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Teachers' Perception of Student Dropout at University Level: Challenges and Way Forward

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Keywords

Students' Dropout
Teachers' Perception
Academic Domain
Non-academic Domain
Challenges

Abstract

This study aims to explore the reasons for dropout among students studying at higher levels. The issue of student dropout in universities is still a challenging educational issue, especially in developing countries like Pakistan. It can have negative impacts on students' learning and development and play a role in the social and economic issues that impact society. This study examined problems related to dropouts among university students and the teachers' perceptions of the causes of such dropouts, along with the findings and recommendations. The findings suggest that financial problems, poor academic background, and selection of an inappropriate field of study are contributing factors to the problem, which shows that proper interview methods should be used to check the financial status and field of study of the students, and also mentoring and counselling classes should be given to the new students. A quantitative research study was conducted. The study discusses the details and provides insights on university student dropout, along with strategies to minimize it. The population was faculty members of the public Universities of Islamabad. Convenience sampling was used. The data were collected through a self-developed scale and divided into four portions, namely academic factors, non-academic factors, strategies to minimize student dropout, and open-ended questions. The results of the study were collected through Google Forms. Later, the data were analyzed using SPSS. Based on the results and findings, recommendations were made.

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Introduction

Dropout of students has drastically affected the education system globally, including in Pakistan. The problem is common at primary, secondary, and higher education levels. The underlying principle of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4) discusses universal and equitable access to education for all. Goal 4 focuses on free education and increased literacy. Dropout hinders this goal and acts as a major hindrance to the full utilization of SDG4. Besides this, Article 25A also states that 'the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 5 to 16 years as in such manner as determined by the law'.

Pakistan, like other developing countries, is facing a high rate of out-of-school children. Although out-of-school children (OOSC) include those who have never attended school, the major portion comprises those who fail to complete a minimum credential and leave the institution early. National Education Policy of Pakistan 2017 mainly focuses on the target of reducing the dropout rate. The indicators, as shown at the national and international level, show that the dropout rate is highest at the primary level and lowest at the higher level. At the higher education level in Pakistan, there are numerous reasons for dropout. A report from the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan shows that approximately a 13% decline in students is reported at the

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university level. The higher education sector of Pakistan is facing a continuing challenge of student dropout, with a mix of academic and non-academic factors.

The factors that contribute to dropout levels at the higher education level include financial, social integration, psychological, and accommodation factors. These factors were categorized into academic and non-academic factors. The present study discusses and analyses these factors through different statistical tools

Dropout factors at higher levels encompass a complex phenomenon influenced by cumulative factors spanning academic, non-academic, individual, and environmental. Financial hardships and institutional barriers further aggravate the risk of dropout. In addition to that, global commotions like the COVID-19 pandemic have also added to these stressors and left students socially isolated and mentally affected.

This article provides a comprehensive overview of all factors that influenced the dropout of students from teachers' perspective. This article not only reviews previous studies on the topic but also analyzes the faculty teachers working at the university level. The study also focuses on the strategies and suggestions by the faculty teachers working in higher education institutions

Research Questions

1. What is teachers' perception about academic factors in students' dropout at the university level?
2. What are the teachers' perceptions about non-academic factors of students' dropout at the university level?
3. What are the strategies that can minimize dropout at the university level?

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the teachers' perceptions about academic factors in student dropout at the university level.
2. To analyze the teachers' perceptions about non-academic factors in student dropout at the university level.
3. To suggest suitable strategies to minimize the level of student dropout at the university level.

Literature Review

Education, being a fundamental human right, contributes to society and has a potential impact on many different segments of humanity. It also helps and contributes to individuals, different communities, organizations, and acts as a major contributor to inclusive societies (UNESCO, 2024; World Bank, 2024). At the same level, the nature of education can be different due to the diverse nature of every society, as each society has different social, cultural, and moral values. Current studies focus on the idea that the education system should correspond to inequalities, technological developments, and diverse learners' needs. These contextual factors are linked when examining student dropout and persistence, as these are the factors that encompass individual characteristics that separate families, societies, parents, institutions, and communities (UNESCO, 2024; World Bank, 2024). In this perspective, there is a need to view students' participation and

resolve in studies along with the factors and environment conducive to their study. Besides this, there is also a contextual perspective to understand student dropout because this phenomenon is recognized as a multidimensional phenomenon having different factors such as social, economic, academic, psychological, and institutional, rather than considering a single one (Apumayta et al., 2024; Valencia-Arias et al., 2026).

