Learning Barriers of Female Students at Intermediate Level

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ABSTRACT Underdeveloped countries tried their best to provide quality education for their children, but there are certain obvious and obscure barriers that put hurdles in providing better and active learning. This research was focused on studying the learning barriers of public sector Intermediate female students in Nankana Sahib District, Pakistan. Respondents for the study were randomly selected from both science and arts female students of Intermediate level (400 from schools + 400 from colleges). A self-designed Questionnaire was valid and reliable through expert opinion and Cronbach Alpha which was .791. Data were analyzed through mean, standard deviation, factor analysis and t-test. It was found that the rural students were more anxious about their education and faced more academic problems like linguistic than urban students, aggression exhibited no difference. Urban students were more motivated, institutional barriers and responsibilities of students and lack of assurance and self-regulation among learners are some reasons that distress knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

There has been a vast literature review on the factors that has a devastating effect on students academic achievement. Many researches were conducted on this topic. However the researchers in this research considered the following learning barriers.

Globally the most concerned issue in the educational division is to make certain that learning of students is in the best way and academic distinction is pursued. Now there has been a worldwide cry on the tumbling standards of education, especially underdeveloped countries have spelled it. Low academic achievement depends on various factors such as poor study, practice, indolence, unproductive classroom teaching and scarcity of basic needs. In classroom, some learners do not pay attention on teachers' activities, because they indulge in useless activities. According to Jones (2008), it is quite easy to observe learners slouching in their chair not listening to teacher or joining classroom discussion that depicts their indifferent and less engaged behaviour. Almost all over the world education system is divided in primary to tertiary education and each level has its own demands and challenges. When students enter from school to college, they become overwhelmed due to huge amount of work (quizzes, tests, assignments, projects) and little amount of time. If students don't manipulate time correctly to guarantee completion of tasks on given time they may experience stress. In this context Hashem et al. (2014) added that there is a positive association between academic problems and students' academic performance. Academic problems are faulty transmission of knowledge, demographical differences, financial constraints and emotional inconsistency. Hashem et al. (2014) added high expenses of learning, so much contention in competitive examination to get access to the reputed education institution put the students in great risk to either continue their study or drop out. Figure 1 clearly shows the learning barriers.

In Pakistan the situation of education is miserable, especially science education. The poor quality of education is the main determinant that prevents the third world to grow and to raise the quality of life. Dearth of trained teachers, poor situation of laboratories, little relevance of curriculum to practical life, dual mode of instruction, devious practices in exams and overcrowded classroom are some determinants of poor quality education in underdeveloped countries (Rasool 2007). Raychaudhuri et al. (2010) concluded that various researches

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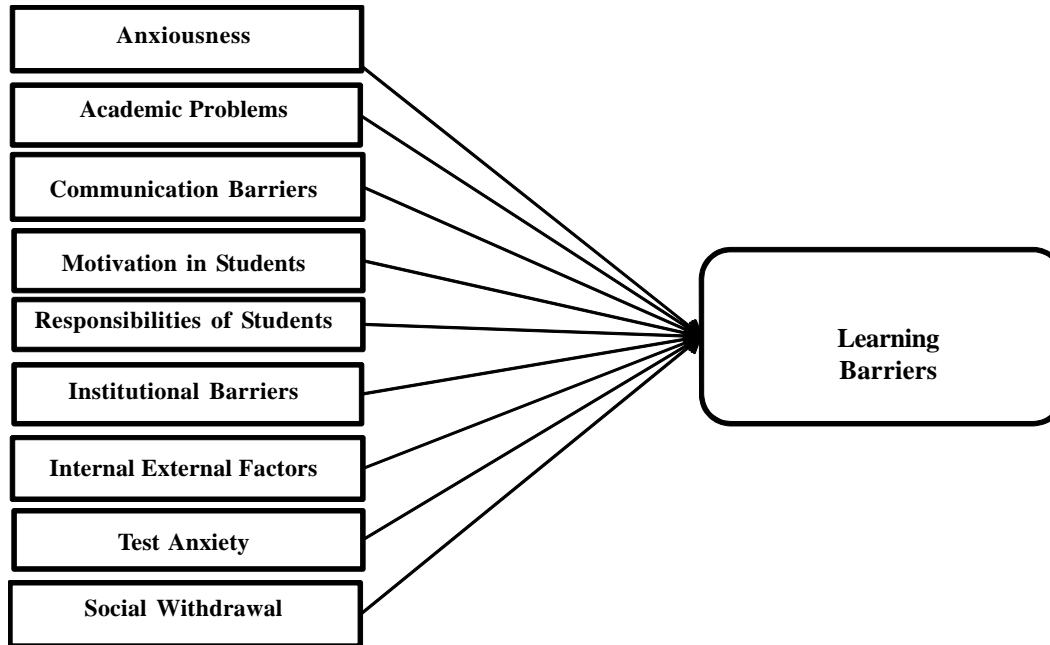*E-mail:* dawoodfsd1@gmail.com

