground and boundary wall etc. Above 90% of parents are also satisfied with school timings. 94% parents do not think that there is much difficulty at the schools and think that education is also provided in their mother tongue. This reflects that there is no lack of educational facilities at least at primary level for both girls and boys in the community under study and above 90% of families are satisfied in their perception about the physical condition of schools in their villages.



**Figure 3:** Overall schools' condition of schools described with drinking water facility, playground, latrine, electricity and boundary wall.

When it is asked from the parents about the availability of primary schools, 99% of households agreed that school is available in their villages. 17% of the households agree that there is another (private or NGO) based school is available in their areas. About 95% of parents said that available school have proper building and considered as *pakka* building. The data presented in Figure 3 represents 49% of school are only for boys and 13% for girls and remaining 38% schools fall in coeducation category. About 94% parents agree that books are available free of cost in the government schools. School status is reflected in 97% of parents say that primary school is near to their home and at less than 1 km distance. Perception of the community about the availability of school shows that only 1% respondents believe that school is not available in their vicinity while 3% respondents believe that school is not accessible. In fact very low number of respondents think if there any problem of availability and accessibility. The respondents here show their perception and awareness regarding the schooling system.

## **Affordability and Awareness**

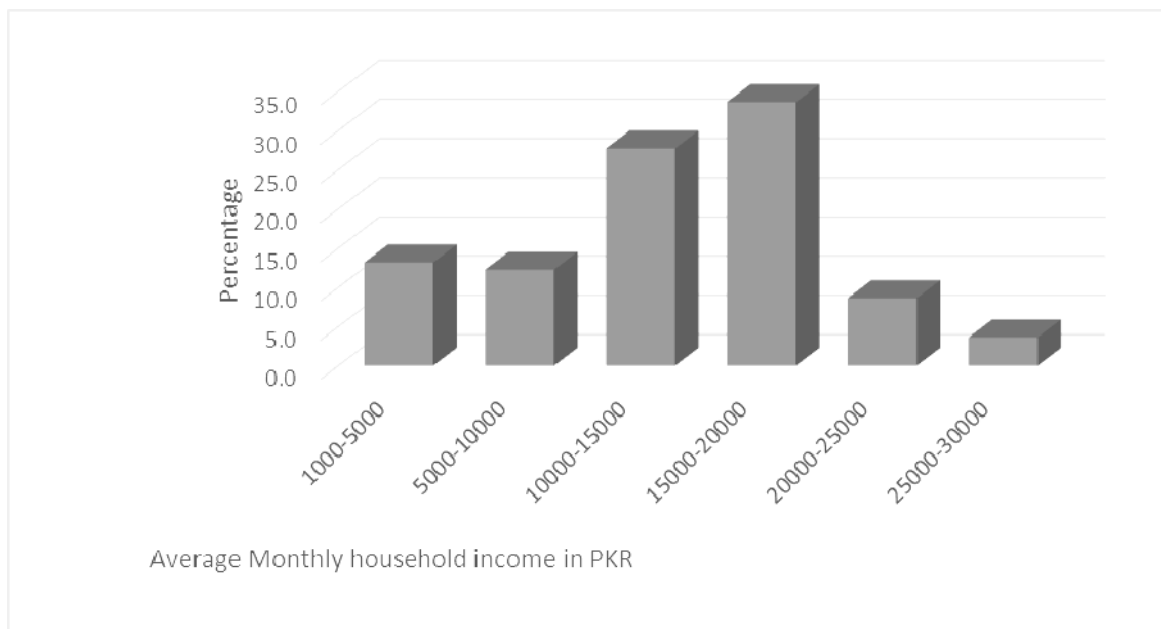
### ***Socio Economic Characteristics of respondent Household***

We try to understand the characteristics of those households whose children remain Out-Of-School system. As all the respondents were male, the pattern shows that very thin portion of female are heading family, this supports the idea that female have lower voice in decision making compared to their male family members. Female in rural set up household is major factor in managing household socio economic affairs. Not only she contributes to the family income but indirectly pays a portion of unpaid amount of services in home management like cooking, cleaning and other jobs on her own without physical help from male members of family. Thus a greater level of household ownership is dedicated by her. In considering out school children we must know the gender balance of a family in decision making process. House hold head makes all decisions regarding engagement in labour and family resources endowment is the pre conceptualized by the family with a greater influence by the father or male elders in charge of family. Almost entire population of household is pre dominantly male household heads. This may reflect in decision making or resources allocation of family most importantly the resources endowment on education of child.