In Pakistan, there are different educational needs owing to its cultural and social features, such as its socio-economic conditions, gender inequalities, and inflexible societal system. There is a dire need to improve all these important factors; otherwise, it will drastically increase the dropout rate and become part of a poor education system along with educational inequalities. Recent official data shows that Pakistan's literacy rate has increased, with significant differences on the basis of gender and geographical regions. According to the report and data issued by the Pakistan Economic Survey 2025-26, the literacy rate of Pakistan is 63%, with the male literacy rate at 73% and the female literacy rate at 54%, with the urban literacy rate at 74% and rural at 55%. The population taken for the literacy rate is aged 10 years and above (Government of Pakistan, 2026). In the same way, data issued by the Pakistan Institute of Education (2025) showed that there is a significant number of children who remain out of school, especially at the higher education level. These disparities should be judged as an important context, as socioeconomic conditions, home circumstances, gender, location, family conditions, and access to educational institutions may affect the students' educational ability and efficiency (Pakistan Institute of Education, 2025; World Bank, 2024). At the higher education level, these conditions may interact with all the above-discussed factors and resultantly affect students' decision to discontinue their studies (Apumayta et al., 2024; Ehtsham et al., 2024).

While discussing the wider problems of dropout at the university level, mental health issues among university students in Pakistan are a grave concern to address. Many universities have established their students' mental health counseling departments. The issue of mental health is recognized worldwide. At the university level, where social pressures, parents' academic expectations, and financial challenges become devastating, mental health problems in universities become a matter of concern. Niazi et al. (2026) conducted a meta-analysis and systematic review of 35 studies and more than 11000 Pakistani students, which found that approximately 51% of university students are identified as having depressive symptoms. The review identified academic stress, financial issues, social issues, and cultural stigma as important concerns for mental health. They also necessitated establishing accessible and culturally appropriate university counselling services for students. Non-fulfillment of these issues and problems leads to dropout. It is important to consider that these concerns cannot be linked with university dropout; evidence shows that psychological well-being should be considered while considering students' capacity to continue higher education. Academic pressure is one of the main reasons for stress for students. The universities which have a highly competitive environment, where students strive to do their best to ensure excellence and a promising future. Along

with this, pressure from peers, family, and societal expectations puts massive stress on emotional health. Recent literature indicates that for many university students, financial constraints play a major role in aggravating dropout and mental health issues. High tuition fees, lodging and boarding charges, lack of financial help and scholarships, and students working part-time jobs are factors that contribute to dropout and mental health issues among students. Apumayta et al., (2024) examined academic performance in higher education and also demonstrated it as one of the major dimensions that lead university students to drop out. The advent of information and communication technology and the huge negative impact and misuse of social media have reshaped university students' style of interacting with themselves and with others around the world. While these channels can be used positively to avail different opportunities and connect people around the world, they also establish unrealistic comparisons. Cyberbullying and online harassment also increase anxiety and depression among students.

In a recent study conducted in Pakistan by Ehteshm et al., (2024), using a mixed-methods design comprising 300 dropout students, out of which 200 were current students, 50 were teaching members, and 50 were administrative personnel, the study found that socioeconomic conditions, academic performance, institutional assistance, and personal problems were the main obstacles. This research is relatively more relevant to the present research as it also included the teaching faculty as the population, and it was also conducted in a higher education context.

The institutional environment for a student also plays an important role during their stay at university. During the stay at university, the student is influenced by the quality of teaching, academic advising, students' counselling services, and relationships with teachers, peers, and administrative staff, which also play an important role. The institutional environment has also been identified as a major factor by Apumayta et al., (2024) in all their 23 studies. In the same way, Rahmani et al., (2024), in their systematic review of 110 studies on online higher education, identified that academic support, learning environment, student-teacher relationship, and course quality were the factors related to dropout. These findings conclude that universities have a responsibility to identify students who are found at risk and arrange counseling services through their dedicated free support services.