Fig. 1. Learning barriers
Source: Author

have been carried out to determine the factor that affect learning of students. These are family income, education of parents, trained and qualified teachers, equal proportion of students and teachers and distance of school. Hussain (2006) pointed out that positive study attitude and proper parental guidance and teachers do not directly mark the educational performance of learners.

Provision of adequate learning resources as lab equipment, libraries, classroom, playing ground, text book, recreational programme, updated learning material and trained teachers are some material and physical resources that enhance the quality of education and create a conducive learning environment. Learning is not only permannt but also evolving in ones conduct due to practical experience. In the longer run learning evrionment should be meaningfull, effective and positive where a teacher pass on the knowledge to students to raise them up in desired way and to steer them for career choice (Aliade 2008).

Linguistic or communication difficulties are also considering the most concerned issue among others. Pakistan has a dual mode of instruction in education. Realizing the importance of education the debated issue is that how to achieve maximum performance from students. Teachers need to improve their andragogical and pedagogical skills to play their decisive role in this scenario (Khan et al. 2013). Students face lots of difficulties when they adopt a second language as a medium of instruction. There are number of mistakes students do while writing English: grammatical problems like syntax, poor vocabulary, sentence structure, correct pronunciation and punctuation marks. A number of reasons are uncovered like lack of dexterity among teachers, skimpy assessment system, less qualified and trained teachers, huge class strength, inability to use proper teaching method and use of translation method while teaching (Nawaz et al. 2015).

Motivation is another factor that affects learning of students. Motivation is a personal effort of one to accomplish their duties skillfully and continue it to achieve desired goals. Motivation allows a person to tackle the obstruction in the way of learning. Motivated learner engag-

es in learning activities and answer the questions: Can I do this activity? Why this activity is necessary to do? In which way I can get success? Lack of incitement and motivation hinders learning and lower education standards. Motivation is leading factor that adds success to students' studious achievements. Teachers and parents should promote and sustain motivation in students early life to achieve higher academic pursuits. Motivation can be said to be an essential element to perform any activity. It is an eminent quality that students, teachers and community must have if the education system wants to prepare their adults to meet the challenges and requirements of coming century. However every stakeholder uses motivation in their own way: students need motivation for better learning, parents have it to follow the academic performance of their children, and teachers require it to ensure quality of education in school.

Academic performance of students at some extent depends on the positive relationship of students with their peers and teachers. Students who may fail to develop strong relationships with others have low academic achievement. Students who are not communicative in their daily life show symptoms of social withdrawal. Social withdrawal is also called social alienation. It is a term used to explain disentanglement of students with instructional process (Brown et al. 2003). Alienation is instrumental in discovering unwanted student results and creating strategies to avoid students from failing in academics (Redden 2002). Isolated students feel incongruent with existing curriculum and let down the opportunities to develop a positive and meaningful relation to others. Such kind of withdrawal and impassive frame of mind is due to the careless attitude in learning process. Numerous results of researches verify that a socializing student is more accomplished academically. It has been proven by reasearches that there is commonality between social functioning and scholarly accomplishment (Welsh et al. 2001).

