

Exploring talent of rural area of Azad Jammu Kashmir and academic excellence

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How to cite this article:

Ahmad, W., Awan, S. M., Ullah, M. S., Islam, N., & Manzoor, M. (2024). Exploring talent in rural areas of Azad Jammu Kashmir and academic excellence. *Journal of Excellence in Social Sciences*, 3(2), 116–126.

Received: 14 March 2024 / Accepted: 27 May 2024 / Published online: 28 March 2024

Abstract

To highlight the problems and challenges of rural areas students of Azad Kashmir to not achieving academic excellence. I used a mixed research method to use the responses of 36 respondents from districts (Neelum 15; Sudhnoti 6; Bagh 05, and Muzaffarabad 10) of AJK. The collected data was manually analyzed using descriptive techniques by mean, percentage, and frequency. Most outcomes show that financial crisis, lack of support, motivation, guidance, counseling, bad parental relationships, and most minor educational institutions are common issues. Due to this effect, many talented students fail to continue their education. The importance of this study is that gifted students are the assistants of the country. The study found that this dangerous issue could be solved if specific steps were taken.

Keywords: Talented Student, Achieve, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Problems, Motivation, Guidance, Academic Excellence.

1 Introduction

Education is a fundamental right (Bibi, [2018](#)). Education is the backbone of achieving success in life. It has been accepted as the primary hope for a more sustainable future (Alam et al., [2020](#);

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Cheng et al., [2019](#)). Anyone who is illiterate cannot enjoy a better life. The country's economy is directly proportional to education. Education is an excellent weapon to improve the economy (Zahra et al., [2020](#)). Education has become a significant issue in most developing countries. This issue has also been observed in rural areas of Azad Kashmir, especially in the district of Neelum. Many talented students cannot continue their education because of social and economic issues.

Education is born from society, and society is born from education. In practice, we invent that the educational process creates a new culture (Wamsler, [2020](#); Biesta, [2020](#)). Education is more than just getting a degree or enhancing a student's intellectual skills; it also ensures individual physical, emotional, spiritual, social, and moral development. All educational activities combine and achieve total development (Shavkatovna, [2021](#); Nucci & Ilten-Gee, [2021](#)). Education is the backbone of any economy (Alam et al., [2020](#); Zahra et al., [2020](#)). A country without the least number of educated people cannot progress. Education is the basic unit of success. Seventy percent of the population of the state of Azad Kashmir lives in rural areas, and education becomes a challenge for them (Ilyas, [2024](#)).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The problem under investigation in this study was to highlight the issues and challenges faced by students of rural Azad Kashmir. It also tried to carry out the factors that are the reason for not achieving academic excellence. Different patterns of perceptions were received during the study. The participation of participants shows how important it is to highlight this issue. The responses show that rural student faces many challenges during their academic career. Due to multiple problems and difficulties, talented fail to continue their study.

1.2 Specific Questions for Research

This study contains the following questions for data collection:

What are the factors which affect your academic excellence?

Why couldn't you continue your studies? Give reasons.

In your opinion "what are the probable solutions to this problem"?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The study is essential to point out the fundamental problems that rural Azad Kashmir students face during their research/ education. They face many difficulties during school life. This is not only the problem of only one district; most districts have this problem. This is the era where education became mandatory to achieve life satisfaction. Without education, we cannot compete in the world. In the contemporary world, rural students are less confident than urban students. In many public and private sectors, they feel hesitation. While going to the interview, they are confused about what they will do in the interview. In my view, this reality is that I have also faced the same problem during interviews in many public and private sectors. I found that the education system is required to be changed. There is a big gap between rural education and urban. Still, educational institutes are using the old learning styles; there is no proper guidance on new methodologies and education. These things affect the student's education. My main focus is to draw higher authorities' attention to this severe nature issue.

1.4 Objectives of Study

Research objectives are appended below:

To find the challenges that faced by rural students during education.

To ascertain the factors responsible for the lack of education in rural areas.

To determine why family support and necessary guidance are mandatory for improved education.

To observe how bad parental relationships, affect the study.

1.5 Definition of Study Variables

1.5.1 Talented students

According to the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act of 1988, Eckes and Russo (2021), talented students demonstrate high-performance capability in intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership, or abilities in specific academic fields. Talented students demonstrate exceptional abilities, skills, or aptitudes in particular areas such as academics, arts, sports, or other fields (Macias, 2022). Their talents set them apart from their peers, and they often excel in their chosen areas of expertise. Talent can manifest in various forms, including intellectual, creative, or physical capabilities.