Due to cultural norms, students live like family, and this provides support in situations of isolation, but at the same time, conservative attitudes lead to isolation and worsen their condition. Recent literature indicates that, at the university level, another serious reason for dropout is uncertainty and a competitive job market. Due to this reason, people feel anxiety and worry about their careers.

The use of digital technologies at the higher education level has changed the teaching and learning experience at the university level. This increasing use of technologies has provided opportunities for teachers and students in communication, teaching, learning, pedagogy, and collaboration. At the same time, excessive use of digital technologies has created some problems for academically struggling and financially weak students, including challenges for students' psychological well-being and academic

engagement. Current research in Pakistan has explored that the relationship between social media use and university students' mental health is interlinked. Hassan et al., (2024) studied social media use and university students' mental health in Pakistan. Similarly, Arif et al., (2023) indicated that research on the use of social media among university-level students and recommended further investigation into its educational and social consequences. Another research review by Arif et al., (2024) on cyberbullying among university students has indicated it as an indicator of mental health. Therefore, while considering digital and social media as communication platforms, universities are required to address the negative consequences through counselling, awareness, digital citizenship, and guiding students to use appropriate platforms. Another important factor in Pakistan's context regarding dropout is social and cultural factors. There are some factors that play a role in students' decisions to continue university education, such as gender, mobility, social norms and values, and family responsibilities. In a study conducted by Karim et al., (2025) on female students at Karachi University, dropout factors associated with it include gender preference, harassment, increasing fees, low parental income, early marriage, migration, transportation issues, family pressure, and lack of guidance and counselling. Findings of the study indicate that academic performance cannot be considered the only factor, as students' educational issues are linked with other social and cultural factors.

Employment and career uncertainty are also factors that students perceive as hurdles in higher education. Contemporary university students perceive and link their education to employment, labour-market demands and opportunities, and the scope of their degree. In the current scenario, the transition from university to the job market has become uncertain due to changing labour markets, making career guidance and vocational support. Apumayta et al., (2024), in their research, identified vocational guidance as a substantial dimension of university dropout and found that this issue was addressed in about three-quarters of the studies in their systematic review. This shows that universities should not limit their assistance to retention interventions in studies only, but they must guide their students regarding the job market, the availability and scope of their jobs, and guidance regarding future emerging professional fields as well.

In the context of Pakistan, a combination of all these factors, such as social, economic, cultural, academic, psychosocial, and institutional, may be considered collectively. Research reports that these factors affect students simultaneously rather than independently. Ehtsham et al., (2024) identified some significant themes that affect student attrition: financial, academic, family responsibilities, institutional conditions, and social relations. In a current study, Karim et al., (2025) also highlighted the gender-specific issues for female students, including harassment, financial pressure, family expectations, transportation charges, and insufficient guidance and counselling. Therefore, this indicates that effective retention policies require a multidimensional approach tailored to students' and institutions' situations.

At the national level, this broader context shows that there are continuous challenges in access and retention. To focus on the principal issues of education in Pakistan, poor literacy and

providing free primary and elementary education are more grave. To improve this concept, Article 25A of the Constitution of Pakistan focuses on providing free and compulsory education from the age of 5 to 16 years. The Pakistan Education Statistics 2023-24 shows that 25.15 million children aged 5-16 were out of school in 2023-24, showing an overall out-of-school rate of 35%. This rate increases, reaching 60% at the higher secondary level. These figures do not include university-level students, as they drop out before reaching the higher education level. The latest Pakistan Economic Survey reiterates that despite recent improvements, educational participation and literacy rates are declining (Government of Pakistan, 2026).

At the international level, research demonstrates that student dropout has become a major concern for higher education institutions because it affects students, families, universities, and society in a larger context. Dropout also results in weaker educational investment, late job entry, fewer opportunities for social mobility, and financial consequences for universities. Current systematic research reviews indicate that the phenomenon is multidimensional and requires intervention through different dimensions for students, such as financial, social, institutional, career counselling, and psychological (Apumayta et al., 2024; Valencia-Arias et al., 2026).

