

The Impact of Teacher Qualifications, Professional Training, and Pedagogical Practices on Female Elementary Education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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Abstract

Teacher quality is a critical determinant of student retention, particularly for girls in developing countries. However, there is limited research on how teacher qualifications and pedagogical practices specifically impact female education in conservative societies like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan. This study aimed to assess the academic and professional qualifications of elementary school teachers, evaluate their pedagogical preparedness, and identify teacher-related factors contributing to female student dropout in KP. A descriptive survey design was employed. Data were collected from 20 teachers (10 male, 10 female) from 10 elementary schools (5 public, 5 private) in KP using a structured questionnaire. The study found that 50% of male and 50% of female teachers held Masters Degrees. However, a significant disparity existed in professional training: 60% of male teachers held M.Ed degrees compared to only 40% of female teachers. Only 50% of male and 40% of female teachers prepared lesson plans before class. Teachers identified poverty (40%), cultural taboos (30%), and lack of parental interest (5%) as key reasons for students dropping out. The study revealed inadequate pedagogical preparation and professional training among elementary teachers, which negatively impacts female student retention. Recommendations included mandatory professional development programs for all teachers, especially females, and strengthening teacher preparation programs.

Keywords: Teacher qualifications, Professional training, Pedagogical practices, female education, Elementary education, KP-Pakistan

1. Introduction

Education is universally recognized as a fundamental human right. Education is the most powerful driver of individual and societal development. Teachers are the most important in-school factor affecting student achievement (Hattie 2003). Quality teaching has a greater impact on student outcomes than school leadership, curriculum, or facilities. For girls in developing countries, teachers serve as role models and gatekeepers to education (Morley 2019).

For girls in developing countries, teachers serve a dual role. They are not only transmitters of knowledge but also role models and gatekeepers who can either facilitate or obstruct girls' access to education. In contexts where cultural norms restrict female mobility and participation in public life, female teachers are particularly critical. They provide safety, cultural appropriateness, and inspiration for girls and their families. However, the shortage of qualified female teachers in many developing regions, coupled with inadequate professional training, perpetuates a cycle of low educational attainment and limited opportunities for girls (Muralidharan and Sheth 2016; Sharma 2025).

Pakistan faces a severe teacher quality crisis that has persisted for decades despite numerous policy interventions (Sain 2023). The situation is particularly acute in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) (Aziz et al. 2023). Despite the critical role of teachers in student retention, the impact of teacher qualifications, professional training, and pedagogical practices on female elementary education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remains under-researched. This study addresses this gap by providing empirical evidence on teacher quality and its relationship to female student retention, with the aim of informing policy and practice to improve educational outcomes for girls in one of Pakistan's most marginalized regions.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Pakistan consistently ranks among the lowest countries globally in terms of educational quality and outcomes. The problem is particularly acute in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), where female literacy is alarmingly low. While much research has focused on socio-cultural and economic barriers to female education in Pakistan, the role of teacher quality has received inadequate attention. There is limited empirical evidence on the academic and professional qualifications of teachers in KP, the pedagogical preparedness of teachers, and the specific teacher-related factors contributing to female student dropout. No previous study has systematically examined how teacher qualifications and practices affect female retention at the elementary level in KP. Despite the critical role of teachers in student retention, the impact of teacher qualifications, professional training, and pedagogical practices on female elementary education in KP remains under-researched. This study addressed this gap by providing empirical evidence on teacher quality and its relationship to female student retention.

1.2. Research Objectives

- To assess the academic qualifications of elementary school teachers (male and female) in KP.
- To evaluate the professional training qualifications of elementary school teachers in KP.

- To examine the pedagogical preparedness (lesson planning) of elementary school teachers.
- To identify teacher-related factors contributing to female student dropout at the elementary level.
- To explore teacher perspectives on parental attitudes toward female education.

1.3. Research Questions

- What are the academic qualifications of male and female elementary school teachers in KP?
- What are the professional training qualifications of male and female elementary school teachers?
- To what extent do teachers prepare lesson plans before classroom presentation?
- What teacher-related factors contribute to female student dropout at the elementary level?
- What are teachers' perspectives on parental attitudes toward female education?

