
THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 DRIVEN LOCKDOWN ON THE EDUCATION OF MARGINALIZED AND DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Marginalized and disadvantaged people are the most vulnerable segment of the society. Prevalence of higher socio-economic disparity, neglected education, political injustice and feudal system, in Pakistan in general, the Balochistan in particular, are the major sources of marginalization and social exclusion. Students from marginalized and disadvantaged families were already facing difficulties, now COVID-19 pandemic has further aggravated the situation and badly affected their education. This qualitative study had been designed to explore the effects of COVID-19 driven lockdown on the students' education belong to marginalized, excluded and disadvantaged families in The Balochistan. For this purpose two sets of semi-structured interview questionnaires, one for teachers' and the other for parents' were used to collect qualitative data. Narrative analysis approach was employed to analyze the data. Results of the present study revealed that students from marginalized and disadvantaged families, during the lockdown and closure of schools, did not have

access to alternatives. i.e. online education, e-learning, online repositories, android based learning applications, electronic mode of learning through T.V or cable network. A large number of respondents reported that they face eight to twelve hours load-shedding daily. They complained that government had suspended education of their children without providing any alternative or supportive education plan. They were of the view that education of students from advantaged families had not been affected as they access to all alternate facilities.

KEYWORDS

Covid-19, corona virus, education, marginalized and Disadvantaged Students, the Balochistan

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is multiethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-class and multi-sect country. Society in Pakistan is not homogenous; high diversity prevails all over the country that is a main source of marginalization and social exclusion for various segments of the society. Economic deprivation and feudal system are among the root causes of marginalization particularly in the province of Baluchistan. Marginalized and disadvantaged people are the most vulnerable segment of any society. It is a common phenomenon that when people are excluded or debarred to achieve their full potential then society has to pay heavy cost for it. As a result a large segment of the society in this province is facing poverty and illiteracy. Consequently this province has lagged behind in education, healthcare and socio-economic development. A large majority of the population lives under poverty line and they are facing social exclusion. The current socio-economic crises due to the COVID-19 can further aggravate the condition of marginalized people of this province. Socially marginalized and economically disadvantaged segments of the society have higher chance of exclusion and are exposed to the negative impact (van Bavel et al., 2020). The Balochistan is the 45% of the total land of Pakistan and it is the largest province of the country whereas only 6% of the total population of the country lives in this province. It has large natural resources reserves as well. As compared to the other provinces it is most under developed province. According to the annual report of Economic Survey of Pakistan, the Balochistan is a neglected province on many accounts including education (Finance Division, 2019). Its rural literacy rate is only 35% and overall literacy rate is 41% whereas national literacy rate stands at 57%. There are 13674 public schools in the Balochistan and majority of them are under resourced or badly managed; only 20.6% of them have electricity, merely 1.3% has computer labs and more than 50% of them are without drinking water and proper classrooms (Govt of Balochistan, 2017).

According to the article 25-A of the Constitution of Pakistan, universal education is mandatory up to the age of 16 but in this province more than half of the children, between 5 to 16 years age, are out of school, more than 70% of them are female. Consequently the overall literacy rate of female is only 27% and in rural the areas this figure is far low (UNESCO .. , 2019).

As per ASER report 2019 students in grade 5th in public schools do not have sufficient reading and basic arithmetic skills that are required at grade 2nd level. While students enrolled private schools at same grade level performed far better as compared to public school students (ASER, 2019). But unfortunately more than 60% of the population of this province consists of under-privileged or disadvantaged class who can afford to send their children to private schools.

Education cannot eradicate the menace of social exclusion but it can play an important role in reducing its effect. The purpose of good education is not only to impart mere knowledge and develop skills but also shape attitude of learners to make them productive and prudent individuals who are well knitted with the diverse society. In addition, education also promotes a sense of inclusive citizenship, equality and equity to include all citizens in the mainstream in a civilized world (Deller, Kaufman , & Tamburri, 2019). Through responsive education, we can eradicate ignorance and uplift the status marginalized section of the society (Maqsood, Balochistan's failing education system, 2018). Because it is the education that enables excluded ones to be among the included ones.