The prevailing literature on dropout suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic also intensified these recent challenges, especially related to online learning, technological access, academic workload, students' isolation, and institutional response. Rahmani et al., (2024) indicated some dimensions, such as motivation, course-related factors, technological factors, demographic factors, and other factors that are related to dropout. The findings of the study show that students' persistent dependence on a digitally mediated environment depends on technology, quality of learning experiences, academic preparation, satisfaction, and institutional support. Therefore, the post-pandemic environment requires higher education institutions to consider both traditional and emerging factors simultaneously.

While research relating to dropout has been flourishing, little research has been conducted to explore the dropout phenomenon from the viewpoint of University teachers, who have frequent contact with students and who can monitor their engagement, motivation, attendance, performance, and social behavior at university. The teachers' perspective is valuable in understanding key institutional and classroom issues that can help inform student dropout rates and develop strategies to retain students at school. While Ehtsham et al. (2024) have included teachers' perceptions in their study of factors associated with student dropouts in the Pakistani context, and Karim et al. (2025) have studied female students' perceptions at the University of Karachi, the literature is limited in providing focused evidence of how university teachers perceive the factors that influence students' dropouts and what the possible solutions to these factors are in a Pakistani higher education context.

The literature reviewed suggests that university dropouts are a multi-dimensional issue that is influenced by academic, social, cultural, psychological, institutional, career-related, and

technological factors. But teachers' perceptions and understanding of these interwoven factors in the context of Pakistan's higher education are yet underexplored. The novelty of the present study is that the opinions of the university teachers are given center stage, examining the challenges faced by students who drop out of the university and what may be done to improve student retention. The study combines teachers' observations of students' academic, behavioural, motivational, and institutional experiences, thus adding to the existing body of work, as it offers an educator's view on university dropout and its consequences for student retention and successful programme completion.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the study is based on the integration of Tinto's model of Student Integration (1993), which discusses that students' retention is based on academic and social integration within the university. Tinto's framework has been used in this study to visualize the two broad factors (academic and non-academic domains) through teachers' perceptions that compel students to drop out. Bean's Student Attrition Model (1983) also focuses on the external factors that are beyond the institution's control (Figure 1). To make the study fruitful and result-oriented, the models of both educationists were integrated. The assimilation of these models provides a theoretical base for the present study and can be used to examine how academic and non-academic factors interpret teachers' decisions and perceptions about students' dropout. This integrated model will enable a detailed analysis of how teachers perceive the academic domain, such as teaching standards, curriculum, methodology, and academic performance of students, that are related to Tinto's academic component. The factors mentioned are closely related to students' experience in the academic system and can affect their academic performance and engagement in university life.

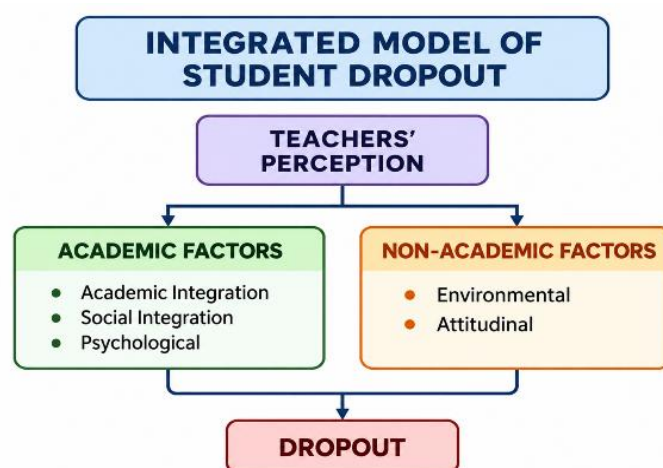


Figure 1. Integrated Model of Student Dropout Based on Tinto (1993) and Bean (1983)