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study provide evidence-based recommendations for teacher recruitment, training, and professional development policies. This study identified gaps in current teacher preparation programs, offered insights into improving teacher support and retention, established a baseline for further research on teacher quality in Pakistan, and it ultimately, improving teacher quality and could increase female enrollment and retention.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Teacher Quality and Student Achievement

Teacher quality is the single most important in-school factor influencing student achievement. Teachers who receive well-rounded, rigorous training are better equipped to improve student achievement, reduce achievement gaps, and promote social-emotional development (Harrison 2025). Hattie (2003) further established that quality teaching has a greater impact on student outcomes than school leadership, curriculum design, or physical facilities. Research on teacher effectiveness has identified multiple dimensions of teacher quality that influence student outcomes. A comprehensive investigation into teacher quality and effectiveness in developing countries, declared that teachers' subject knowledge, classroom management, and accountability are vital aspects of teacher quality. These qualities require significant improvement. Teacher characteristics play a limited role in explaining differential teacher effectiveness, suggesting the factors including teacher attitudes, social distance between teacher and student, and pedagogical approaches, are critical determinants of effectiveness (Aslam and Rawal 2015). The impact of comprehensive teacher education extends beyond immediate student achievement. Well-trained teachers are more confident in their abilities to adapt teaching strategies to diverse classroom environments and are better equipped to address the unique needs of individual students. Furthermore, comprehensive teacher education contributes to teacher retention, as teachers who undergo thorough preparation are less likely to leave the profession prematurely, ensuring greater continuity in the classroom and more stable learning environments for students (Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden 2007; Gomendio 2017).

2.2. Academic and Professional Qualifications of Teachers

Teachers play a vital role in the educational development of Pakistan. The quality of education largely depends on the knowledge, skills, and professional competence of teachers. Therefore, academic and professional qualifications are essential for teachers to perform their responsibilities effectively (Khan, Omar Fauzee, and Daud 2015; Memon 2007). Academic qualifications give teachers a strong command of the subjects they teach. A well-qualified teacher can explain difficult concepts clearly and accurately and answer students' questions effectively (Kola and Sunday 2015). Professional qualifications such as B.Ed. and M.Ed. provide teachers with knowledge of teaching methods, lesson planning, classroom management, assessment, and educational psychology. These skills help teachers make learning more effective (Abdin 2021). Qualified teachers contribute not only to students' academic achievement but also to their moral, social, and intellectual development. Pakistan's education system is changing with the introduction of technology and modern learning approaches (Asad et al. 2021). Professionally trained teachers are better prepared to use digital tools, activity-based learning, and student-centered teaching methods.

2.3. Problems Faced by Female Teachers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Female teachers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa face a unique set of challenges rooted in the cultural and social context of Pakhtun society. The patriarchal social structure imposes restrictions on women's mobility and participation in public life, making teaching a particularly challenging profession for women. Cultural norms around purdah (female seclusion) and family honor (nang and ghairat) mean that female teachers must navigate complex social expectations while fulfilling their professional responsibilities (Khan 2011; Khan, Khan, and Muhammad 2022; Shah, Khan, and Ullah 2014). Female teachers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also face significant institutional and professional barriers. Research reveals that teachers are not adequately motivated towards the teaching occupation due to issues related to appointments, transfers, place of posting, and promotions. The rapid rate of bribery and political interference in appointments, rather than merit-based selection, affects teacher morale and effectiveness (Shah et al. 2014).

2.4. Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review and theoretical foundations, this study adopts a conceptual framework that identifies the key variables affecting female teachers' effectiveness and, consequently, female student retention in elementary schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Independent Variables (Teacher Factors) are academic qualifications (BA/B.Sc vs. MA/M.Sc), professional training qualifications (CT, B.Ed, M.Ed), pedagogical preparation (lesson planning), teacher attitudes and behavior (interest, harshness). While intervening Variables are, teacher gender, school type (public vs. private), and geographic location (rural vs. urban). Consequently, dependent Variable are female student retention/attrition.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. The quantitative approach was chosen to systematically document teacher qualifications, training, and practices, as well as to identify teacher-related factors contributing to student dropout. This design allowed for the collection of data from a representative sample and the generalization of findings to the broader population of elementary teachers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

3.2. Population of the Study

Target population was all the elementary school teachers (male and female) in government and private schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

3.3. Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample of 20 teachers (10 male and 10 female) was selected from 10 schools (5 public and 5 private) across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This sample size, while modest, is adequate for a descriptive survey study focused on identifying patterns and themes rather than statistically generalizing to the entire population. Sampling technique used was convenience sampling combined with purposive sampling. The study focused on teachers from schools where female education is a concern. Convenience sampling was used to select accessible schools. Purposive sampling was used to ensure gender balance.