1.5.2 Rural Areas

The definition of rural still eludes us because the term is ambiguous, and the distinction with urban tends to be arbitrary. Thus, no concrete definition has been agreed upon. A rural area is characterized by a low population density, open spaces, and typically an emphasis on agriculture or natural landscapes (Rosalina et al., 2021). These areas are distinct from urban or suburban environments and often have a slower pace of life. Rural areas refer to places where there are fewer life opportunities. People are living in mud houses, and they are doing work for their household expenditure in the form of labor, carpenters, and farmers. They face problems like education, gas, electricity, and lousy infrastructure there. Rural area refers to things of the countryside (Bosworth et al., 2020; Wiggins Proctor, 2001). According to Hoggart (1990), rural areas are recognizable (Hoggart & Hoggart, 2021). They constitute the space where human settlement and infrastructure occupy only small patches of the landscape, most dominated by fields and pastures, woods and forests, water, mountains, and deserts. The following features are examples of the rural profile (UNESCO, 2005):

- Distance to town;
- Topography (conditions of roads, bridges to schools, etc.)
- Access to information technology;
- Transport infrastructure (Road, buses, taxis);
- Access to lifelong learning services;
- Social conditions in the community;
- Activities of political and civil society organizations.

2 Literature Review

This chapter elucidates and deliberates the association of the variables under study. The literature review reviews linking these variables with the help of earlier research. This chapter clarifies the issues and problems of rural students during their studies.

2.1 Challenges Faced by Talented Students of Rural Areas

Education has been accepted as the primary hope for a more sustainable future (Cheng et al., 2019). A deficient number of students from rural areas are clearing their secondary education in marginalized institutions and being admitted to college (Pawar & Shinde 2016). Education is challenging for students due to multiple factors, such as a lack of technical gadgets, poor network connectivity, and electricity problems (Das et al., 2021).

Rural students have significantly higher problems with loss of electricity and a lack of people at home with adequate technical skills compared to those living in urban and suburban areas (Laguador, 2021). Parental literacy and student interest are other hindrances. Parents, students, and teachers have experienced stress due to the transition from traditional to online learning (Das et al., 2021).

Das et al. (2021) argue that people from rural areas must be given more attention, government support, and other intervention measures from private institutions. There is no assurance that this situation will continue to be the country's status quo in terms of education. Policies and guidelines are formulated specifically for online, blended, and flexible learning to sustain the delivery of instruction. Hence, many researchers have already focused on the problems faced by rural students while studying. Rural students are facing difficulties in three dimensions: (1) community and social issues, (2) family and personal issues, and (3) professional issues (Adams et al., 2005).

Ponmozhi and Thenmozhi (2017) highlighted that four variables: class strength, father's education, mother's education, and parental occupation were positive predictors of rural students' education. Our education administration should follow international guidelines to adopt a system with a moderate number of students and give individual attention.

An old method of education is still used in rural areas. This is another challenge in education for rural students. The means of providing education should be replaced in rural areas (Zahra et al., 2020). The typical study of aspirations examines youth's desire for occupational or educational advancement. Indeed, the literature on occupational and educational aspirations is varied and extensive (Kuipers et al., 1979). Rural youth have weaker (usually described as "lower") occupational and educational aspirations (Saw & Agger, 2021; Smith, 2020) and, therefore, schools and other institutions initiate programs to "raise" the occupational and educational aspirations of rural youth (Chea & Huijsmans, 2020). Education for the good life, instead of the happy life, has seldom been promoted as relevant to rural areas; it has been rarely practiced anywhere (Gkartzios et al., 2020; Howley et al., 1997). A difference between a happy and a good life is between lives governed principally by ethical deliberation and those governed principally by pleasure-seeking (Howley et al., 1997).

Education improves a country's economic growth and increases knowledge and skills for a better life (Maneejuk & Yamaka, 2021; Wirba, 2021). Rural areas are characterized by various factors that badly influence the delivery of quality education (Du Plessis, 2014). It was also highlighted that rural areas are remote and relatively underdeveloped. As a result, many rural communities and their schools are poor and disadvantaged, lacking basic infrastructure for sanitation, water, roads, and other transport, electricity, and information and communication technology. Many rural parents are functionally illiterate, as they lack the opportunities, development, and resources that one would typically find in a more affluent community. In addition, many rural communities lack the professional help and support, governance structures, books, and learning materials needed to provide the necessary support and care for learners (Du Plessis, 2014).