The non-academic domain includes financial, social integration including friendship and belonging, psychological, and accommodation factors, which can be visualized through corresponding perspectives of Tinto and Bean. The factors under social integration relate to Tinto's social integration component, and financial, psychological, and environmental-related factors can be Bean's external and attitudinal influences on student attrition. While discussing the theoretical underpinnings of Tinto's model (1993), he categorically theorized that students' persistence largely depends upon academic and social integration in the university. Those students who have warm relationships with peers, faculty, and institutions are more likely to persist, and their dropout rate is minimal. According to Tinto (1993), the academic domain includes results, classroom participation, and intellectual development, while social integration includes social affiliation, peer interaction, and on-campus involvement. Consequently, the teacher-perceived factors of the present study, such as students' academic performance, classroom performance, teaching practice, friendship, and social interaction, can be interpreted through Tinto's academic and social integration dimensions. According to Bean (1983), non-academic domains include external and attitudinal variables that are influenced by psychological, environmental, financial, cultural, and mental health factors. The factors studied in the present study, perceived by teachers as financial difficulties, psychological well-being, and environmental and cultural circumstances, link to Bean's model. This shows that students' dropout is extended beyond academic factors and is also affected by external circumstances and attitudes towards the university experience. The integration of Tinto's and Bean's models is relevant to the factors discussed in the research article. This argues that Tinto's model provides theoretical explanation for academic and social dimensions measured in the present study, whereas Bean's model complements it by explaining the external, environmental, financial, and attitudinal influences on student attrition. Therefore, the integration of these two models provides a theoretical base for visualizing academic and non-academic variables examined by university teachers. The factors of dropout as perceived by the university teachers are truly covered in the integration of these two authors' models.

According to the theme of the study, we can relate both academic and non-academic factors to Tinto and Bean, respectively. Rather than taking these two models separately, their integration will provide insight to explain dropout as a multidimensional problem. This theoretical framework provides an overall and well-validated view to explain dropout through teachers' perceptions. This holistic framework will provide a scholarly foundation and a strong structure.

Research Methodology

The researcher used a quantitative research design. The study focuses on teachers' perceptions of students' dropout at the university level. The study also discussed the two broad domains of dropout, i.e., academic and non-academic domains. Both domains were discussed in detail. The population of the study was based on faculty members serving at public universities in Islamabad. The sample of the study was selected by the convenience sampling technique. The data were collected by sending links through e-mails on Google

Forms and through a developed scale. The tool was developed on three scales: academic domain factors, non-academic domain, and strategies to minimize the dropout scale. Two open-ended questions were also included to analyze the teachers' views about dropout.

Research Design

The study was designed to investigate teachers' perceptions of student dropout at the university level. The study proceeded with a quantitative research design to investigate the teachers' perceptions of academic and non-academic factors based on the theoretical perspectives of Tinto's Student Integration Model (1993) and Bean's Student Attrition Model (1983) in students' dropout at the university level. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), quantitative research allows for the collection of numerical data, facilitating statistical analysis to draw conclusions. By following Creswell and Creswell (2018), teachers' perception about student dropout at the university level was analyzed and generalized through findings for the broader population.

Research Population

All faculty teachers serving in Public Universities of Islamabad were the population of the study.

Research Sample

The sample size of this study included 43 faculty members of different departments serving at National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, and other public universities of Islamabad. The sample size ensures statistical reliability and precision in the analysis of the data collected (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

Sampling Technique

Sampling refers to the selection of individuals from whom data will be collected. The research sample was selected through a convenience sampling technique. In convenience sampling, each faculty member has ease of access and available ability to the researcher. The individuals were informed about the confidentiality of their data and their willingness.

Validity of the Instrument

The validity of the tool was ensured through a developed research instrument. The research tool was formulated with the help of existing literature on the topic and with consultation from the subject experts by the researcher. The instrument consisted of 18 questions depending on the academic factors scale, non-academic factors scale, and strategies to improve the dropout scale. Two open-ended questions were also included and were analyzed through thematic analysis.

Reliability

The reliability of the tool was checked. A tool with high reliability is crucial in the research process, as it can safely be reused under the same conditions with a considerable degree of trust and confidence. The tool's internal consistency was evaluated using SPSS tools like Cronbach's alpha to confirm that the instrument has consistency with a level of confidence. The value of Cronbach's alpha is 0.85.

