

## AN EXPLORATION INTO THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN LOCAL SCHOOLS IN SWAT

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### Abstract

This research examines how being involved in communities can help increase the quality of education in Swat, an area of Pakistan where there are many social, political, economic and historical problems. The research demonstrates that community involvement benefits students in terms of their attendance, grades and conduct. Interviews, focus groups and observing people's activities are some of the methods used to study types of community engagement, including raising money, supplying educational resources and running after-school tutoring. Due to these community programs, Swat's schools now have more resources, so students perform better in math and English. Yet, according to the study, various obstacles exist that hinder community members from being more involved. Not everyone is involved because of financial difficulties, rules that primarily affect women and a lack of trust in the government. In rural areas, many families do not have enough money to take part in their children's school activities. Besides, when gender expectations are limiting, women face barriers to taking part in school decisions, hurting the community's ability to shape reforms in the educational system. Based on the study, organizing participation through committees like PTAs and SMCs allows families to be more involved in school matters. It proves that being actively involved in the community helps improve education in Swat. They can be helpful to those who want to change and boost education in rural and conflict areas. Should local communities handle the challenges that are shaped by society and gender, they will greatly impact the improvement of schools and provide better learning chances to all.

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## INTRODUCTION

Societal growth and development rely on education which affects many social and economic aspects and ensures the well-being of individuals. Ensuring better education is still a main issue for Pakistan and especially for rural locations such as Swat, mainly because of the area's disturbing social, political and economic factors. Most of the educational disruptions in Swat, from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, are caused by security concerns, the lack of proper facilities and gender inequality. Nevertheless, many believe that engaging the community can be a key way to improve education. Studies have demonstrated that when local communities are part of the educational process, it mostly leads to good outcomes. This leads to students performing better in school, attending regularly, retaining the knowledge they learn and developing the school as a whole (Lakum et.al , 2024). Since Swat seldom has much funding from the government or schools for education, the local communities are now seen as a strong influence in helping children succeed in school. Many publications on education recognize the significance of community participation (Mwangome, N. M. (2025)). Building such relationships between the community and school is necessary where there are not enough resources or when fewer students are attending. They stated that getting communities involved in rural Pakistan resulted in better infrastructure at schools, more available resources and increased quality of teaching. These papers show that local activities are able to keep improving education standards for students, regardless of obstacles caused by ineffective government assistance.

Still, the studies suggest that community participation is helpful, but there are not yet many specific findings related to community involvement in Swat. Most of the studies concentrate on places where community involvement has been taking place for some time. It matters a lot that this gap occurs in Swat, due to the region's lack of links, financial struggles and a violent past. Some projects support education in the community, but detailed studies on how their participation influences Swat's schools have yet to be done (Antoninis et.al, 2023). We intend to use this study to find out how community members in Swat contribute to better education and how they may overcome the challenges to attending school. This study is aimed at addressing the gap in our knowledge about how participating in the community helps improve education in Swat. Even though it's recognized that community involvement aids education, researchers have not documented the specific activities people in Swat engage in and what they achieve. It is not certain which types of parent-teacher and other community groups are most useful in improving schools and students' achievements. On top of that, little is known about the factors that get in the way of communities being more involved with local schools. The study seeks to find out how participation from members of the community supports education in Swat's schools, how it can be improved and what problems stand in the way of better cooperation between the community and schools (Hussain et.al, 2024).

The research aims to review the participation of communities in local schools in Swat, examine how it impacts student attendance, retention, performance and the growth of the schools and point out the obstacles communities meet and try to find ways around them. The study hopes to develop a thorough understanding of how engaging the community can improve education in Swat and give practical suggestions that can benefit the area's educational system. In Swat, what is the main type of participation found in schools by members of the community? How can various activities within communities influence factors such as students' continued presence in school, success and progress in

learning? Why is it hard for communities to participate in school activities and what do these communities need to overcome such problems? The questions will help identify the main weaknesses in the literature and offer practical advice for those in charge of making education policy. This study has a number of meaningful aspects. First, the research will expand the understanding of community participation in education by studying Swat, a place with important socio-political challenges. Since most of the existing research on community participation centers on advanced urban or rural areas, the findings here will illustrate how community engagement can help address various problems in Swat, including both infrastructure and local traditions. In addition, the results obtained will offer important advice for local officials, schools and community members. These findings will give important insights, assist in choosing better-suited policies and schemes and address the problems connected to participation in Swat and other regions. Moreover, outcomes from this study could guide other rural areas in Pakistan as well as in other parts of the world, where leaving students behind could be avoided by getting the community involved.