3.4. Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire (close-ended questions) was used as research instrument. The research instrument contained multiple choice, yes/no, and Likert-scale items. Sections of the research instrument contained sections as; Demographic information (name, sex, qualifications), Academic qualifications (HSSC, Bachelors, Masters), Professional qualifications (PST, CT, B.Ed, M.Ed), Pedagogical practices (lesson planning, student interaction), Perceived causes of student dropout, and Teacher perspectives on parental attitudes.

3.5. Validity and Reliability

To establish validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by three subject matter experts in education from Qurtuba University, Peshawar, KP-Pakistan. Their feedback was incorporated to improve clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness. A pilot study was conducted with 5 teachers from schools not included in the main sample. Based on the pilot study, ambiguous questions were revised and redundant items were removed. The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.78, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

3.6. Data Collection Procedure

For the data collection, permission was obtained from school principals. Teachers were approached and the purpose of the study was explained. Questionnaires were distributed and teachers were given 20-30 minutes to complete them. Completed questionnaires were collected

and responses were checked for completeness. Data from questionnaires were compiled and organized for analysis.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participation was voluntary. Responses were kept confidential. Teachers' identities were anonymized.

3.8. Data Analysis Procedure

Quantitative data collected through the questionnaires were coded and entered into SPSS Version 20.0 for analysis. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were calculated to summarize the data. The findings are presented in tables and figures for clarity and interpretation.

4. Results

This section presented the findings of the study organized by research objective. Data is presented in tables and figures, followed by interpretation. The sample consists of 20 teachers (10 male, 10 female).

4.1. Respondent Profile

Table 1. Distribution of Teachers by Sex and School Type.

Sex	Public School	Private School	Total	Percentage
Male	5	5	10	50%
Female	5	5	10	50%
Total	10	10	20	100%

To describe the demographic characteristics of participants, the sample comprised an equal number of male (50%) and female (50%) teachers. Half of the teachers (10) were from public schools and the other half (10) from private schools (Table 1). Bar chart showing 50% male, 50% female (Figure 1).

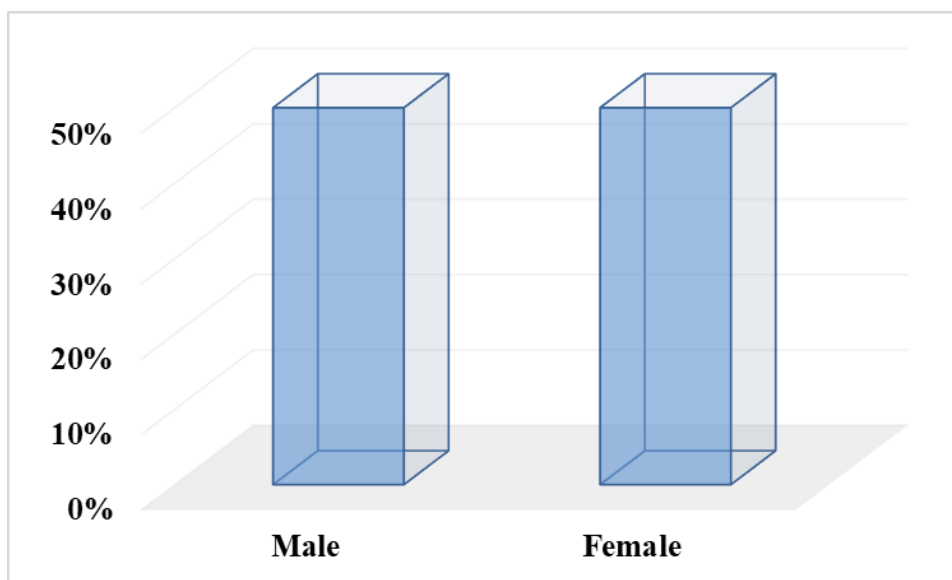


Figure 1. Bar chart showing 50% male, 50% female.

4.2. Academic Qualifications of Teachers

Table 2. Academic Qualification of Teachers by Sex.