Ethical Consideration

In the research study, ethical considerations play an important role. Informed consent was obtained from the participants with assurance of confidentiality and voluntary participation.

Participants were assured that their data would be anonymized and would be utilized for research only.

Research Tool

The research tool was a self-developed tool, consisting of a total of 18 questions, including demographic and open-ended questions. The same was used to analyze the teachers' perceptions of academic and non-academic factors and to suggest strategies to minimize student dropout at the university level. The questions were framed to collect data using a 5-point Likert scale to produce quantitative responses.

Data Collection

The data were collected through a Google Form. The data received contributed a lot to making a comprehensive dataset.

Data Analysis

Data were collected using Google Forms and were processed. Subsequently, the developed tool was used to collect and analyze the data using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The sample was described and characterized using descriptive analysis. At the end, the analysis of the data was done through different statistical techniques like mean and Standard Deviation (SD). This study was a quantitative study that explored the views of University teachers on dropouts in university and the causes of dropouts. A self-structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. The results are valuable to researchers, educationists, university teachers, and education scholars to gain insight into student dropouts and to implement strategies to prevent them at the university level.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

		N	%
Gender	Male	21	48.8
	Female	22	51.2
Department	Education	15	34.9
	English	4	9.3
	Management Sciences	8	18.6
	Economics	2	4.7
	Electrical Engineering	1	2.3
	Pakistan Studies	4	9.3
	International Relations	3	7.0
	Accounting and Finance	2	4.7
	Persian	4	9.2
Designation	Lecturer	19	44.2
	Assistant Professor	18	41.9
	Associate Professor	4	9.3
	Professor	2	4.7
	Professor	2	4.7
Job Experience	1-5	6	14.0
	6-10	6	14
	11-15	9	20.9
	16+	22	51.2

Qualification			
M.Phil.	14	32.6	
Ph.D.	26	60.4	
Post Doc	3	7.0	

The population of the study was based on teachers serving in public universities of Islamabad. The sample of the population was selected from teachers for data collection through convenience sampling. Accordingly, 43 teachers responded and were taken as the sample of the study.

The demographic data revealed that 21 respondents (48.8%) were male and 22 respondents

(51.2 %) female. Teachers were categorized into different departments to check their responses and their experience in their own department. 15 Teachers represented the education department, which accounted for 34.9%. According to designation, 19 were Lecturers (44.2%) of the study, while 18 were Assistant Professors (41.9%). The remaining teachers were Associate Professors and Professors, with frequencies of 4 and 2, respectively, representing 9.3% and 4.7% of the study. Regarding job experience, it was found that teachers with 1-5 years of experience were 6, which is 14%, whereas teachers having job experience of 6-10 years, 11-15 years, and 16+ years were 14%, 20.9%, and 51.2%, respectively.

Regarding the qualifications of teachers, the majority of respondents held a Ph.D. degree. The number of teachers who held M Phil were 14, which was 32.6 % of sample while 26 teachers were Ph. D which comes to 60.4% whereas 3 teachers had done Post doc which were 7%.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Academic Factors of Student Dropout

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D
Academic Factor	43	2.17	4.50	3.51	0.520
Missing Value	0				
Total	43				