This research could lead to improvements in the education system in Swat. Because rural areas often lack government assistance, education there suffers. Given the proper resources and information, communities can be significant drivers of changes at the school level. The study hopes to demonstrate that the local community, due to its particular interests and unique background, can significantly boost local education. Based on UNESCO's findings for 2022, being involved in a community helps earn better school results and creates a feeling of ownership and duty in local stakeholders. In places like Swat, it is especially vital to have such responsibility since the people there have already shown they are capable of tackling different community problems. All in all, this research examines how community participation can help improve education at local schools in Swat. Using a qualitative method, the study will focus on finding out which types of community engagement help students learn best, address the reasons why certain communities are not involved and make suggestions for strengthening relationships between schools and communities. The research will boost the understanding of educational reform centered on communities by highlighting results found in Swat and it will give useful suggestions for both policymakers and teachers.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Supporting community involvement in education is important in creating reforms since it has proven to improve the outcomes of schooling. Community involvement generally involves communities, parents, school staff and students in making, planning and executing educational decisions. It has been found that getting communities involved improves educational quality in disadvantaged or trouble spots. Still, there are not many studies that concentrate on community participation in Swat, Pakistan. This review examines evidence from around the world and in Swat about the part community participation plays in education.

## **GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION**

It has been demonstrated in many countries that taking part in community events improves educational performance. Research conducted by Chigona and colleagues in South Africa connected household support with improved academic achievement. It was discovered that participating in their children's learning helped parents improve their children's grades and kept them from dropping out of school. Moreover, kids learned to be responsible and accountable as parents participated in school events which created a

welcoming and supportive atmosphere at the school (Mncube et.al, 2022).Furthermore, Nasir et al. (2022) focused on how communities influenced education in rural Pakistan's similar areas to Swat. The researchers discovered that when the community was involved, students retained more knowledge and achieved better results in school. Volunteers from different communities helped bridge the gaps in the education system through better allocation of resources, better managing schools and contributing volunteer time to schools. The research emphasized that communities step in and start organizing infrastructure, including schools and study centers, if the government is unable to respond to their needs (Nasir et al., 2022).Community participation is shown in the UNESCO report to increase both student results at school and their well-being. The document notes that collaboration between educators and local communities can set up inclusive schools for all. In these areas, it is usually the community members who set up campuses and offer basic learning materials, as well as psychological counseling, to students.

### **THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN CONFLICT AFFECTED AREAS**

It is particularly important for everyone in the community to join efforts in places where wars or violence have harmed the education system. As a result, some traditional education systems were broken, so these areas lack proper school buildings, underqualified teachers and learning supplies. Khan et.al,(2021) suggest that involving communities in rural Pakistan could improve social welfare there. In Swat, after violence affected the education system, people from these communities found new approaches to support learning. They set up tutoring sessions, turned available rooms into classrooms and offered financial support for the cause.According to (Hussain et.al,2025) the people of Swat significantly helped and supported the educational projects being carried out, both during and after the conflict. It was noticed that, especially in more distant areas, people in the community have made an effort to create learning spaces for children and teenagers who had been displaced and had little chance of getting an education. Many students in conflict areas have been able to keep learning because of these initiatives led by the community. It has been found that becoming a part of the local community plays a role in providing both vital infrastructure and stability for students affected by war.