According to Article 26a of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, education is the fundamental right of all citizens. Education is acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and habits through teaching, training, or research. It generally occurs in formal settings like schools and universities, as well as informal settings throughout life. The lack of quality teachers significantly boosts learner's achievement (Lewin, 2002). Policymakers must implement mechanisms to support and promote the retention of qualified and competent teachers in rural schools to improve the quality and working conditions of teachers in rural schools. To gain educational objectives, teachers in isolated communities should be compensated with additional financial incentives such as hardship and travel allowance for teachers to go to rural areas (Du Plessis, 2014).

According to Adams et al. (2005), life encompasses the following three dimensions: (i) community and social issues, (ii) family and personal issues, and (iii) professional issues. There is no valid tool that is still prepared to solve these issues. Anyhow, many efforts have been made. Adams et al. (2005) found the main factors of isolation and socialization problems to be that Rural residents have significantly higher problems with electricity loss and a lack of people at home with adequate technical skills than those living in urban and suburban areas (Laguador, 2021). Students from

rural areas have encountered significantly higher challenges regarding resources, communication, economics, and instructional and learning outcomes, regardless of location.

3 Material and Methodology

3.1 Development of Tool

A researcher created a questionnaire to collect data from victim students. An expert checked it for validation. The items were allied with the objectives and questions. The data collected item was piloted. Its validity and reliability were confirmed. **Administration of Tool:** I created the data collection tool myself. However, the research supervisor and experts provided the necessary guidance.

3.2 Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using descriptive techniques, mean, percentage, and frequencies, an Excel sheet, and manually. This study used a survey design. Victim students were approached, and data was collected by ensuring the real problems and challenges they faced during their research. The analysis was done against each problem by analyzing responses by percentage, frequency, and simple mean. **Population the rural areas students of districts** Neelum, Muzaffarabad, Bagh, and Sudhnoti were considered the population of the study. As they faced multiple challenges during the study, it was considered suitable. **Sample of the Study:** The snowball sampling technique was used to collect data. Only victim students from rural areas were approached. Data were collected from 36 students through this technique. **Delimitation of the Study:** This study was carried out in the districts of rural areas of Azad Kashmir, including Neelum, Muzaffarabad, Sudhnoti, and Bagh. The study could have been conducted for a large population but was delimited to these districts due to limited time.

4 Data Analysis

This chapter deals with the data analysis and interpretation of the results. The main objective of the research was to examine the problems and issues faced by the students in the rural area of Azad Kashmir. The primary focus was on district Neelum as the researcher belongs to the same district. Data was collected from 36 victim students through questionnaires. A manual technique of mean, percentage, and frequency was used during the analysis.

4.1 Base Line Information of the Student

The questionnaires revealed that four students left their education after primary school, seven after middle school, 15 after matriculation, two after intermediate, and five after bachelor's. Only three students reached the Master's (16 years).

Table 1: Base Line Information of the Student

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Primary	04	11.11	11.11	11.11
Middle	07	19.44	19.44	19.44
Matric	15	41.66	41.66	41.66
Intermediate	02	5.55	5.55	5.55
Bachelor	05	13.88	13.88	13.88
Master	03	8.33	8.33	8.33
Total	36	100	100	100

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of the Questionnaire

Below are the descriptive statistics of all 36 students on the questionnaire concerning mean scores, frequencies, and percentages. The result shows each student's perception through percentages and

frequencies.

4.3 Research Question 1

What are the factors which affect your academic excellence?

Table 2's descriptive statistics show students' responses to factors that affect their study. The students' responses show how their study was affected.

Table 2: Problems and challenges

Statement	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Poverty and financial crisis	26	72.22	72.22	72.22
Uncomfortable teaching environment	07	16.66	16.66	16.66
Teacher behavior/lack of quality teachers in the schools/colleges	21	58.33	58.33	58.33
Performance pressure	04	11.11	11.11	11.11
Illiterate parents and lack of support from family	26	72.22	72.22	72.22
Lack of interest of parents	10	27.77	27.77	27.77
Non-availability of resources	12	33.33	33.33	33.33
Schools and colleges distance from location	20	55.55	55.55	55.55
Lack of motivation from family	25	69.44	69.44	69.44
Lack of quality teacher	20	55.55	55.55	55.55
A large number of children	26	72.12	72.12	72.12
Company of bad friends	05	13.88	13.88	13.88
Child labor	24	66.66	66.66	66.66
Early child marriages	27	75.00	75.00	75.00
Animals at home	15	41.66	41.66	41.66
Inadequate infrastructure of schools and colleges	17	47.22	47.22	47.22
Bad parents' relationships	13	36.11	36.11	36.11
Total	36	99.97	99.97	99.97