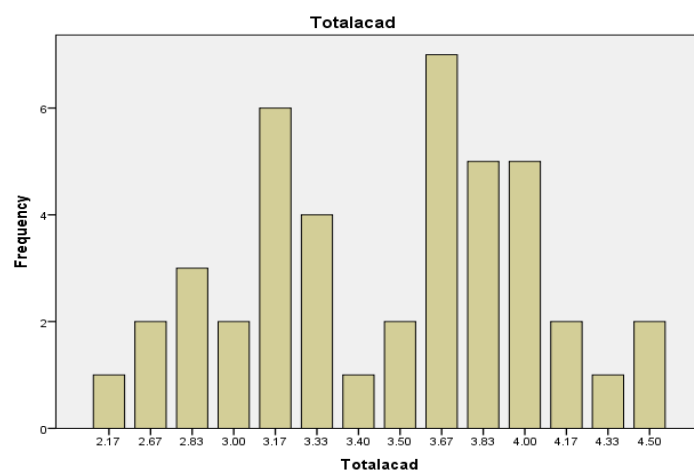


Figure 2. Distribution of Academic Factor Scores

Table 2 and Fig. 2 showed the descriptive statistics for computed variables of academic factors of students’ dropout at the university level. Data were obtained from 43 valid participants, with no missing values. The mean score for the academic factors was 3.51, with a standard deviation (SD) of 0.520, indicating that respondents generally rated academic factors as moderately high. Scores ranged from 2.17 to 4.50, showing a relatively narrow distribution around the mean.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Non-Academic Factors of Student Dropout

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D
Non-Academic Factor	43	2.33	4.50	3.58	0.532
Missing Value	0				
Total	43				

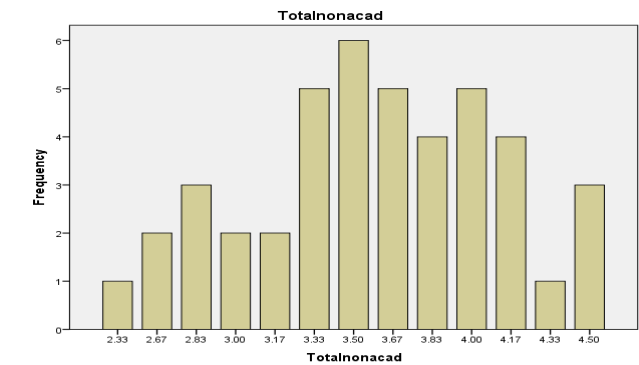


Figure 3. Distribution of Non-Academic Factor Scores

Table 3 and Fig. 3 showed the descriptive statistics for computed variables of non-academic factors of students’ dropout at the university level. The analysis was conducted on 43 participants, with no missing values. The mean score for the non-academic factors was 3.58, with a standard deviation (SD) of 0.532, indicating that respondents generally rated non-academic factors as moderately high. Scores ranged from 2.33 to 4.50, showing a relatively narrow distribution around the mean.

Qualitative Research: Research Questions

1. In your opinion, what is the most significant reason for students’ dropout?

Theme: Lack of Interest, Finance, Social and Academic Factors

Table 4. Themes Related to the Most Significant Reasons for Student Dropout

Theme	Category	Code	Transcript
Lack of interest, Finance, Social and Academic Factor	Personal and Academic, Peer interaction. Social engagement,	Poor support, Peer engagement, low motivation, Scholarship	Teachers gave comments on all these issues randomly. Students feel free, and they engage in social interaction. Financial issues, traditional teaching, Social responsibilities and family conditions, and ‘Not capable of studying at graduate level’.

Theme: dropout signifies that the categories of lack of interest, financial, social, and academic factors play a large role in dropout of students at university level. Students’ interactions and friendships also remained a major factor in dropout. Students’ financial issues and traditional teaching were other non-academic factors in dropout. University administrations should take measures to minimize these dropout reasons. (Table 4)

2. What specific strategies would you suggest to reduce dropout rates at the university level?

Theme: Parent, Support Program, Scholarship, Pedagogy, Admission Policy

Table 5. Themes and Strategies for Reducing Student Dropout

Theme	Category	Code	Transcript
Parents Support, Scholarship, Pedagogy, Psychological support	Awareness, wellbeing, Finance, Teacher Training	Educate parents, mental health, increase financial aid, revised curriculum and PD of teachers	Parents should give incentives to educate them. Mental health seminars are required to be organized. Revision of curriculum as per HEC policy and professional development of teachers is also required.