### **BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION**

Although participating in the community is proven to be beneficial, effective ways of doing so are rarely achieved, especially in Swat. If there is poverty, people cannot read much or if they are not shown the value of education, the community may not become active. Additionally, because of certain socio-cultural conventions and issues related to gender, women are discouraged from joining discussions in school governance and other key decisions (Nasir et al., 2022).In Swat, some social and cultural traditions stop women from being actively involved in school or holding leadership positions. Ikram et.al,(2022) explained that taking part in politics is difficult for many rural women of Swat because of their culture and the lack of public transportation. Though women in cities are able to be involved in education programs, women from rural Swat seldom take part in decisions about their children's schooling. In addition, the violent past in Swat has made it difficult for people in the area to work closely with the government on educational activities. According to Hilman, C. (2025). many years of political turmoil and conflict have resulted in less trust in the local education system and the government's resources. As a result, people in some communities may be reluctant to participate in educational programs organized by outside authorities, as they prefer to help education through their community groups.



## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN SWAT

Though people are appreciating the role of communities in Swat, there is not much research on what actions they take and what changes are apparent from those actions. In other parts of Pakistan, involving the community and offering training to teachers has been proven to improve the attendance and grades of students (Hussain et al., 2024). In Swat, the evidence supporting these findings is less available because the education system there has been more affected. Ahmad et.al,(2024, state that the informal support networks built in Swat's schools are one reason community participation is so successful. Many times, these networks recruit local leaders, parents and others to urge school reform, make learning materials available and encourage children to get an education. These endeavors are often unorganized and informal, so it is hard to see how they affect students' educational results. Because there are few studies, we can see that more careful research on how community involvement in Swat contributes to improved education is justified.

### METHODOLOGY

The project tries to examine how community involvement can enhance the standard of education in Swat's schools. Qualitative research is chosen to hear about the views, experiences and opinions of community members, along with others, concerning how they are involved in education. For this study, cases will be selected from Swat, since the area is affected by instability, has lower enrollment rates, gender gaps and lacks adequate resources which impact education. The research will be carried out with people from the community, teachers and administrators, students and local officials. For this study, samples will be drawn from people who are directly involved in community participation in education. The researchers will gather data using interviews, FGDs, participatory observations and by studying documents. Interviews with teachers and leaders and focus groups with parents and students will provide a means of collecting different opinions. Engaging in participant observation, the researcher can observe parents, teachers and others during meetings, school functions or when volunteering. Relevant school documents and minutes will be studied to see what formal roles the community has within the school. By using thematic analysis on the collected data, patterns and trends relevant to people participating in their communities will be discovered. You will have to look into how students take part in their communities, the benefits for their schooling and any barriers to involvement. Comparing information sourced from different studies will be done using triangulation. When considering ethics, obtain permission from all people involved, guarantee their privacy and follow the local standards for including women in the research. Researchers will work with just a few schools in Swat and so the findings will only apply to those schools, but they will offer important clues about involvement in education during conflict. Overall, this study will explain how communities in Swat are involved in their schools and share meaningful ways to make community-school partnerships better and learning more successful.

### RESULTS

This study has revealed how people in Swat are involved in education in their neighborhood schools. Along with data from semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observation and an analysis of documents, the following major findings were found.

### FORMS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

In Swat, the study found there are different types of community engagement in schools which can be defined as formal or informal. Communities collaborate by forming groups such as PTAs and SMCs with school staff to manage school matters, organize fundraising

and promote the school's orderly running. Parents in urban areas are regularly involved in parent-teacher meetings which positively impact the education system. Often, members of a community choose to volunteer by teaching, organizing clubs or offering help with school repairs. Many informal efforts appear in rural communities, since the government structures cannot always reach those areas. Another aspect of community-led work is raising funds in the local community for building classrooms or providing learning materials, with the help of NGOs.