Another significant factor that is directly correlated with academic accomplishment is self esteem. Self esteem acts as a driving force to easily attain some academic objectives. As indicated by Amini (2004), self esteem is an optimistic way of self assessment. Self esteem inculcates confidence in an individual that he/she has competency and ability to accomplish something unprecedented throughout everyday life. It is simply the inclination towards self-worth and skills. Miraei (2005) points out that students who are hesitant and shy, don't participate actively in classroom. Such students remain backward in the class and show diffident behavior regarding classroom activities which ultimately lower their performance. Students with low self esteem not only bear the feelings of denunciation from their peers and teachers, but also such student cannot solve their problems related to school and society.

The most important factor that contributes to low academic achievement is anxiety and especially test anxiety. Anxiety or anxiousness has a pessimistic effect on the individual's experience and state of mind. Anxiety is a chief determinant that has worsened effect on students overall academic performance and lack of engagement towards learning and situation is most aggravate as course difficulty increase (Vitasari et al. 2010). Anxiousness is the product of course related issues like inadequate preparation of content, uncooperative parents, comparison of self result to peers and to estimate the consequences of bad result. It may affect the memory span, meditation, self-reliance and reasoning power.

"We live in a society which is test conscious and the lives of individuals are partially dictated by their results in these tests". It was specified in 1960, imagine the situation and now it is 2019. Tests and exams at any level of education have become a universal phenomenon and decision about the fate of people made on the results of tests.

Throughout the world, the aptitudes, capacities, inclinations and accomplishments of people of different age groups and different classes are assessed through tests execution. All students of any age familiar with the word "exams" evokes anxiety in them though the level of anxiety is varying among individual and depends on the importance attached to it and the level of preparation. Before and during exams, people tend to experience test anxiety. It is a psychological characteristic in which people are disturbed by the stress caused by it. Test anxiety spoils the learning and impairs test results. So it

can be said that test anxiety is linked to over-come the feelings of agitation and stress among students and can have devastating effects on their academic and personal life (Farooqi et al. 2012).

Objectives of the Study

This research was intended to attain some objectives:
1. To determine the learning barriers among female students at higher secondary level.
2. To find out the factors which are responsible for developing these learning barriers among higher secondary's female students
3. To classify the differences in opinion between urban and rural female students regarding learning barriers.

Research Questions

This research focused to answers some questions:
1. What are the learning barriers among female students at higher secondary level?
2. What are the factors which are responsible for developing these learning barriers?
3. What are the differences in opinion between urban and rural female students regarding learning barriers?

METHODOLOGY

This research was intended to study the "Learning Barriers of Female Students at Intermediate Level". The nature of this research work was descriptive. The population for this study was taken from all public sector girls' higher secondary schools and degree colleges of women of District Nankana Sahib Pakistan. To carry out the research for five girls' h secondary schools and four degree colleges of women were selected as a sample. From each school and college 100 students of both sciences and arts of intermediate level were selected randomly. Detail of total government girls higher secondary schools and degree colleges of women and total student enrollment is given in Table 1.