Marginalization is the process of making a group or class of people less significant or demoted to a less important position. It is the process of pushing something or someone to the edge of a group. In the marginalization process, individuals or a group of people are deprived of full access to various human rights, resources, and opportunities that are generally offered to members of a different group, and which are essential to social integration.

This study is guided by two theories; Cumulative Disadvantage Theory given by Robert Merton in 1988 (Melo, 2019) and theory of Social Exclusion or Marginalization (Jehoel-Gijsbers & Vrooman, 2007). Cumulative disadvantage theory is a systematic and scientific explanation of the all types of inequalities that develop in a society with the course of time. According to this theory social system itself generates and promotes inequalities which are evident in social structure and cultural fabric of any society (Ferraro & Shippee, 2009), either the society is rich or poor. The divide between social

exclusion and inclusion can widen further if not bridged by the society. Furthermore exclusion is a disadvantage for an individual or group of people or segment of society and it gives rise to disadvantages that ultimately give birth to cumulative effect. On the other hand theory of Social exclusion or marginalization social factor leads to the social exclusion of individuals and they are denied, partially or completely, various rights, equal opportunities, access to particular resources that are available to rest of the society.

Marginalization can be related to color, social class, clan, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation or domicile. Marginalization affects negatively the quality of life because they face inequality in access to employment opportunities, health facility, housing, social activities and participation in political affairs. Consequently it results in poverty, deprivation, low productivity, injustice, unemployment, crime, drug addiction, infidelity and extremism. Marginalized individuals or class can be integrated into the national mainstream through social inclusion based on the principles of equality and equity. Social inequalities in terms of availability of and accessibility to resources increase risk of failure (van Bavel et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 driven humanitarian crisis in Pakistan is a part of the current pandemic all most in the all countries of the world. The COVID-19 is an infective disease caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The disease was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. As of June 2020, more than eight million confirmed cases with 0.5 million death cases have been reported across 188 countries and territories all over the world. In Pakistan the first case of corona virus was reported on 26th February 2020, when a student returning from Iran tested COVID-19 positive in Karachi. It took less than a month to spread epidemic in all four provinces, the federal capital Islamabad and two autonomous territories Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan of Pakistan. The following table shows the statistics of Covid-19 in Pakistan.

The Covid-19 is primarily a health crisis but it has badly disrupted every aspect of our lives including education. As Covid-19 is new to the world hence at present no medicine or vaccine is available to treat it. Scientists all over the world are working on it but it is it's not clear how much time it will take to discover Covid-19 vaccine. In this scenario majority of the countries in the world immediately went to impose lockdown and social distancing that resulted in the closure of education institutions including all others. The government of Pakistan and provincial administrations also for suspended all educational, economic and social activities. In the province of The

Balochistan all schools colleges and universities were closed and ongoing secondary level exams were suspended in the last week of February 2020. Later on 24th March 2020, a complete lockdown was imposed in the province by the provincial government.

Pakistan is among those countries where education is already passing through crisis and the stakeholders, responsible for planning, policy making and execution, are not taking sincere efforts improve the state of education. Furthermore education system in Pakistan, particularly in The Balochistan is not ready to face current challenge of COVID-19. to deal with such crisis.. They have not designed or implemented any technological solution and have not trained their faculties and students to use any specific technology in teaching and learning for such situations. A very simple approach of prepare, cope and recover can be used to (figure 1).