**Figure 4:** Profession of respondent family head.

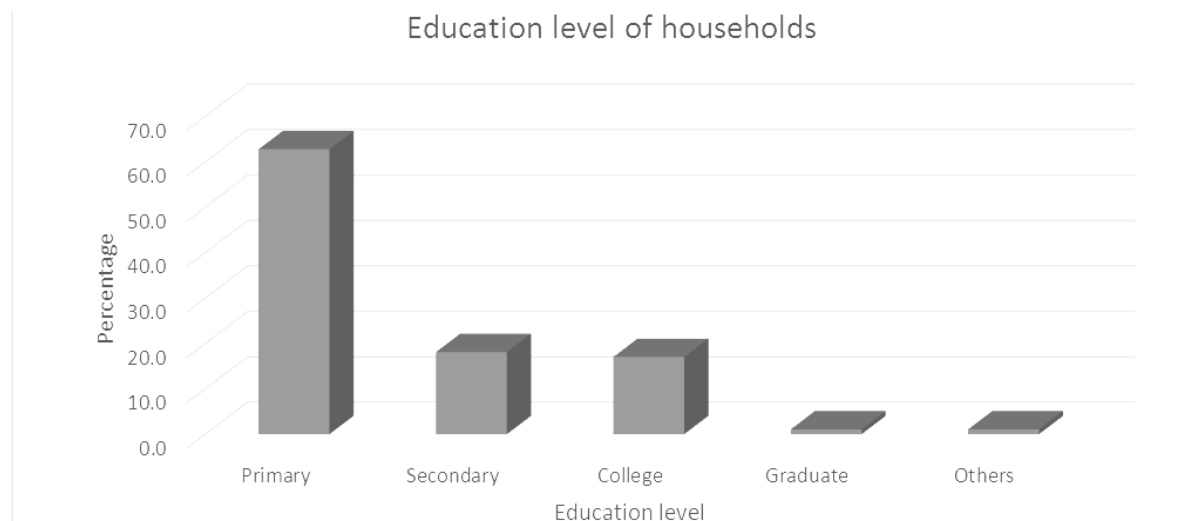
In Figure 4 it can be seen that over all approximately 60% respondent's family business is unskilled labour, which means that these families do not have regular sources of income with stable income flow over a year. The second category of family profession is farming at 32.7%. In fact agriculture is marginal return activity and the sector is vulnerable to natural disasters. This may affect family income. Any decision to allocate resources is linked to the stable sources of income of a family. Only 10.5% families are engaged in vocational works, while only 4.1% respondents do private job. Very thin portion of households in engaged in government sector jobs.

Further to this, it can be seen in Figure 5 that the major portion of households is engaged in low paid unstable job market. It can also be seen clearly that the higher percentage of Hindu community belongs to very low income category. This monthly income chart supports the data given in Figure 4. The income is the major factor in deciding to send a child to school. It is assumed that a family may decide positively if the income flow is stable and may decide negatively if the same is other way around. However, income cannot be the only the factor but one of the major factors. Our analysis will unfold to other factors which may have effect on family decision making regarding sending their children in school.



**Figure 5:** Monthly income of the household's families

The other factor may be the educational status of the parents. It is considered that the Out-Of-Schoolchildren mostly belong to illiterate parents. Rest of the parents are mostly primary pass. Very low percentage of the parents has higher degrees. Due to lower education level, many of the parents do not belong to government or private job sector, as discussed earlier, and that is the reason they belong to low income families. The households' literacy ratio was just 45%, and the level of education can be seen in Figure 6.



**Figure 6:** Education level of the households

Financial conditions of households are also having significant impact on children enrolment. Low enrolment of the children is also related to literacy rate of the community to some extent. Hence the parents are unaware of the importance of education. Though the education is free of cost and books are also available free of cost at primary and secondary school level in Sindh, but even this doesn't help apparently in increasing school enrolment. There are many reasons behind this critical situation which is discussed in following sections, but financial and educational status of parents cannot be ignored. Usually school going or Out-Of-School children, both help their parents in agricultural fields and daily life matters and also many support their parents in financial matters too.