Theme: There are some specific strategies that can reduce the dropout rates of students at university level. Parental support, scholarships, and psychological support may be helpful in reducing the dropout rate at university level. Teamwork (teachers, HoDs, and administration) and collaboration can help in decreasing the dropout level of students. (Table 5)

Findings

From the results, the researcher found the following: -

1. From the demographics, it was found that 43 faculty teachers participated.
2. Out of the respondents, 21 were male 48.8% and 22 were female 51.2%.
3. Teachers from nine different departments participated in the research.
4. Out of the sample, 19 were lecturers, 18 were assistant professors, 4 were associate professors, and 2 were professors.
5. Regarding job experience, teachers having job experience of 16+ years were 22, which was 51.2% of the whole sample.
6. From Table 2, it was found that the mean score for academic factors as a cause of students' dropout was 3.51, and the standard deviation (SD) was 0.52, which generally indicates that academic factors favor dropout.
7. It was found from Table 3 that the value of the mean score for the non-academic factors remained 3.58, whereas the standard deviation (SD) for this factor was 0.532, which shows that the majority of the participants agreed that non-academic factors play an important role in the dropout of students.
8. While discussing the open-ended questions in qualitative research, it was found that, through establishing different themes, financial issues, social and students' friendships, academic factors, poor academic background, and an inaccurate field of study remained the prominent factors held responsible for students' dropout.
9. Regarding the strategies to reduce the dropout of students as discussed in theme 2 of the open-ended question, parents' support, pedagogy, scholarships, and psychological support.

Discussion

To uplift the education standard is the will of every nation. Every educational system strives to bring and promote the education standard of its nation. The higher the standard of education of a nation, the more the country will prosper. To develop and nourish, there are some factors that should be considered. Pakistan, being a developing country, has faced numerous difficulties. At the time of independence, the literacy rate of Pakistan was only 4%, and that was alarming to compete with the world. Since then, educationists, by following the policies of the sitting government, approved and initiated different policies along with setting some targets. There remained two major factors due to which the literacy rate could not achieve its target. Shortage of allocation of funds and their true implementation by the government.

In the true implementation of educational policies and achieving targets, there are certain hurdles and obstacles. Presently, Pakistan has only a 63% literacy rate, which is much lower as compared to other countries. Along with other reasons for the low literacy rate, student dropout is one of the main reasons for the low literacy rate. Zarif, (2012) has stated some statistics about children out of school. According to him, the dropout rate in elementary education is 33%, but it is 73% at the secondary level, which includes primary education. According to the data collected by him, 10.6 million pupils attend approximately 54,000 public schools in Punjab. About half of those 8 million enrolled children in 38,000 elementary schools drop out of the educational system before entering primary school, and the primary school dropout rate is about 50%. One reason for the declining literacy rate is children being out of school. Meraz (1983) has highlighted that preschool children must attend school, but in the real world, it is not happening.

From the theoretical framework of the study, dropout factors of students studying at higher levels are different compared to children at the primary and elementary levels. According to the model of social integration elaborated by Tinto (1993), which focused on two factors, academic and social integration within the university, these factors accelerate students' dropout at the higher level. The other model presented by Bean (1983) discusses the non-academic factors for students' dropout.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following was concluded by the researcher: -

1. Male and female teachers equally showed a positive attitude in sharing their views about dropout of students at the higher education level.
2. It was concluded that academic factors play an important role in the dropout of students at the higher education level.
3. Academic factors include curriculum, pedagogy, teachers' relationship with students, and the system of examination; all of these have a positive relationship with dropout of students at the higher level.
4. Non-academic factors like students' relationship with peers, financial issues, parents' involvement, lack of physical facilities, and social and institutional pressure are all positively connected with the dropout of students at the university level.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following are some recommendations that may be beneficial to educators and researchers related to the field of education.

1. A detailed interview may be conducted, and it is recommended that a questionnaire be filled out by the board to keep a personal record of the student.
2. Financial status may be noted at the time of the interview, so that the dropout rate can be minimized.

3. More focus is required to be paid to academic and non-academic factors as indicated by Tinto's (1983) and Bean's Integrated model of student dropout.
4. The choice of student may be considered for the respective field of study.
5. An open discussion can be arranged for students for whom the selection board feels some doubt regarding the student's personal and socio-economic condition.
6. Mentoring and counselling sessions may be arranged for the new students frequently at the departmental as well as university level.
7. Guidance sessions may be arranged for desirous students.
8. Parents can be involved to minimize the dropout cases.

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