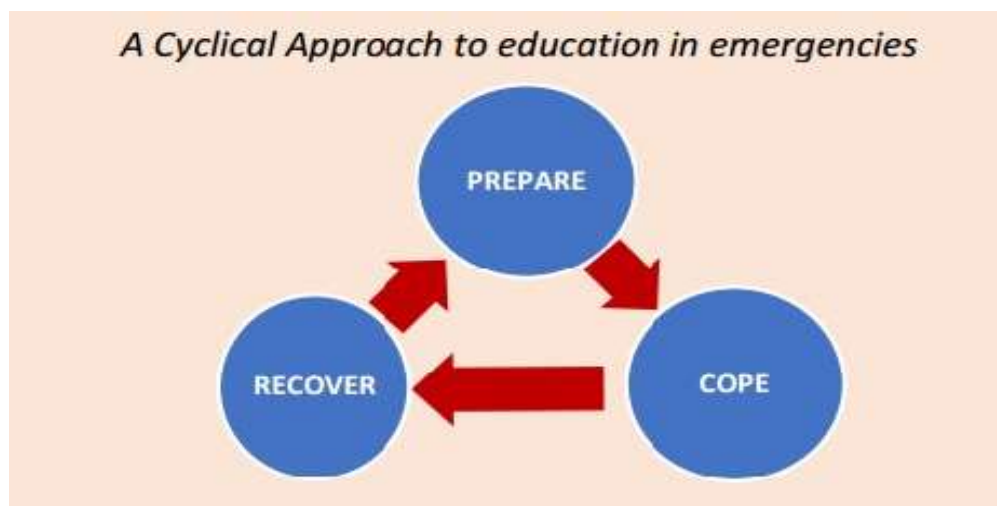


Figure 1. Three Phased Cyclical Approach to Education in Emergencies source: (Guidance Note on Education Systems' Response to COVID19, 2020)

As the Balochistan is technologically is also very under developed province with little or no access to basic digital facilities in the many areas. People have to travel kilometers to the nearby towns or cities to use their mobile phones due to absence or poor quality mobile network signals at their native places. Similarly access to internet is still a luxury in the major part of this province. Therefore a significant part of the population, in this province, is faced with multi-layered marginalization and exclusion.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To provide an overview of the state of education in Baluchistan.
2. To explain the present scenario of the lockdown of schools' education in Baluchistan.
3. To clarify the terms and areas "marginalized and disadvantaged" in Baluchistan.
4. To explore teachers' perceptions regarding the effect of lockdown on marginalized and disadvantaged students.
5. To obtain parents' observations regarding the effect of lockdown on their children's education living in marginalized and disadvantaged students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research had been designed to investigate the impact of Covid-19 driven lockdown on the education of marginalized and disadvantaged students in the Balochistan province. In this study qualitative approach was used and the data was collected through two semi-structured interview questionnaires; a semi-structured interview questionnaires for teachers' to find their perceptions and opinion about the impact of Covid-19 driven lockdown on the education of marginalized and disadvantaged. Another semi-structured interview questionnaire was developed for parents/ guardians of the students who belong to marginalized and disadvantaged families. Data was collected, face to face interview, from twenty respondents; ten teachers teaching to the marginalized and disadvantaged students and ten parents/ guardians of those students.

Sampling and Participants

In this study, 22 sample size was taken from the population of district Kech, Balochistan. There was a total of 21 participants (10 teachers and 12parents). They were selected randomly from different regions of District Kech. All the respondents were willing to contribute to this study. The collected data were analyzed thematically to draw a deep understanding of the responses of the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**Overview of the State of education in Baluchistan**

In Pakistan, low literacy rates and low quality of education are the main problems in the education sector due to low enrollment and high dropout rates at the primary level. The state of education in this province gives a dismal picture because of questionable standard of education, low budget allocation, low quality of curriculum and textbooks and the low standard of teaching and learning process (Fatima, 2010).

Although the Government of the Balochistan claims to have given high priority to education for overcoming the challenges of illiteracy, ignorance, insecurity, and resistance against change and slow development in the education system, the education situation is worsening in the Balochistan. The education department of the Balochistan is facing various challenges in the field of education because a large number of children of the province are out of the mainstream schools, low access to schools, extreme dropout rate, gender gaps, and low-quality learning and teaching process in education, the development process of the province is also very slow due to high level of poverty and the weakest education and health indicators.