Qualification	Male (n=10)	%	Female (n=10)	%	Total (n=20)	%
BA/B.Sc	3	30%	2	20%	5	25%
MA/M.Sc	7	70%	8	80%	15	75%
Total	10	100%	10	100%	20	100%

To present findings on teachers' academic qualifications, the majority of both male (70%) and female (80%) teachers held an MA/M.Sc degree, indicating that most elementary teachers in the sample possess graduate-level academic qualifications. Female teachers were slightly better qualified at the master's level (80%) compared to male teachers (70%). Only 25% of all teachers held a BA/B.Sc as their highest degree (Table 2). Bar chart comparing male and female academic qualifications is given in Figure 2.

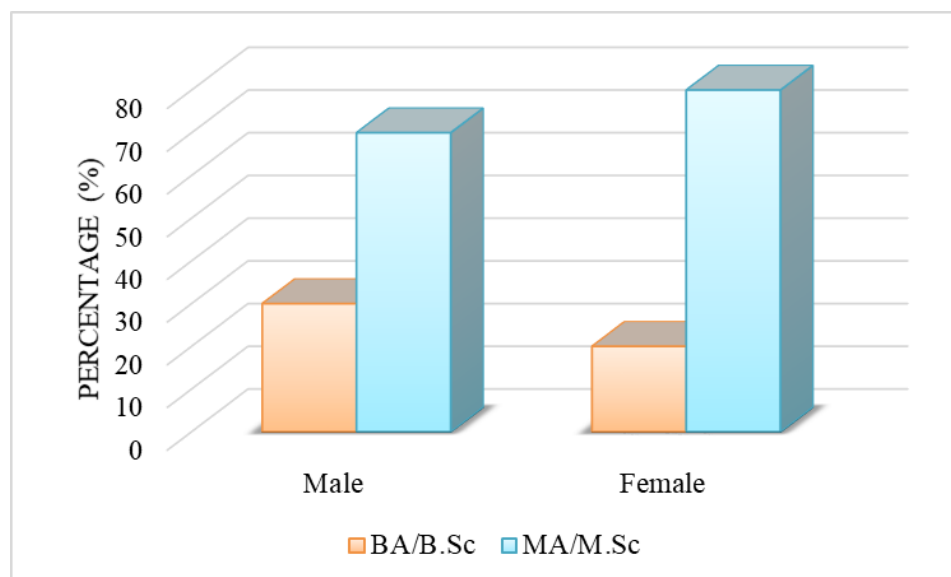


Figure 2. Bar chart comparing percentage (%) of male and female academic qualifications.

4.3. Professional Training Qualifications

Table 3. Professional Training of Teachers by Sex.

Qualification	Male (n=10)	%	Female (n=10)	%	Total (n=20)	%
CT	4	40%	2	20%	6	30%
B.Ed	6	60%	8	80%	14	70%
M.Ed	10	100%	6	60%	16	80%

To present findings on professional teaching qualifications, the data was analyzed. The results declared that all male teachers (100%) held an M.Ed degree, compared to only 60% of female teachers. However, female teachers were more likely than male teachers to hold a B.Ed degree (80% vs. 60%). Overall, professional training was more comprehensive for male teachers, with 100% having the highest level (M.Ed), while a significant proportion of female teachers (40%) did not hold the highest professional qualification. This disparity may reflect fewer professional development opportunities for female teachers (Table 3). Bar chart showing CT, B.Ed, M.Ed distribution by sex (Figure 3).

A notable finding is that while female teachers have slightly higher academic qualifications at the master's level (80% vs. 70%), male teachers have significantly higher professional training

qualifications (100% M.Ed vs. 60% M.Ed). This suggests a gender gap in professional development access.