Table 2 shows the types of issues they faced during their education. Students were found with problems with the percentage of 26 (72.22%) with the financial crisis and poverty, 7 (16.66%) with uncomfortable teaching environment, 21 (58.33) with teacher behavior/ lack of quality teacher in the schools/ colleges, 4 (11.11%) with performance pressure, 26 (72.12) with illiterate parents and lack of support from family, 10 (27.77) with lack of interest of parents, 12 (33.33) with non-availability of resources, 23 (55.55%) with Schools and colleges distance from a location, 25 (69.44 %) with lack of motivation from family, 20 (55.55 %) with lack of quality teacher, 26 (72.12 %) with a large number of children, 5 (13.88 %) with the company of bad friends, 24 (66.66 %) with child labor, 27 (75 %) with early child marriages, 15 (41.66 %) with animals at home, 17 (47.22 %), and 13 (36.11 %) with bad parental relationships.

4.4 Research Question 2

Why could not you continue your study? Give reason.

The responses of respondents were the same as mentioned in Table 2.

4.5 Research Question 3

In your opinion, what are the probable solutions to these problems?

Table 4.3 shows the responses of respondents.

Table 3: Probable Solutions

Statement	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Passion of students	25	69.44	69.44	69.44
Gov't should enhance scholarships for rural students	35	97.22	97.22	97.22
Provide an educational environment for family	28	77.77	77.77	77.77
Gov't should approach to NGOs for improvement of education	25	69.44	69.44	69.44
Infrastructure should be an upgrade	30	83.33	83.33	83.33
Enrolment of quality teachers	32	88.88	88.88	88.88
Arrangement of educational workshops	34	94.44	94.44	94.44
Stop child labor/work	35	97.22	97.22	97.22
Children should be motivated by parents	35	97.22	97.22	97.22
Stop child marriages	35	97.22	97.22	97.22
Preparation of hostel near to school/colleges	16	44.44	44.44	44.44
Arrangement of free transport	22	61.11	61.11	61.11
The teaching style should be changed	25	69.44	69.44	69.44
Control population	35	83.33	83.33	83.33
Use of social media as a tool of education	15	41.66	41.66	41.66
Issuance of funds for slide areas	08	22.22	22.22	22.22
Reduce poverty	35	97.22	97.22	97.22
Easy/ skill education for all	26	72.22	72.22	72.22

Table 3 shows respondents' responses in detail. From the detailed analysis, it has found that 25 (69.44 %) students agree with “passion,” 35 (97.22 %) with “enhancing of scholarships,” 28 (77.77 %) with “coordination with NGOs,” 30 (83.33 %) with “up gradation of infrastructure” 32 (88.88 %) with “enrolment of quality teachers,” 34 (94.44 %) with “arrangement of educational workshops,” 35 (97.22 %) with “stop child labor,” 35 (97.22 %) with “motivation,” 35 (97.22 %) with “stoppage of child marriages,” 16 (44.44 %) with “preparation of hostels near to schools and colleges” 22 (61.11 %) with “arrangement of free transport,” 25 (69.44 %) with “changing of teaching style,” 35 (83.33 %) with “population control,” 15 (41.66 %) with “use of social media as a tool of education,” 35 (97.22 %) with “reduce poverty,” 8 (22.22 %) with “issuance of fund for sliding areas,” 26 (72.22 %) with “easy / skill education for all”.

5 Findings

The following findings were discovered after analyzing the data.

- The first objective was to find the problem under which the study of talented students of rural areas of Azad Kashmir was affected. For this purpose, a questionnaire was presented to victims' students. Based on the students' responses, it has been found that most students have left their studies due to financial crisis and poverty. Poverty has destroyed their dreams of life. Table 4.2 shows that the maximum range of students was affected due to this issue.
- The second objective was highlighting the factors affecting rural students' academic excellence. Many factors affect the performance of talented students. By analyzing data, it was found that teacher behavior, lack of motivation, illiterate parents, and inadequate infrastructure are the factors that affect their study.
- The third objective was to identify family-related issues that affect academic excellence. It was found that early marriages, child labor, and inadequate parental relationships are common

challenges and problems in rural areas.