A self-designed and closed ended questionnaire with 47 statements was used to collect data. A research instrument was validated through

Table 1: Total institutions and total enrollment of female students at higher secondary level in girl's higher secondary schools and degree colleges for women in district Nankana Sahib

S. No.	Total enrollment of female students at higher secondary level in higher secondary schools and colleges	Institutions	Enrollment
1	Total enrollment of 1st year and 2nd year female students in girls higher secondary schools	5	884
2	Total enrollment of 1st year and 2nd year female students in degree colleges for women	4	2958
	Total enrollment		3842

Source: http://schoolportal.punjab.gov.pk/schcriteria.asp?crit=MPs

expert opinion. To gain expert opinion research instrument was presented to four Ph.D. professors of education in the light of their opinion necessary changes were made in the questionnaire. The overall reliability of the questionnaire was determined through Cronbach Alpha using SPSS 24 which was .801. To make sense of responses of respondents mean, Standard Deviation, and factor analysis were used. In order to compare the responses of urban and rural students t-test was applied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study focused on the learning barriers of female students at intermediate level. Research was comprised on public sector girls' higher secondary schools and degree colleges of women in district Nankana Sahib. By using the appropriate statistical package, it is found that anxiousness, academic problem, aggression, linguistic barriers, motivation, institutional barriers, responsibilities of students, and unreliability and self regulation among students are some factors that affect learning.

Results of Table 2, Anxiousness variable has three items. The result showed that the average mean of the responses of urban female students is 3.24 and the mean of the responses of rural female students is 4.30, t-value is -13.3191 and

Table 2: Anxiousness variable between urban and rural female students

S.No.	Factors	Locality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	P-value
1	Anxiousness	UrbanRural	246554	3.244.30	.8181.025	-13.3191	0.00001**
2	Academic problems	UrbanRural	246554	3.564.25	.975.817	-10.3683	0.00001**
3	Aggression	UrbanRural	246554	3.563.30	1.1021.058	3.1665	0.0016**
4	Social withdrawal	UrbanRural	246554	2.682.60	.977.990	.982	.327
5	Feelings of rejection	UrbanRural	246554	2.572.60	.796.821	-.530	.596
6	Linguistic barriers	UrbanRural	246554	3.213.59	1.0831.014	-4.788	0.00001**

p-value is 0.00001. All the mean ratings are above the cut-off point 2.50 that show the respondents agreed that they feel difficulty in some subject, to understand some concrete concepts, figures, graphs and tables. P-value is less than .05 that determined the difference exist between the responses of urban and rural students. The result showed that rural students were more anxious about their studies than urban students.

Academic problems range from 3-6 items table showed the average mean of the responses of urban students is 3.56 and rural student mean is 4.25, t-value is -10.3683 and p-value is 0.00001. Means of all items are above the cut –off point means all respondents agreed to statements that boring subjects, unattractive teaching methodology creating hurdles in learning along with hesitation to ask questions to teacher related to topic. P-value confirmed that rural female students have greatly influenced by academic problems than to urban female students.

Aggression factor represented 7-8 items mean of urban students responses is 3.56 and rural students mean is 3.30, t-value is 3.1665 and p-value is 0.0016 respectively. Mean values of items show that students agreed to statements that due to harsh attitudes of teachers I lose my confidence and if my classmates disregard and neglect me, I become depressed. Result showed consistency between their responses.

Social Withdrawal factor encompasses 9-11 statements. Results represented that average mean of urban respondents is 2.68 and mean of rural respondents are 2.60, t-value is .982 and p-value is .327. According to mean values students rejected all statements. P-value is greater than .05 which showed that no difference was found in opinion regarding urban and rural students.

Results regarding Feelings of Rejection illustrated the mean values of urban and rural respondents are 2.57 and 2.60, t-value is -.530 and p-value is .596 correspondingly. Respondents rejected two statements that are no one likes me and my teachers don't understand my needs. While students accepted that they need extra explanation about topic. P-value also confirmed that students relating to both localities have same opinion regarding statements.

Results of data represented the mean value of urban and rural students about Linguistic Barriers which are 3.21 and 3.59, t-value is -4.788 and p-value is 0.00001. Mean values of items are show that respondents agreed to statements that rules to grammar and jargons of English are difficult and they faced problem to convey their thoughts to others. P-value showed that rural female students have many linguistic barriers in learning as compare to urban female students.