### **IMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES**

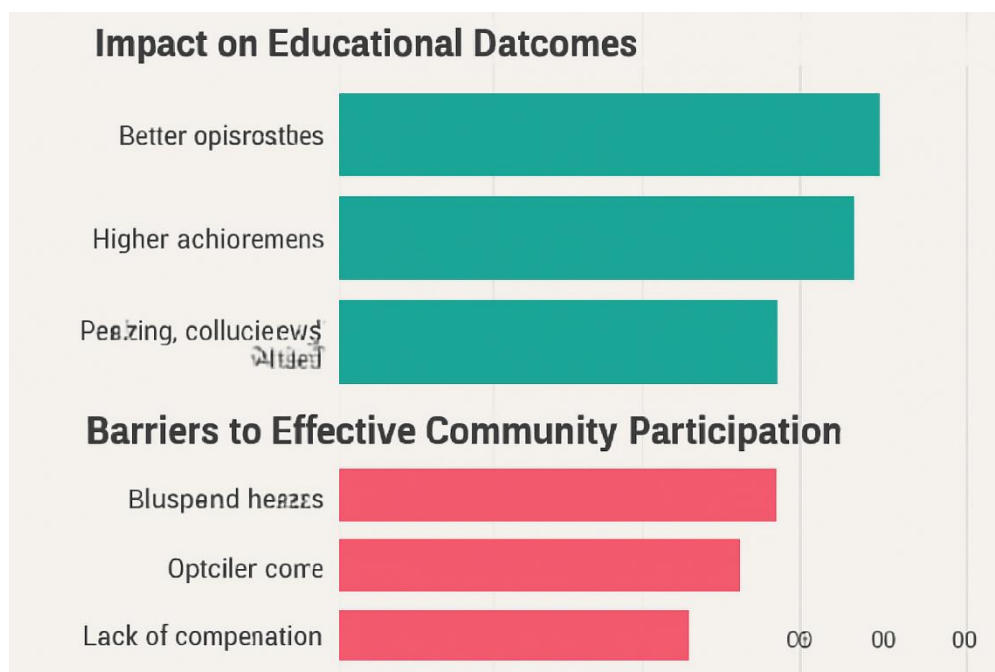
Being involved in the community was found to greatly improve student attendance and academic record. When speaking with teachers and administrators, it was determined that involved communities are linked to better attendance. Plenty of teachers reported that students behave better and improve their schoolwork when their parents are involved. In discussions with parents, it was found that they believe taking an active role in their child's education encourages them to value school and study more. Moreover, having community volunteers as tutors or help for students' homework greatly supported and enhanced their understanding of different subjects. Those schools with programs organized by the community after classes showed improvements in math and English.

### **BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

Yet, there are a few challenges preventing more people in Swat from participating in the education system. According to the study, difficulties because of income and the economy were considered the biggest barrier. Oftentimes, parents in rural regions are poor and this prevents them from taking part in school matters. A number of parents reported that, due to busy schedules and money problems, participating in school activities is not possible for them. It also became clear that gender roles were a particular problem for women. In regions where conservatism is strong in Swat, women are not involved much in decisions about schools and education for the community. According to a number of female focus group participants, they understand the role they should play, but they find it difficult because of the usual male/female roles in the village. A lack of cooperation between community members and schools was a concern identified during interviews with those in charge. Despite some efforts from the community, a lack of a regular connection platform prevents schools and the community from building lasting partnerships. School leaders that formal ways for involving the community should be established for greater sustainability and consistency in their engagement stressed it.

### **SUCCESS STORIES OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

There were plenty of examples where people in communities helped make great changes. In one such school, a local leader provided the community an opportunity for everyone to donate books and educational supplies. Along with tutoring, it encouraged more students to learn and made lessons easier for them to follow. When a PTA made repairs to the roof and increased classroom lighting, it resulted in a much better place to study. It was also found that the groups had a bigger effect when working hand-in-hand with the community. Thanks to NGO involvement, resources were gathered, children and adults were trained and special education programs were set up for the community. The programs provided learning opportunities and helped develop the community, allowing them to participate more in their children's education.



