



Sociology and Education: A Study on Higher Education in Pakistan

Moula Bux Naich¹, Wakeel Ahmed Otho², Zuhaib Ali³, Muhammad Salman⁴

¹ PhD. Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Sindh Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan. Email: naichm@hotmail.com

² B.Ed. Student, Department of Education, Humdard University Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.

³ Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Shah Abdul Latif University, Ghotki Campus Sindh, Pakistan.

⁴ B.Ed. Student, Department of Education, Humdard University Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.

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ABSTRACT

The research paper studied higher education in Pakistan from a sociological perspective. It examines how social factors affect higher education, with a focus on how higher education can either promote social mobility or lead to social reproduction. The study addresses how sociological theories may help us comprehend higher education challenges such as access to quality and efficiency, the importance of education, insufficient research activities, and discrepancies in educational attainment and retention based on class, race, and gender. This study aims to analyze the education system in Pakistan and identify the challenges that hinder the achievement of higher education opportunities. It investigates the historical, cultural, and institutional contexts that shape these fields and their interrelationships. This study draws material from the literature that has already been published. This research aims to emphasize how sociology and education can complement each other in advancing our understanding of human behavior and society.

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Corresponding Author's Email: naichm@hotmail.com

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions worldwide collaborate with industrial development organizations to accelerate economic growth. Since education is a social process in which people engage in community activities, there is a strong correlation between development and higher education (Serpa & Sá, 2019). Educated individuals can control their environment, improve the community's well-being, and promote economic growth. Only highly educated individuals who learn are capable of doing this. An individual's ability to learn depends on several factors. This paper aims to analyze the factors that impact students' achievement in higher education and the academic achievements of graduate and postgraduate students. These factors can be divided into different categories, such as Academic performance is typically higher for institutional, socioeconomic, and professional factors as well as for those who are enthusiastic about and actively involved in their studies (Ballantine, Stuber, & Everitt, 2021). Their local environment and family traits significantly influence the study habits of students. The institutional environment should be conducive, and teachers should have high expectations for their students. In order to, some other factors also influence students like Previous academic bases on teaching methodology, classroom and academic performance (Moore & Young, 2001). Better socioeconomic conditions and high parental educational levels also impact their children's academic quality (Lingard & Thompson, 2017). The field of sociology of education is constantly evolving, diverse, and often contentious. Sociologists should refer to the names that represent themselves in the plural, such as feminism, phenomenologist, Marxism, and postmodernism.

1.2. Sociology of Education

In the beginning, education is an informal process where infants observe others and imitate their actions. As the child grows older, education becomes more organized through

activities like playdates and preschool. Once enrolled in grade school, academic lessons take priority as the child progresses through the educational system. However, education encompasses more than just the acquisition of knowledge and information (Schofer, Ramirez, & Meyer, 2021). The education system socializes our society by reinforcing cultural expectations and norms through teachers, textbooks, and classmates and schools have the potential to challenge cultural norms and effect change beyond the family unit (Morrish, 2019). In terms of socialization, students from different backgrounds are taught a standardized curriculum that reduces diversity and promotes homogeneity. They learn common knowledge, culture, and official societal priorities, as well as how to fit into that framework (Latuny, Hariani, & Muzammil, 2021). The field of sociology of education involves with varying approaches. However, there is a growing convergence of topics, methods, and perspectives due to the impact of globalization (Ballantine et al., 2021). Higher education has increased the exchange of ideas and theories between academic sites. However, it has also led to the directional flow of these ideas. There are three different approaches to comprehending educational inequalities. The first approach focuses on individual schools, the second on parental and child education, and the third on internal and external factors, including educational policy. The third approach, which takes into account both internal and external factors, highlights the importance of educational policy in reducing social class inequalities (Collins, 2019). However, sociological understandings face challenges due to the fluctuating presence of class in educational policies. Every class is really classless.

2. Literature

In the literature, there has been a debate about whether the sociology of education defines a body of texts and rules that establish and define a particular discipline. This study explains how sociology provides criteria for evaluating education but also highlights the challenges of applying sociological principles to higher education.

3. Theoretical Views of Education

Theoretical perspectives deals with exploring various theoretical frameworks that explain the significance of education in shaping individuals and society. It involves studying different approaches which help comprehend the diverse aspects of education and its role in socialization (Chung, 2021). Functionalists think that education equips people to take on diverse functional responsibilities in society (Kurtz, 2022). Symbolic interactionist examine classroom dynamics and how interactions between students and teachers affect everyday life. This section covers each perspective (Bryan, 2019). Children are taught different societal roles from a young age, starting from preschool and kindergarten, as a part of socialization. Émile Durkheim, a renowned French sociologist who founded the academic discipline of sociology (QIZI, 2023). Functionalists acknowledge that one of the primary roles of schools is to teach students the values that are most important for their respective groups or society as a whole (Liu, Peng, & Luo, 2020). Critical sociologists have a different perspective, compared to functionalists, regarding the role of public schools. While functionalists view education as playing a constructive role, critical sociologists view it more skeptically (Blossfeld & Von Maurice, 2019). The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu researched the concept of cultural capital. In his study, he highlighted that cultural knowledge impact on students from different social classes. This concept can be seen as a parallel to economic capital, which Marx analyzed. Bourdieu emphasized that cultural capital, which encompasses cultural taste, knowledge, speech patterns, and more, requires deliberate effort to acquire. It takes a significant amount of time and energy to cultivate cultural capital. Individuals from upper and middle-class backgrounds possess (Zeldin, 2023). The major sociological theories provide different perspectives on how we can understand education. In other words, education helps students prepare for their future roles or functions in society while also serving the needs of society as a whole. On the other hand, critical sociologists argue that schools perpetuate. Finally, the theory of symbolic interactionism views education as a way of labeling individuals based on their behavior and performance.