In the Balochistan, 60 to 70 percent of school-going girls and 67 percent of boys are out of schools due to long distances between the schools and their homes. Such as a primary school at the distance of every 30 kilometers, a middle school every at a distance of 260 kilometers, and a high school at the distance of every 360 kilometers. Furthermore, almost 1,800 schools are functionless, above 6,000 schools are running by a single teacher and 2,200 schools are facing the problem of basic facilities, and 80.50 % school buildings are in poor condition in the Balochistan (Maqsood, 2020). As per the report of Pakistan Education Statistics 2015-2016, there are 1.89 million children out of schools in the Balochistan (Kakar & Naveed, 2018). In the province the levels of education are pre-primary, primary, middle, secondary, higher secondary, higher education, and technical and vocational education & training levels (PPIU, 2013).

The Government of the Balochistan is facing numerous problems but education is the top of the list among them. The education system of the Balochistan is failed in terms of providing basic facilities for basic education particularly in far-flung areas of the Balochistan. Most of the schools and colleges are facing the problems of unskilled faculty members. The improvement and advancement in education is not the priority of the government authorities and policymakers (Marza, 2017).

The current status of education in the Balochistan is not as satisfactory as all. According to the Balochistan Real-Time School Monitoring System, Statistical Booklet, June-2019, there are 14855 schools across the province. The Balochistan RTSM Team visited 73.8 % of schools in the province and 48.1% of schools were visited by educational department officials. It is reported that 27.4 % of schools are found closed and the attendance ratio of students in schools is 76.2 % and 75.4 % is the attendance of teaching staff. Only 58.8 % of rooms and 50.7 % of toilets are usable in these schools in the Balochistan. The schools are also facing the problems of

unavailability of basic facilities such as drinking water is only available to 18.7 %, chairs and tables for teachers and students available to 68.1% and seating mats and desks are available only to 63.6 % of students. (Malik, 2019). The Balochistan is suffering from an extreme poverty level and a very slow development process from an economic perspective and other fields.

Present Scenario of Lockdown of Schools' Education in Baluchistan

In The Balochistan, to stop and control the spread of the COVID-19 virus, all the educational institutions from schools to universities are closed until an indefinite time. The educational process is interrupted by mainstream institutions in the Balochistan.

Although, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan has instructed all universities and degree awarding institutes around Pakistan to setup and proceed through an alternative source of education i.e. Online teaching approach so that the teaching and learning process continues during this long period lockdown. The federal government has also inaugurated to launch a TV channel named "Tele-School" for teaching and learning. Besides, the government of Punjab has designed a website that stores study materials for Class 1 to 10 related to the Punjab Textbook Board Syllabus but unluckily, such initiatives have not been taken by the Government of the Balochistan yet. The policymakers in the Balochistan have not presented any solution to educational problems caused by the Covid-19 driven lockdown. This delay will cost the students of the Balochistan very badly in the near future even after the lockdown ends.

Therefore, the approaches taken by the federal and Punjab governments are not useful for the students of The Balochistan because most of the population of the Balochistan province belongs to rural areas where the basic facilities of electricity, Internet, and TV cable are unavailable. The population in cities and towns in the Balochistan also faces the problem of high load shading up to 18 hours a day in some areas. It is not possible for students of the Balochistan especially district Kech and some other districts of the Balochistan where are no 3G &4G network and landline Internet facilities to approach such alternate approaches.

Terms and Areas "Marginalized and Disadvantaged" in Baluchistan

Globally, the term "marginalized" is used in different perspectives. According to James & Taylor (2008), marginalized students are those who are beyond to schooling system due to the influence of race, ethnicity, social classes, or facing barriers to career opportunities.

The poverty level in the Balochistan is very high but the province has exceptional economic potential due to its natural resources and long coastline but unfortunately, its contribution to GDP in both sectors is much below its potentials. The population of the province is only 5% of the overall population of the country. The population of the Balochistan is dispersed over the land so as a result of dispersion the per capita expenditure on services delivery and development is much higher than the high-density populated provinces. Further, the province has poorly maintained roads and poor communication networks. Poor economic growth rates restrain the resource mobilization ability of the province.