Results of Table 3 Motivation factor ranges from 17-19 mean values of urban and rural re-

Table 3: Motivation factor between urban and rural female students

S. No.	Factors	Locality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	P-value
7	Motivation in students	UrbanRural	246554	4.253.88	.975.895	5.286	0.001**
8	Dedication and commitment in teachers	UrbanRural	246554	3.103.70	.824.867	-9.17	0.00015**
9	Responsibilities of students	UrbanRural	246554	4.253.75	1.5941.067	7.8044	0.0001**
10	Self image and self confidence	UrbanRural	246554	2.592.67	.701.651	-1.568	.117

sponses are 4.25 and 3.88, t-value is 5.286 and p-value is 0.001 respectively. All mean values of items are above 2.50 which show that respondents agreed to the statements that their family support them, solve their educational difficulties and new things in the daily lecture positively affect their learning. P-value determined the difference among responses; urban female students are more motivated than rural female students.

Results about dedication and commitment in teachers showed the mean of items 20-21. Mean values of urban and rural responses are 3.10 and 3.70, t-value is -9.17 and p-value is 0.00015 respectively. Students accepted the statement that new thing in daily lecture have a positive effect on learning and school provide activities to prepare them for practical life. P-value confirmed the difference in opinion regarding both areas(urban and rural). Rural female students are more dedicated and commited with teachers than urban students.

Responsibilities' of the students cover 22-23 items results in table showed the mean value of urban and rural female students, which are 4.25 and 3.75, t-value is 7.8044 and 0.0001 according to the sequence. Students accepted that they have to do work at home. P-value indicated that responsibilities of urban students are more as to rural students.

Self-image and self-confidence contained 24-27 items. Mean values of urban and rural female students are 2.59 and 2.67, t-value is -1.568 and P-value is .117 respectively. Mean values showed that students relating both localities rejected all items. No difference was found in opinion of students concerning both areas.

Results of Table 4 Lack of commitment and Self-regulation in students take in 28-30 items. Mean values of urban and rural responses are

3.88 and 3.04, t-value is 7.0174 and p-value is 0.0001 respectively. Mean values indicated that respondents accepted all statements that they study unplanned manner, face difficulty to submit tough assignments and they have a time management problem in exams. P-value defined that urban female students were victim of lack of commitment and self-regulation as compared to rural students.

Table 4 illustrated the results of External and Internal factors affect students learning. Items range from 31-33. Mean values are 2.80 and 2.86, t-value is -1.069 and p-value is .285. Mean values are not favourable to the statements. All respondents rejected the statements. No difference was found in opinions of female urban and rural students about problem.

Institutional and Situational Barriers comprise the items 34-39. Mean values of urban rural students are 3.75 and 3.34, t- value is 8.4886 and p-value is 0.0013. Means values are highly favourable to the statements. Respondents agreed to all the items. Disparity in opinion was found concerning both areas.

This factor concerned about Personality of students affects learning and range of items is 40-42. Mean values of urban and rural students are 3.78 and 3.21 corresponding t-value is 11.0184 and p-value is 0.0001. Students agreed to all the items that success of others are a cause of jealousy and some entertainment programmes should be arranged for students at school. A significant difference was shown in opinion of both urban and rural students.

Test Anxiety covers 45-46 items. Average mean of urban and rural responses are 2.61 and 2.71, corresponding t- value is -1.545 and p-value is .123. Mean values are not favourable to the statements means all respondents disagreed to

Table 4: Lack of commitment and self-regulation between urban and rural female students

S. No.	Factors	Locality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	P-value
11	Lack of commitment and self regulation	UrbanRural	246554	3.883.04	.8541.789	7.0174	0.0001**
12	External and internal factor	UrbanRural	246554	2.802.86	.756.695	-1.069	.285
13	Institutional and situational barriers	UrbanRural	246554	3.753.34	.611.639	8.4886	0.0013**
14	Personality of students	UrbanRural	246554	3.783.21	.702.663	11.0184	0.00019**
15	Test anxiety	UrbanRural	246554	2.612.71	.902.876	-1.545	.123
16	Attention problem	UrbanRural	246554	2.382.53	1.3401.345	-1.479	.140

statements and p-value also pointed out no difference in opinion.