**DISCUSSIONS**

Results from this study highlighted both advantages and disadvantages of involving the community in School quality in Swat. It was found that when communities are engaged, students achieve better results in school. It has been repeatedly found in past studies that when parents and other community members participate in education, both performance and behavior of students tend to improve while their attendance increases. Studies from different parts of the globe demonstrate that community involvement is useful in Iraq and leads to improved student attendance and performance in Swat schools (Murtaza et.al,2021). Reports from schools in Swat indicated that students from involved families earned better grades and got more involved in schoolwork. This suggests that being part of a community positively affects a student’s growth in education and social life. In addition, it is important to note how the community helps to improve schools. In Swat, schools located in rural areas have to deal with inadequate buildings and a lack of important resources. Based on the study, community activities like fundraising for schools and providing learning materials helped resolve the lack of resources. Rojas and Mendez (2023) also point out that in places where funding from the government is lacking, local activities can go a long way to fix problems and improve education settings. Furthermore, getting involved with the community led to after-school tutoring which greatly improved students’ understanding, mainly in math and English.

Nevertheless, some problems still prevent people in Swat from taking part in community activities. It identified economic problems as the primary source of difficulties in the field. A lot of people living in Swat find it challenging to assist their children at school because of poverty. The study’s result agrees with Baker et al. (2019), who discovered that difficulties in finances are a major obstacle for parents in economically weaker areas to participate in their children’s education. Since families face tight financial situations and must ensure needs are met, sending children to school is not always a priority. The concept of gender roles stands in the way of many people from Swat contributing to their community. The social norms in certain areas prevent rural women from participating in educational activities. According to Singh and Kaur (2017), in many conservative societies, women tend not to take part in educational policy-making, making it harder for them to

assist their children with learning. In Swat, it is clear that women living in rural communities have issues with gender limits, lack of mobility and difficulty entering public spaces. Since women are not as active in these forums as men, the community does not fully realize its ability to bring change to education.

In addition, the violent history in Swat has caused people here to doubt the educational officials. The uncertainty and conflict in years past have caused people to doubt any government-backed educational projects. Most residents in a community find grassroots approaches more useful than regular educational programs, as they are better suited to local situations. Memon, G. R. (2007) explains that when trust is lacking between the government and local communities after a conflict, educational plans are often less successful because they choose local solutions rather than those managed by the government. Even so, many success stories highlight how taking part in community activities can boost education in Swat. It is clear that initiatives such as providing books, making repairs at schools and organizing after-school programs demonstrate that local communities have a strong influence on education. They have changed the way students learn and encouraged the community to become more responsible. According to Epstein (2018), including parents in school activities increases the community's feeling of responsibility for success in the school. Also, NGOs have supported community involvement by helping the community and the school work together. Such organizations have supplied tools, arranged training and set up chances for parents and others to engage school staff. Local communities and NGOs have successfully addressed resource problems in Swat, thanks to the approach noted in Smith et al.'s research. The partnerships have allowed the community to address problems in education which has resulted in better results for students.

The investigation found that following a more defined approach to community participation might result in better educational outcomes in Swat. In order for participation to be easy, schools should regularly communicate with people from the community. If education authorities include women and obtain needed funds through community support, it could boost educational change in the community. This matches the guidelines issued by UNICEF in 2021, urging schools to work together with the community to help students in rural places reach better educational standards. Overall, this study shows that community involvement is significant for bettering education in Swat, even though the area experiences various socio-political challenges. Engaging local communities in education has resulted in improved academic scores for students and added improvements to schools and their equipment. Nevertheless, making sure citizens are free from financial troubles, gender bias and past disagreements is necessary for a thriving community. Once the obstacles are tackled, Swat's schools will be able to create lasting partnerships with local people which will lead to better education for students. The research results benefit Swat schools and also propose support for enhancing learning in other rural and conflict-impacted communities through community participation.