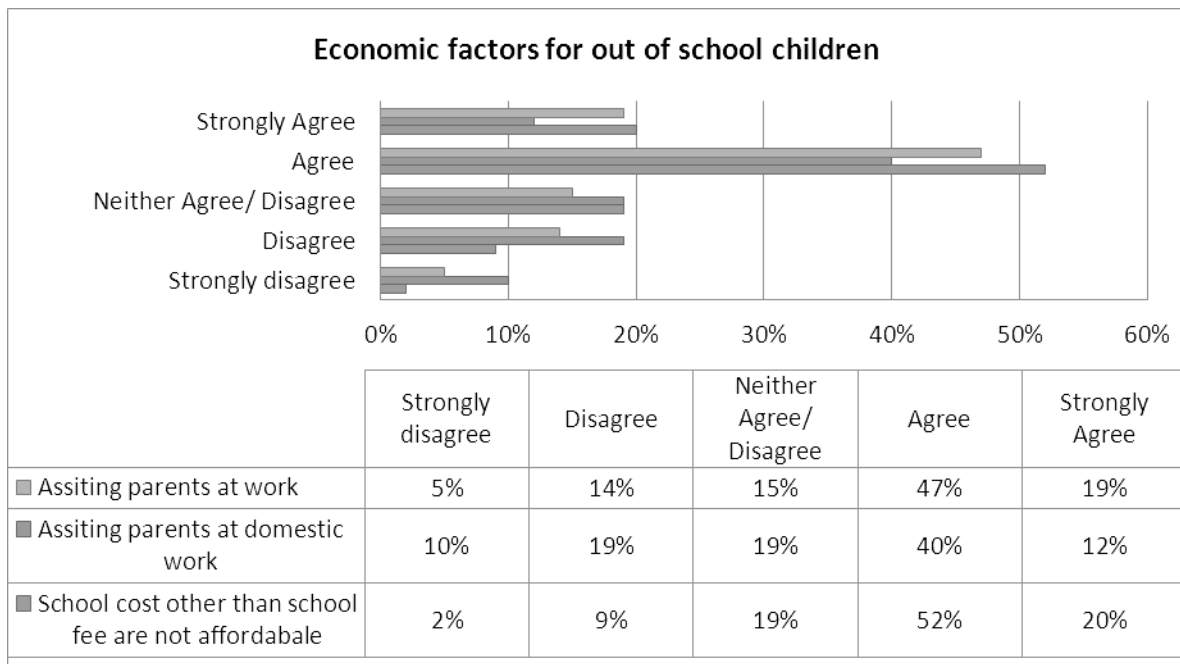
### ***Parents' perception***

In the survey around 60% of the parents, whose children are Out-Of-School, agreed that they are unable to afford education related expenses for their children and consider affordability as the primary reason for them not sending children to school. In order to understand affordability and awareness parameters of parents of Out-Of-School children, a separate questionnaire was included in the survey. The questionnaire includes questions involving to explore the perception of parents regarding to find out reasons and logic for not sending their children school

The affordability parameter examined in two parts, one deal with economic factor and other involves social factor which also sheds light on the parents' awareness about education. As can be seen, even the school fee is waived off in government schools the primary factor which drives affordability is the cost related to school schooling: uniforms, books, stationary and transport. The trends in Figure 7 show that, above 70% parents of both boys and girls agreed or strongly agreed with this rationale. They think that they cannot afford to send their at least one or more than one children to school. This also suggests that the community under study belongs to low income group and the affordability is an obvious problem of those families, even there is no school fee and books are also free of cost available, but other cost