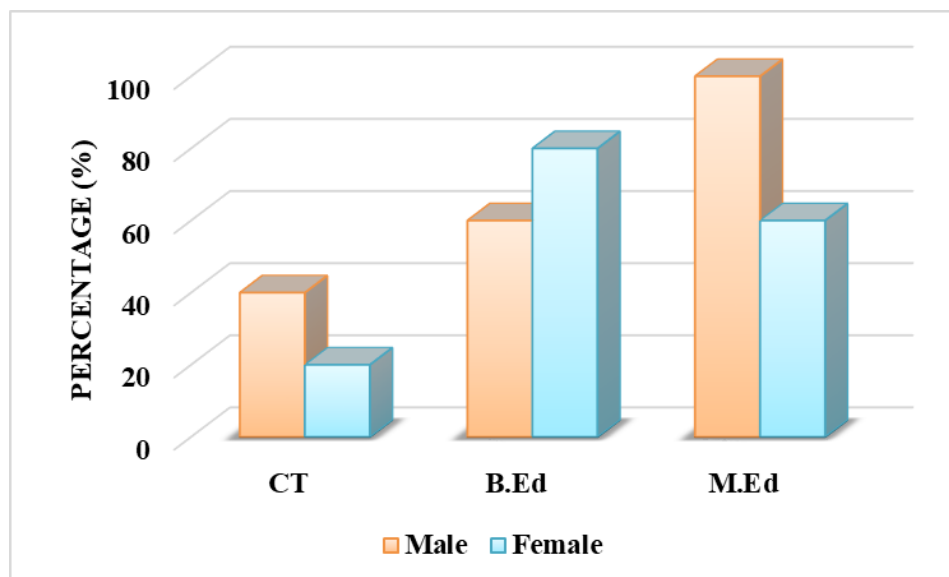


Figure 3. Bar chart showing percentage (%) of qualification (CT, B.Ed, M.Ed) distribution by sex.

4.4. Pedagogical Preparedness (Lesson Planning)

Table 4. Teacher Preparation of Lesson Plans by Sex

Response	Male (n=10)	%	Female (n=10)	%	Total (n=20)	%
Yes	5	50%	4	40%	9	45%
No	5	50%	6	60%	11	55%
Total	10	100%	10	100%	20	100%

To present findings on teachers' lesson planning practices, the data was analyzed. The analysis declared that only 45% of teachers reported preparing lesson plans before teaching. Male teachers (50%) were slightly more likely to prepare lesson plans than female teachers (40%). The finding that 55% of teachers do not prepare lesson plans is concerning, as lesson planning is a fundamental pedagogical practice that enhances teaching quality and student engagement. Female teachers were notably less prepared (60% not preparing lesson plans), which may be attributed to their greater domestic responsibilities or lack of training (Table 4). Pie chart showing yes/no responses is presented Figure 4.

The data revealed a significant gap in pedagogical preparedness. Over half of the teachers (55%) do not prepare lesson plans before class. This suggests that many teachers may rely on rote teaching methods rather than systematic instructional planning, which has negative implications

for the quality of education, particularly for female students who may require more engaging, supportive instruction to remain in school.

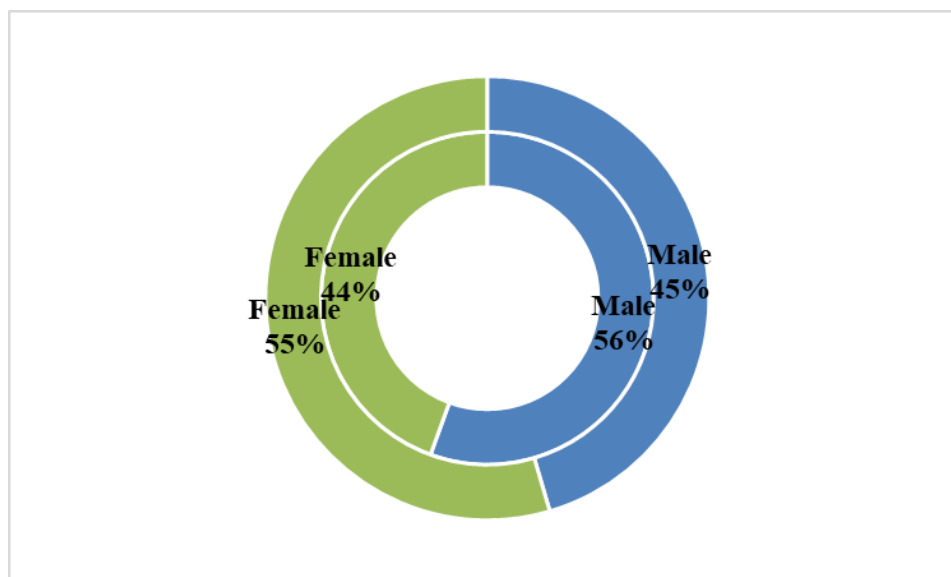


Figure 4. Pie chart showing yes/no responses in percent (%).