Geographically, the Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan that covers 45 % land area of the country. The poorest education system is seen all over the province in terms of low literacy rate, single teacher and single room schools, and lack of basic facilities in schools to fulfill the needs of students. According to (Maqsood, Balochistan's failing education system, 2018), the province consists of 60 % needy population. They hardly afford basic needs of life like food twice a day. In these circumstances, they are unable to manage the educational expenses of their children. On the basis of basic human rights, they would have been given the right to a proper education by the government of Pakistan.

The above literature shows the overall state of education in the Balochistan and the problem faced by marginalized and disadvantaged students regarding basic facilities in educational institutes and their areas. So, the students of the Balochistan are marginalized and disadvantaged to other provinces of the country in terms of not having proper resources and opportunities for education and career development. The standard of education is also much lower than the other provinces.

Descriptive Analysis of Results of Parents Questionnaire

The parents were asked the following open-ended questions to obtain their observations regarding the effect of lockdown on their children's education living in marginalized and disadvantaged students. For this purpose, an open-ended questionnaire comprising of five questions was distributed to 10 parents and all of them responded.

1. How education of your child has been affected during the COVID 19 driven lockdown?

With reference to this question, 10 parents were asked to acquire their responses. According to all 10 respondents (100 %), the formal and informal education of their

children has become affected totally due to the closure of all schools and educational institutions during the lockdown.

According to respondents (90 %), the learning process of their children has been affected and as a result, they are lagging behind in all aspects of learning, for example, reading, Writing, speaking, and listening. The unavailability, slowness, and disrupted Internet service is perceived as another factor affecting the learning process of their children by 4 respondents (40 %). As for the views of 6 respondents (60 %), the educational routine such as the academic sessions and exams of students are disturbed. 6 respondents (60 %) reported that the change in the students' academic routine has brought a negative impact on their behavior and have caused a mental disturbance in children.

Comparing the results of the study with the world's students that they are affected due to the lockdown. CNN website reported that 90 % of the world's students affected due to the closure of schools worldwide during the lockdown. According to this report, the poorer students are more affected than rich students and facing the problems of obtaining good grades due to lack of space work, access to online courses, and facing the problem of psychological disturbance (JOHAN, NECTAR, & GUPTA, 2020).

2. Why and how the education of your child is more disturbed than people of big cities during the lockdown?

With reference to this question, 9 respondents (90 %) pointed out that the education of marginalized and disadvantaged students has been more affected than the students of big cities as they perceived the schools as the only source to save their children's education. In contrast, 1 respondent (10 %) perceived that the effect of lockdown on education is the same for both marginalized and students living in big cities.

According to the respondents (90 %), the lack of basic technological facilities such as the personal computer, the Internet, and TV is a big cause of disturbance to the education of marginalized and disadvantaged students. They also reported that the unavailability of books, illiteracy of parents in remote areas, less availability of skilled tutors are other factors disturbing the education of marginalized students more than the students living in big cities.

3. Why students of your area suffering more during the COVID-19 driven lockdown?

With reference to this question, all the respondents (100 %) perceived that due to the unavailability of basic facilities, lack of interest of the government in education, lack

of community mobilization, lack of awareness in parents, financial problems of families the students of their area are suffering more during the COVID-19 driven lockdown.

4. How education of your child can be saved during the lockdown?

With reference to this question, 8 parents (80 %) suggested that the education of their children can be saved during lockdown by starting online classes and providing basic required facilities such as the Internet, electricity, technology equipment such as laptop PC and learning materials by the government. In this sense, 3G & 4G Internet service needs to be restored in remote areas and load shedding of electricity need to be minimized for the interest of education of students. Further, 2 respondents (20 %) suggested that parents should teach their children at home. Besides, 2 respondents (20 %) suggested that the government bound the local area teachers to teach and engage the students in small groups. Only 1 respondent (10 %) suggested that the government should provide additional space for learning in schools to minimize the social distance of students to save the education of children during the lockdown.