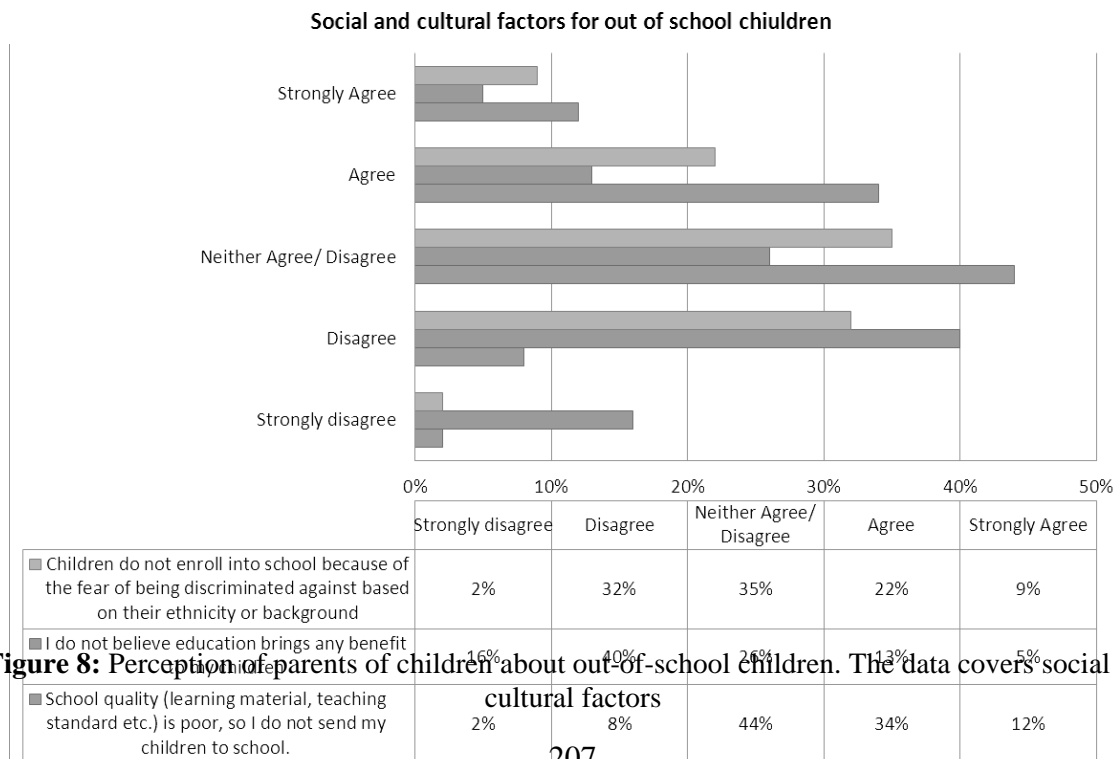


cannot bearable for these deprived families. Boys in those families are often involved to generate income and support their families. 70% parents are agreed or strongly agreed that their children help them in daily at work may be involving severe labour and above 60% also agree that they support in domestic work. Parents' belonging to farmer families involve their children in fields from very early age.



**Figure 7:** Perception of parents of children about Out-Of-School children. The data covers economic factor

Beside this major factor, *awareness* of parents about education and literacy is also an important factor behind this high Out-Of-School children phenomena. In Figure 8 mixed response can be realized and it can be seen that it is not a major issue and most respondents are of the opinion that they are aware of the importance of education to some extent.



**Figure 8:** Perception of parents of children about out-of-school children. The data covers social and cultural factors

## Conclusion

In this study, it is revealed that in the surveyed households, the major challenge was children who had never enrolled in school in comparison to children who had dropped out from school. Of the total Out-Of-School children 90% had never enrolled in school while a much smaller percentage (8%) had dropped out from school. Affordability was the key reason for non-enrolment of children. Scholarships and other economic benefits should be offered to them by government and non-government organizations. As observed in the data analysis, it is concluded that the major obstacle restricting access to education for Out-Of-School children has been the incapacity of parents to meet the education related expenses, like school dresses, books, bus fares etc. Parents need children to assist them to generate income for the family. Mainly, it is for these particular reasons, parents hesitate to send their children school. Government and non-government organizations should initiate programs to reduce other school related expenditure especially in rural areas where poverty level is high. Given that affordability was the main factor for Out-Of-School children, incentives, for example scholarships, free food supply etc., should be offered to children. Financial support can also be provided to poor parents who cannot afford their children to go school. In the general discussion with parents, during the survey, it is observed that many parents were ready to send their children school, if there is no any education related expenditures have to bear. The parents were more interested to send their children, if stipend or such kind of incentive was provided alongside free education.

## References

- Ashiq Hussain, N. A. (2011, September). Causes of Students' Dropout at Primary Level in Pakistan: An Empirical Study. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1(12).
- Behrman, J. F. (1999). Women's schooling, home teaching and economic growth. *Journal of Political Economy*, 7(4), 682-714.
- CB Lloyd, C. M. (2009). *Economics of Education Review*, Elsevier.
- Holmes, J. (1999). Measuring the Determinants of School Completion in Pakistan: Analysis of Censoring and Selection Bias. *Working Papers*. Economic Growth Center, Yale University.
- Roy, R. (2000). Child Labor, Child Schooling, and Their Interaction with Adult Labor: Empirical Evidence for Peru and Pakistan. *The world bank economic review*, 14(2), 347-367.
- ASER. (2013). ASER Pakistan. Retrieved from <http://www.aserpakistan.org/index.php?func=report>
- AsmaBajwa. (2011). *Out of school children in Sindh: Looking at access and equity*. ASER
- UNDP. (2012). UNDP Organization. Retrieved from <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/pakistan/docs/MDGs/UNDP-PK-MDG-SindhReport-2012.pdf>
- UNESCO. (1990). World Conference on Education. Retrieved 2014, from World Conference on Education Website: <http://www.unesco.org/en/efa/the-efa-movement/jomtien-1990/>
- UNESCO. (2000). Retrieved 2014, from <http://www.unesco.org/education/wef/en-conf/dakframeng.shtm>
- UNESCO. (2008). Education for all Global Monitoring Report "Education for All by 2015, will we make it?". UNESCO.
- UNESCO. (2012). Education for All Global Monitoring Report "Reaching out of School Children is Crucial for development". UNESCO.
- UNICEF. (2014). SOUTH ASIA REGIONAL STUDY.
- United Nations. (2010). United Nations. Retrieved 2014, from United Nations Web site: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>