4.5. Teacher Perceptions of Student Dropout

Table 5. Teacher Perspectives on Causes of Dropout.

Cause	Frequency (n=20)	Percentage
Lack of facilities	10	50%
Physical punishment	3	15%
Lack of interest on the part of teacher	5	25%
Harsh attitude of teacher	2	10%

To present teachers' views on the causes of student dropout, the analyzed data was presented in Table 5. According to teachers, the most significant cause of student dropout was the lack of facilities (50%), followed by lack of interest on the part of the teacher (25%), physical punishment (15%), and harsh teacher attitude (10%). This indicates that teachers themselves acknowledge institutional and behavioral factors as contributing to student dropout, which suggests a need for improved school resources and professional development focused on positive teacher-student interactions. Pie chart showing the distribution of causes of dropout is presented in Figure 5.

Teachers identified their own behavior (lack of interest, harsh attitude) as contributing to dropout in 35% of cases. This self-awareness is important for professional development interventions.

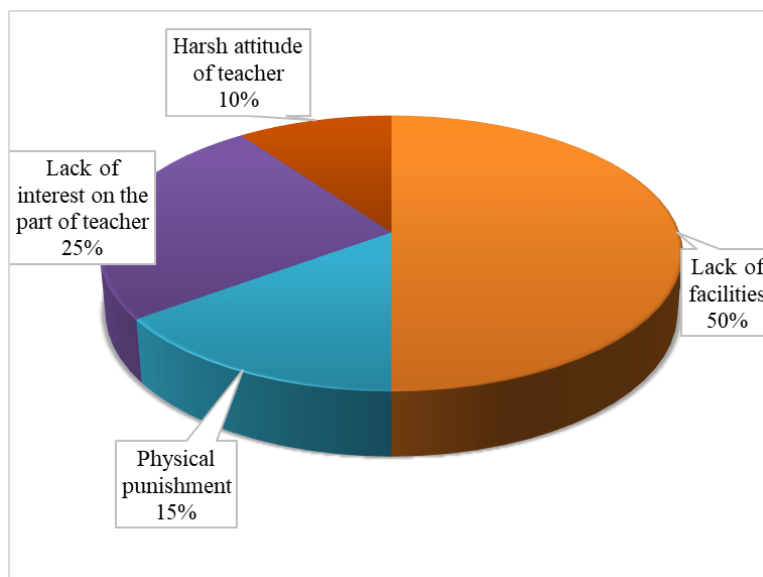


Figure 5. Pie chart showing the distribution of causes of dropout in percent (%).

4.6. Teacher Perspectives on Parental Attitudes

Table 6. Teacher Perspectives on Parental Resistance to Female Education.

Cause	Frequency (n=20)	Percentage
Poverty	9	45%
Cultural taboos	6	30%
Non-earning status of women	3	15%
No interest on part of parents	1	5%
Non-caring attitude of women	1	5%

In Table 6, teachers identified poverty (45%) and cultural taboos (30%) as the primary reasons parents are against sending their daughters to school. Non-earning status of women (15%), lack of parental interest (5%), and non-caring attitude (5%) were also mentioned. These findings confirm that teachers recognize the dual impact of economic and cultural constraints on girls' education. Bar chart showing causes regarding teacher perspectives on parental resistance to female education is presented in Figure 6.

The data reveals that teachers perceive poverty and cultural taboos as the most significant barriers to female education from the parental perspective. This suggests that any intervention to improve

female retention must address both economic and cultural dimensions. Teachers also acknowledged that parents' perceptions about women's non-earning status contribute to devaluing girls' education.