3.1. Impact of Social Factors on Higher Education

In Pakistani society, Gender inequality poses a significant obstacle and political rights. This situation negatively impacts both development and higher education. Due to economic dependency on men, most women are unable to afford higher education expenses, leading to exclusion from higher education. Gender discrimination and inequality are major contributing factors to this issue (Saqib et al., 2020). Individual differences among students, such as their

social class, gender, and the cultural values they learn from their family and community, have the greatest impact on higher education administration. Whether they are full-time or part-time students, they share the same motives for pursuing higher education. They aim to improve their career prospects and job market positions. However, younger students also appreciate the university or college experience (Murtaza & Hui, 2021). Much of the current activity is targeted at lower social class groups or undertaken early enough in education (Memon, Joubish, & Khurram, 2010). Additionally, both the federal and state governments could redirect their financial aid from colleges and universities to help support students from lower-income families.

3.2. Social Mobility in Higher Education

In order to improve social mobility, it is essential to review a variety of education. In a time when inequality is increasing and social mobility is limited, enhancing education standards and expanding access to education can create a more equal opportunity for all Pakistani citizens. Colleges and universities across the nation are generally expected to support opportunities for every person with the potential and motivation to succeed in order to achieve the goal of social mobility (Shah, 2010). Robert Haveman and Timothy Smeeding have found that there are significant income-related gaps in both access to and success in higher education, and these gaps are only getting larger. In top-tier colleges and universities, almost all incoming students come from the highest socioeconomic quartile. Despite there being a large pool of qualified students, the number of students admitted and enrolled is much lower (Parveen, Rashid, Iqbal, & Khan, 2011). This makes it difficult for students to select institutions, apply for admission, and gain acceptance. They must be better informed about the expense of attending college and the availability of need-based financial aid to make informed decisions about their education (Aslam et al., 2012). The current focus in sociology and politics is on the impact of higher education in facilitating social mobility. In contemporary Pakistan, education has become a critical factor in determining job prospects and social class positions. While some academics argue that this marks the arrival of meritocratic societies determining an individual's social standing (Mehmood, Chong, & Hussain, 2018).

4. Results and Discussion

According to the data gathered for this study, there is a strong connection between the subject being studied and the type of knowledge that can be derived from it. However, like any social practice, the framework of knowledge can only offer specific possibilities and constraints, within which academics must work as agents of reconceptualization.

4.1. Functionalist Perspective

In today's society, higher education provides specialized training for various occupations where most vocations were passed down; most employment now requires at least a high school diploma; and many professions require a college or post-graduate degree. This shift in job requirements has led to an increased emphasis on obtaining higher education as a means to secure employment and advance in one's career. According to functionalist theorists, higher education also serves as a means of social control.

4.1.1. Symbolic Interaction

Higher education involves the interactions that occur during the process of higher studies and the outcomes that emerge as a result of those interactions. These interactions, such as those between students and teachers, can give rise to certain expectations for both parties. Teacher may, over time, behave in ways that discourage the black student from achieving high scores in math.

4.1.2. Conflict Theory

Higher education is used as a tool to segregate individuals based on their class, gender, or race. Conflict theorists believe that the educational system produces and perpetuates inequality in society. They argue that educational attainment can be used to discriminate against certain groups, such as minorities, working-class individuals, and women. This is often because these groups need more access to education and more credentials due to discriminatory practices within the educational system. Employers may also require educational qualifications that are not necessarily relevant to the job, which further worsens educational inequality and discrimination.

4.1.3. Significance of Higher Education

Pakistan's policymakers are working on improving the quality and affordability of higher education. Their focus is to prepare young individuals to become productive members of society while also contributing to the nation's growth and development. To achieve this, significant efforts have been made to make education more relevant, with many attempts documented in the literature. Studies have demonstrated that the reason for a lack of interest in education is often due to the perception that formal education is not valuable. This is because parents are dissatisfied with the current education systems and prefer curricula that are more relevant to their children's daily lives and provide them with practical skills. This problem arises from a hierarchical system that pervades all levels of society, including households, schools, colleges, universities, and workplaces. In order for research to thrive, it is crucial to have a community of critical thinkers who can engage in meaningful discussions and provide valuable insights. This critical mass is essential to drive progress and innovation in the field of research. It is beneficial for a group to have members from diverse fields as it can foster the exchange of ideas. This is an advantage that universities have over institutions that only focus on a single discipline. The Pakistani government's decision to allocate substantial research funds to public-sector universities is commendable as it eliminates a significant obstacle.

5. Conclusion

In the past half-century, access to higher education has improved for individuals from different social classes in Pakistan. However, despite this improvement, there still exists a significant gap in educational achievements between social classes. While education can explain some of the correlation between an individual's social and their parents' social class, it is not the only factor. There are various theories to comprehend the reasons behind college dropouts, and some of these theories now incorporate Indigenous viewpoints on higher education. Educational institutions must eliminate systemic obstacles that could hinder students from finishing their studies. Students encounter financial, academic, cultural, and social challenges, and it is vital to discover ways to reduce or eliminate these barriers to achieve academic excellence in college. It opens up the path to a safer, more progressive future. A better higher education system in Pakistan can be a powerful tool to alleviate poverty, promote mutual respect, and encourage peaceful resolution of conflicts. Changes in social mobility have resulted in modifications to academic programs and revenue streams in Pakistan. Access to higher education should be available to all, irrespective of their social class, to advance progress and prosperity for the people of Pakistan.

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