The mean values of attention problem of urban and rural students are 2.38 and 2.53, t-value is -1.479 and p-value is .140. Mean values showed students rejected the statements and no difference existed between the responses of urban and rural students.

DISCUSSION

Results of various studies strengthen the result of the present study. Mushtaq and Khan (2012) indicated that communication barriers affect the learning of students. Nawaz et al. (2015). concluded that students face difficulties in adopting a second language. The study further showed that linguistic problems like poor vocabulary and lack of fluency in speaking and understanding grammatical pattern are most important learning problems.

Abdurrahman and Garba (2014) discovered that there is a positive relationship between inspiration and academic achievement. Highly motivated learners perform well as compare to low motivated students. These findings also matched to the result of Aire and Tella (2003). They continued that fruitful understudies have more significant level inspiration scholarly qualification than ineffective understudies. They persisted that effectiveness of students is increased by the level of motivation. Wormington et al. (2011) also concluded that successful students have great quality and great quantity motivation.

The results of the present investigation pointed out that institutional barrier and academic problems adversely influence the learning of students. The results of these studies Nihaadh (2010); Odeh et al. (2015) are strengthening the findings of research. Nihaadh (2010) find out that evaluation method, curriculum and physical conditions of school have noteworthy impact on academic achievement of students, along with students discontented about the teaching methodology of the teachers. Hammond (2001), identified that good school organization and lab condition and some programmes can depict a positive image about school through (posters, story writing and exhibitions about student's creativity, student's project and distribu-

tion of prizes). Odeh et al. (2015) reported that congested classrooms, stickiness on out dated teaching methodology and unattractive school building contribute to poor academic achievement.

Result of the study illustrated that self regulation strategies have significant relation to learning of students. Daniela (2015) conducted a study to find out the relationship between self regulation, motivation, and academic achievement. An academic self regulation questionnaire was used on 270 secondary school students, it was concluded that self regulated learning has a positive influence on students academic achievement. Effeney et al. (2013) also discovered that early habit forming to do homework and study routines was founded as a base for self regulating learning. Teachers and parents have the most important part to develop self regulation learning strategies among students.

Results of study revealed that students are anxious about their study. Previous researches pointed the direct correlation exist between, anxiety and academic achievement.

Shakir (2014) carried out a research to find out the correlation of academic anxiety with academic achievement. Research findings uncovered a converse relationship between academic anxiety and academic achievement. Significant contrast was found between academic achievement and high and low academic anxiety groups of students. Khemka and Rathod (2016) indicated that approximately 18.5 percent of students had low academic anxiety, 75 percent of students had average academic anxiety and about 6.5 percent of students had high academic anxiety.

The result of the present study regarding fear of exams is corroborated with the Eysenk (2009) who determined that students with high test anxiety have come across inappropriate thinking, such as stress and nervousness about self evaluation.

CONCLUSION

It was found that the rural students more anxious about their study and faced more academic problem like linguistic than urban students, aggression exhibited no difference. Urban students were more motivated, institutional barriers and responsibilities of students and lack of assurance and self-regulation among learners are some reasons that distress knowledge.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following recommendations were made on the basis of findings and conclusions.

1. Teaching method specially tough subjects like Maths, English and Science subjects may be needed to be more effective.
2. The teacher must create a positive classroom environment and motivate students to discussion.
3. During classes more activities are necessary for time management during exams.
4. A career counselor and psychologist must be appointed in school to solve students' problems.
5. Refresher courses for in service teachers must be held frequently.
6. More schools must be open to manage class size as per International standards.

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