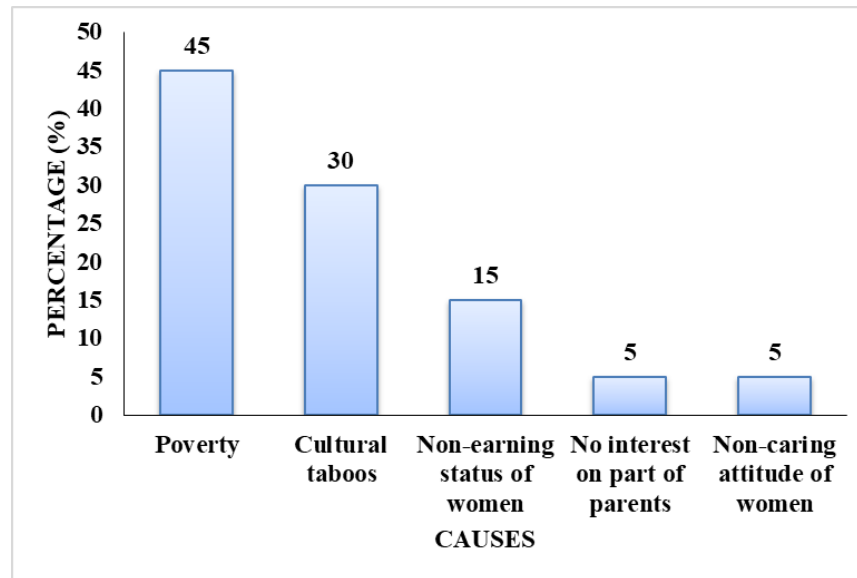


Figure 6. Teacher-Reported Parental Resistance to Female Education.

4.7. Teacher Responsibility for Dropout

Table 7. Teacher Responsibility for Student Dropout.

Response	Frequency (n=20)	Percentage
Yes	8	40%
No	12	60%

To examine whether teachers feel responsible for student dropout, the analyzed data is presented in Table 7. While 60% of teachers do not believe they are responsible for student dropout, a significant minority (40%) acknowledge that teachers may play a role. The 40% who admit to some responsibility aligns with the earlier finding that 35% of teachers identified their own behavior (lack of interest, harsh attitude) as a cause of dropout. Pie chart showing 40% yes, 60% no is given as Figure 7.

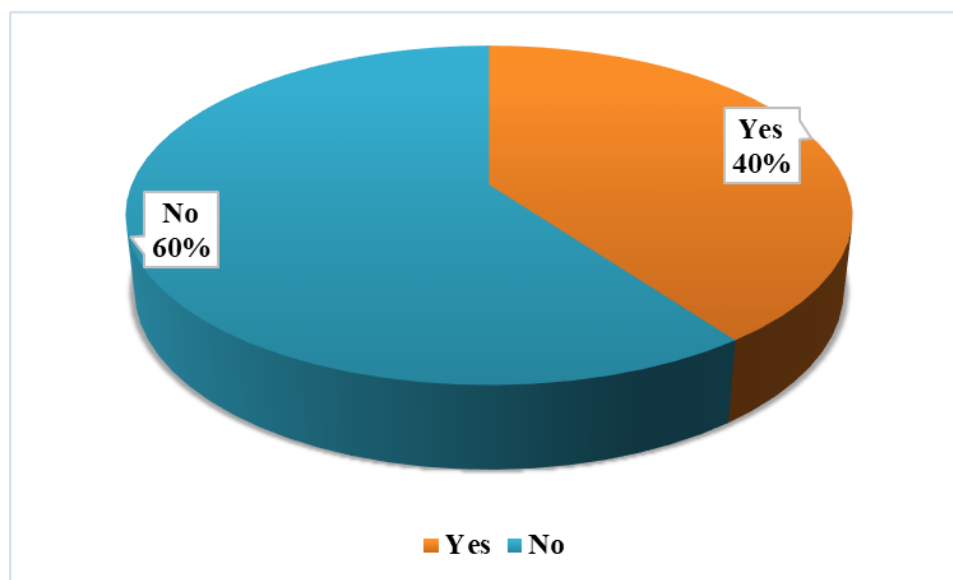


Figure 7: Teachers' Perception of Their Responsibility for Dropout (%).

5. Discussion

The study found that 75% of teachers held MA/M.Sc degrees, with female teachers (80%) slightly outperforming male teachers (70%) at the master's level. This finding is encouraging and suggests that elementary teachers in KPK possess adequate academic qualifications, exceeding national averages (Shah et al. 2014). This finding is consistent with research by Bano (2012, 2022), who noted that Pakistan's teacher education system has produced a significant number of graduates, though the quality of their training remains questionable (Bano 2012, 2022).