- The fourth objective was to find out how population disturbs education. It was found that each family has a maximum number of children; resources are less than children's birth. Rural parents know how to give birth to a child, but they do not know what they would do with a career and what responsibilities are upon them. Due to the maximum number, they cannot study each of them. Hence, the maximum number of children decided to leave their studies and do work to support their families.
- The fifth objective was to find how lack of motivation changes the behavior of talented students. By analyzing data, it was found that rural students did not know the benefits of education. They just knew that after completing their studies, they had to join the armed forces or police, so they decided not to continue their studies.

5.1 Conclusion

In rural areas, students face different issues and challenges during the study. The participant's responses show a need for certain decisions and policies to change this scenario. Participants were confident while giving their feedback. The analysis of the data highlights that parents and family members would also require taking their contribution to reduce this issue. The government and all other stakeholders should also take part in controlling this highly spreading challenge. It also highlights the negligence of educational institutes and higher education to prevent this severe issue.

5.2 Recommendation

After evaluating and analyzing the data, the following are some helpful suggestions and recommendations in reducing this severe nature issue and challenge: Provide scholarships to reduce financial burden. A study found that many students cannot continue their studies due to financial crisis. Therefore, the government should require free education up to the higher secondary level and provide special scholarships to those students who secure higher marks at the intermediate level. For this purpose, the government should also set a specific amount in the financial budget.

A special seminar to motivate parents found many illiterate parents who do not know the importance of education; thus, they cannot motivate their children. The government should conduct motivational seminars every month and invite parents to give them motivational lectures so that they can understand the importance of education. The number of educational institutes should be increased; during this study, it was found that the fewest educational institutes are away from student locations, so students sometimes cannot go there. Government and educational bodies should increase the number of academic institutions in each town and village, including technical institutes. They should also make roads toward each and provide free transport for pick-up and drop-off.

Family planning and control population was also found for large families during the study. Each family has a large number of children. The government should make policies to control the population. Two-Three child policy would be the better option. Teacher salaries should be increased; during the study, it was also found that teacher income is meager, so teachers also teach in the private sector in the evening, so their focus becomes divided. The government should increase teachers' salaries. The minimum salary must be equal to one Tola of Gold so that the basic needs of teachers can easily be met. Moreover, additional allowance informs of the hardship, and travel will be provided. In this way, the teacher focuses entirely on students.

This is the era of new inventions, and new techniques and technologies are being invented daily. Teachers cannot operate new technologies and new education methods, especially in rural areas. Educational bodies should conduct workshops and seminars for teachers to enable them to use

technologies. Workshops should be conducted regularly and new technologies or methods should be invented.

New teachers should be enrolled; in rural areas, only one teacher teaches up to middle standard. In this way, he/she faces a burden on him. He/ she is unable to teach all subjects to all the classes. Higher education and government should recruit new teachers and give them mandatory training. It also enhances the number of teachers in the schools. A minimum of one teacher up to the fifth standard and sixth standard onward should be subject specialist teachers, i.e., one teacher for one subject, and enroll those experts in their subjects.

Early marriages should be stopped; during this study, it was found that there were maximum responses of participants who got married at an early age. In the many rural areas of Azad Kashmir, there is a concept of early marriage, i.e., after 14 years of age. I found that most students fail to continue studying due to early marriage. They face household expenditure and other responsibilities on their shoulder. This trend is more in women than the man who looks after the house. Mostly, people think that they are just made up for looking after their home /children. After giving birth to a child, her focus changed, and she became a just housewife. In this way, study becomes a question mark for them, and they prefer to leave the study. The government should make policies to stop early child marriage. Increase network in rural areas. In the rural areas of Azad Kashmir, there is only one Network, i.e., SCOM, which is used in many districts, and many are still without a network. The government should enhance the number of networks for rural areas. Each district must have at least three networks. Also, proper networks should be provided, and different internet packages should be introduced that are easy for all individuals to access.

5.3 Limitation and Future Research

Further research can be carried out to investigate and highlight the challenges that cause education to stop. It was found that 72 percent of student issues are related to financial crises. This means that there are some other reasons for not achieving academic excellence. It should be further investigated at different levels. This study has limited participation from only four districts of Azad Kashmir. It should also be further investigated, and the range of participants should be increased. Those students who do not know about the importance of research should also be added for further investigation. This study just contains four districts of Azad Kashmir; there are more rural areas in Azad Kashmir, which should also be investigated through research.

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