In India, technology such as mobile Internet and mobile-based learning models are initiated to save the education of vulnerable and marginalized students (Choudhary, April 16, 2020). The results of the study also suggested that providing the basic facilities of technology such as the Internet and restoring 4G service provision of laptops, and other facilities of education the only way to save the education of marginalized students in the country. Otherwise, the education of marginalized students can be affected more and more in this pandemic situation of COVID-19 lockdown.

5. What strategies did you adopt to save the education of your child during the lockdown?

With reference to this question, 7 respondents (70 %) reported that they have not adopted any proper strategies to save the education of their children at all. Only 3 respondents (30 %) reported that they have been teaching their children at home during COVID-19 driven lockdown, they are using online sources and mobile applications to save their education during this period. 2 of the respondents (20 %) also reported that they have hired home tutors but the result is not satisfactory according to one respondent (10 %).

Descriptive Analysis of Results of Teachers' Questionnaire

To obtain the perceptions of teachers regarding the effect of lockdown on marginalized

and disadvantaged students, an open-ended questionnaire comprising of five questions was distributed to 10 teachers and all of them responded by filling and returning the questionnaire.

1. How education of marginalized and disadvantaged students has been effected more during the COVID-19 driven lockdown?

With reference to this question, 10 teachers (100 %) indicated that all the educational processes of marginalized and disadvantaged students have been affected due to the closure of schools during the lockdown.

Seven respondents (70 %) mentioned that the lack or unavailability of the basic facility of the Internet has brought a big effect to disturb more the education of marginalized and disadvantaged students during this pandemic situation of lockdown.

Lack of PC and mobile facilities have also affected more the education of marginalized students during this lockdown according to 2 respondents (20%). Further, 3 respondents (30 %) reported that the lack of prior planning of policymakers and educational institutions, uneducated parents, and unawareness also effected more the education of marginalized and disadvantaged students. Only 1 respondent (10 %) reported that lack of transportation, shortage of food affected the education of marginalized and disadvantaged students during this period.

When discussing the type of effect caused during the Covid-19 driven lockdown, 6 respondents (60 %) reported that the routine academic schedule and exams of marginalized students have been effected during the lockdown. Furthermore, according to 4 respondents (40 %), the lockdown has also disturbed the marginalized students socially and mentally. This is because the schools are closed and the learners are staying at home all the time during the lockdown, this is further justified by (Tabner, April 8, 2020) by reporting that the people who live in big cities and crowded areas and close houses have limited outdoor physical activities, thus they face the problems of mental and physical health.

2. What is the variation of the effect of COVID-19 lockdown on marginalized and non-marginalized students?

With reference to this question, 9 respondents (90 %) pointed that the variation of effect on the education of marginalized students is more than non-marginalized students as they observed that the schools are the only source to save the education of marginalized students. They further argue that the difference in variation is because unavailability of basic facilities from the government to continue their education

process such as electricity, the Internet (DSL or 3G& 4G), TV cable, PC, mobile devices are main causes of lagging behind of the marginalized students than non-marginalized students. They further reported that poverty, less interest of the government in the education of the marginalized students, lack of skilled teachers in remote areas, and lack of computer skills and knowledge are the other factors to increase the variation of the effect of COVID-19 lockdown on marginalized and non-marginalized students. On the other hand, 1 respondent (10 %) is of the opinion that the variation of effect Covid-19 driven lockdown is the same for both marginalized and non-marginalized students due to closure of all educational institutions.

3. Why are marginalized and disadvantaged students suffering more during lockdown driven?

With reference to this question, 10 respondents (100 %) reported that due to the lack of basic facilities for marginalized students, for example, the Internet, electricity, tutors, and PC, the marginalized and disadvantaged students are suffering more during Covid-19 driven lockdown. Besides, 5 respondents (50 %) stated that the poverty, lack of government interest, lack of awareness in parents of marginalized students are other additional causes for marginalized and disadvantaged students to suffer more during Covid-19 driven lockdown.