The study revealed a significant gender disparity in professional training: all male teachers (100%) held M.Ed degrees, compared to only 60% of female teachers. This finding is concerning and has important implications for the quality of education provided to girls in KPK. The fact that male teachers are more likely to hold advanced professional qualifications than female teachers is a significant concern for female education. Girls in KPK are taught predominantly by female teachers at the elementary level, as cultural norms dictate that girls should be taught by female teachers (Westbrook et al. 2009).

The study found that only 45% of teachers prepared lesson plans before teaching, with male teachers (50%) slightly more likely to do so than female teachers (40%). This finding is concerning, as lesson planning is a fundamental pedagogical practice that enhances teaching quality and student engagement (Richards, 2001). This finding is consistent with research by Nabi et al., (2026), who observed that Pakistani teachers often rely on rote memorization and lecture-based instruction, with limited lesson planning (Nabi, Ghayas, and Naz 2026). Bano (2012) similarly found that lesson planning in Pakistani schools is often superficial or absent, with teachers relying on textbooks without systematic instructional planning. More than half of teachers (55%) do not prepare lesson plans, suggesting that many elementary teachers in KPK rely on ad hoc or rote teaching methods rather than systematic instructional planning. This likely reduces the

quality of education, particularly for girls who require more supportive, engaging instruction to remain in school.

The study found that teachers identified lack of facilities (50%) as the primary cause of student dropout, followed by lack of interest on the part of the teacher (25%), physical punishment (15%), and harsh teacher attitude (10%). Combined, teacher-related factors (lack of interest, physical punishment, harsh attitude) accounted for 35% of dropouts. Teachers themselves acknowledge that their behavior, lack of interest, harshness, physical punishment, contributes to student dropout in 35% of cases. This self-awareness is a critical starting point for professional development programs that aim to improve teacher-student relationships and retention (Saleem and Muhammad 2020).

The study found that teachers identified poverty (45%) and cultural taboos (30%) as the primary reasons parents oppose sending daughters to school. Non-earning status of women (15%), lack of parental interest (5%), and non-caring attitude (5%) were also identified. Teachers demonstrate awareness of the dual economic and cultural barriers to girls' education, but they may benefit from additional training on the economic benefits of girls' education to better advocate for girls in their communities (Sikhwari 2024).

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, most teachers hold academic qualifications at the master's level. However, there is a significant gender gap in professional training qualifications, with male teachers having higher M.Ed attainment (100%) than female teachers (60%). Pedagogical preparedness is weak, with only 45% of teachers preparing lesson plans. Teachers identified lack of facilities (50%), teacher behavior (35%), and cultural factors as causes of dropout. Teachers perceive poverty (45%) and cultural taboos (30%) as the main reasons parents oppose female education. 40% of teachers acknowledge their own responsibility for student dropout. Furthermore, teacher quality is a significant factor in female education in KPK. While teachers have adequate academic qualifications, their professional training and pedagogical practices are lacking. A gender disparity exists in professional development. Female teachers are less likely to have advanced professional training than their male counterparts, which may reflect broader gender inequalities in the education system. Pedagogical preparation is insufficient. The majority of teachers do not prepare lesson plans, which is likely to negatively affect teaching quality and student retention. Teachers recognize their role in dropout. A significant proportion of teachers acknowledge that their own behavior (lack of interest, harshness) contributes to student dropout. Economic and cultural barriers are widely recognized. Teachers perceive poverty and cultural taboos as the most significant barriers to female education.

7. Recommendations for Future Research

For future research, it is suggested to do studies with larger, more representative samples to enhance generalizability. Compare teacher quality between public and private schools in KPK. Include student interviews to understand their views on teacher behavior. Track the impact of teacher professional development on student retention over time. Test the effectiveness of specific

professional development programs on female student retention. Compare teacher quality across provinces (KPK vs. Punjab vs. Sindh vs. Balochistan).

Delimitation of the Study

The study was limited to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Pakistan. Only elementary schools (primary and middle level) were included. The study included 20 teachers (10 male, 10 female) from 10 schools (5 public, 5 private) only. This study only focused on teacher qualifications, professional training, lesson planning, and teacher-perceived causes of dropout.

Limitations of the study

The sample of 20 teachers is relatively small and may limit generalizability. The study focused on KPK, so findings may not apply to other provinces. Teacher responses may be subject to social desirability bias. The study captures data at one point in time and cannot establish causality. Student perspectives on teacher practices were not collected.

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