## **THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The study's theoretical points also cover many issues and explain how community involvement influences the achievement of students in rural Pakistan. First, the research improves the theories behind how communities can play a role in schooling. According to Epstein (2018) and Henderson and Mapp (2002), studies in the past looked at cities and stable rural regions, where the community was supported by both governmental and non-governmental initiatives. It applies the aforementioned theories by exploring how



community involvement functions when there is conflict, financial challenges and restrictions related to culture in the area. The difficulties felt by communities in Swat reveal the ups and downs of engaging in community activities without outside help.

Additionally, the study opposes the idea that the state alone determines the improvement of the education system. Based on the study's findings, local communities can make important contributions to improved outcomes in schools. This is supported by Nasir et al. (2022), who believe that efforts conducted by the community produce better results than those led by the government in impoverished places. Besides, the research points out that gender must be considered in education community involvement theories. This research proves that the involvement of women in communities is often blocked by gendered barriers not considered in many existing theories. It indicates that the theory should consider how gender roles play a part, mainly in conservative or areas that have experienced conflicts. Furthermore, this study increases understanding of trust and the role of governance in schools. This study reveals a new connection between conflict history and changes in Swat's government which adds to Jones' (2020) argument that governmental reforms in education are linked to the political and historical background. Journals and research papers have neglected the role of historical trauma and political turmoil in reforms to education.

## **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

For real world purposes, this study gives important advice to those who wish to improve education in Swat and analogous areas. As a result, communities should have access to formal and structured opportunities to be involved in decisions about schools. It notes that it is important to regularly connect school authorities with parents and local stakeholders. This would help schools receive input from the community and include those ideas in their practices and policies. Forming PTAs and SMCs gives all stakeholders, including parents and teachers, a way to work together and support continuous changes in schools. It also highlights that attending events can be costly, so efforts should be made to eliminate these barriers in Swat and communities like it. Many people in families are unable to take part in educational programs because they lack the necessary funds. If local people work on funding and use local NGOs to share resources, it can ease the barrier of resources. Small rewards or stipends for community volunteers may convince more people to become part of volunteer activities.

Another practical issue that arose was the unequal treatment based on gender. This issue can be resolved by introducing gender-balanced laws at both local and school levels. Promoting the educational decision-making role of women could involve training, workshops on leadership and including them in school board responsibilities. Addressing challenges that only allow some people to attend school in rural areas benefits all by using the skills of influential women within households. Local governments ought to ensure that relationships of trust are built between the local communities and the education authorities. Because of historical conflicts, people in some countries do not trust their government to provide quality education. Authorities in local education should be honest, initiate school projects with the community and make tangible progress to help rebuild trust. Collaborating with non-governmental groups could address the issue, since people often trust them more than the government. NGOs are able to provide resources and bring together schools and communities. Lastly, as Swat is a conflict-affected region, the kind of education reform chosen should consider its needs. Using mobile classrooms or support programs in the evening is one way to ensure rural students' education is not disrupted. As

a result, education would continue to be accessible and able to handle various social-political issues.

## CONCLUSION

The importance of people in the community for improving learning opportunities in Swat has been explained in this study. The research shows that when a community is involved, there are better results in student attendance, their performance at school and their behavior. Initiatives driven by the community, hence fundraising for repairs at school, donating study materials and providing tutoring, have resolved the lack of resources at school and made learning easier there. Thanks to these efforts, students are performing better in math and English. Nonetheless, some things still stop the community from fully engaging in Swat. The main problem is financial hardship, since it stops many families from providing food and other services, so children cannot do extracurricular activities. Moreover, because of traditional gender roles in rural areas, women are prevented from participating in educational decision-making which affects the entire community. Earlier research similarly suggests that finances and the unequal treatment of genders hinder involvement of parents and communities in education. The fact that communities have often lacked faith in government due to disagreements has also caused schools and communities to not cooperate. Nevertheless, structuring participation in education through PTAs and SMCs could encourage people to be more involved on a regular basis. Also, funding certain initiatives and providing opportunities for women to join in on how a community is governed can help involve more members of the community. All things considered, while participating in the community has been beneficial so far in Swat, working on socio-economic and gender problems will improve its sustainability. According to the study, getting the community involved is important in schools located in underserved areas.

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