All the institutions around the world are setting all the learning and assessment through the online process during Covid-19 driven lockdown but it creates a hurdle to those disadvantaged students who do not have access to online learning due to not having a good Internet connection, proper IT equipment, a preferable home study environment, and technical knowledge to get benefit from online learning (Tabner, April 8, 2020).

4. How can the education of marginalized and disadvantaged students be saved during the lockdown?

With reference to this question, 8 respondents (80 %) suggested that providing basic facilities by the government such as the Internet by restoring the 4G & 3G net services in remote and backward areas where landline Internet service is not available can save the education of marginalized and disadvantaged students during the lockdown. In addition, 4 respondents (40 %) suggested that the education of marginalized students can be saved to implement effectively the newly initiated program of the government "MERA GHAR MERA SCHOOL" in those areas where basic facilities of Internet and TV cable are not available. Furthermore, 3 respondents (30 %) recommended providing the facilities of computers laptops and tablet devices by the government can save education. Moreover, 2 respondents (20 %) suggested to start the online classes

and only 1 respondent (10 %) suggested that providing special care, food, opening the schools in rural areas, contact with teachers for teaching in a small group of those students that they are enrolled in government schools can save the education of marginalized and disadvantaged students during the lockdown.

5. *What strategies did you adopt to save the education of your Students during the lockdown?*

With reference to this question, 7 teachers (70 %) reported that they have not adopted an alternative approach and strategy to save the education of marginalized and disadvantaged students yet. Only 3 teachers (30%) reported that they have adopted an alternative approach for saving the education of their students during this lockdown, according to them, they are contacting with students physically and through mobile and Internet sources. They are helping their students via text messages, phone calls, mobile applications, and social media apps.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the impact of Covid-19 driven lockdown on the education of marginalized and disadvantaged students in the Balochistan province of Pakistan. All the respondents reported that the education of marginalized and disadvantaged students has been completely affected during Covid-19 driven lockdown. The results also revealed that there are no proper initiatives taken by the teachers and parents of marginalized and disadvantaged students and authorities to save the education of marginalized and disadvantaged students although a very few parents (2 out of 10) reported that they attempted to save their children education through home tuition but they are not satisfied with the results and only 3 teachers reported that he is in contact with his students through mobile and Internet technology to guide them but that is not enough to save the education. From the side of authorities of school education in the Balochistan, no initiative was taken to save the education of students. This study further investigated the barriers to mitigate the educational loss of marginalized and disadvantaged students. The findings revealed that unavailability or lack of resources such as the Internet, electricity, Cable TV, PC, technical support are the main barriers in mitigating the educational loss of marginalized and disadvantaged students. This study explored that unawareness in parents is also a barrier to mitigate the educational loss of marginalized and disadvantaged students in the Balochistan.

Research Implications

The findings of this study are important for policymakers and administration in school education to properly plan and implement alternative strategies to mitigate the

educational loss of marginalized and disadvantaged students during the Covid-19 driven lockdown. These findings are also important for the government and administrative authorities to understand and remove the barriers in learning for marginalized and disadvantaged students during lockdowns.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The federal government has promoted students to the next grades to proceed with annual academic calendars. Although, promoting students to the next grades can save the academic session of the students but can't save the education of marginalized and disadvantaged students. In the light of the findings of this research the some recommendations are being presented; the policymakers and the academic institutions should prepare themselves before such conditions. They should continue the educational process without delay during such lockdown scenarios with an alternate source of education such as through online learning with the help of a learning management system, social media and cable TV network.

These alternate sources can only be useful to the students if they have basic technical skills and technical support is also required. In such scenarios basic resources such as the electricity and the Internet service must be provided by the government, duration of the load shading that is currently up to 18 hours in some areas in the Balochistan should be minimized and 3G & 4G Internet service should be made available especially in the areas where landline Internet service is not available. As the poverty level in the Balochistan is very high so students in should also be provided with laptops or tablets to learn through online mode of education.

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