The Effect of Cultural, Social and Economic Factors on Students Persistence Rate in Rural Areas in Fenouj from the Perspective of Teachers

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Abstract

This study sought to investigate the factors affecting student persistence rate in education in Fenouj, Iran from the perspective of teachers. This was a descriptive-survey study. Based on Cochran sampling formula, 224 teachers (57 female and 167 male teachers) were selected as the study sample using random-stratified sampling technique. The results showed that from the perspective of teachers, cultural, social and economic factors play a large role in the student persistence rate in rural areas. Recognition and pathology of cultural, social and economic factors can increase persistence rate and reduce the dropout rate in rural areas.

Keywords: Cultural, Social and Economic Factors; Persistence Rate in Education; Rural Students, Fenouj County.
**Introduction and Statement of the problem**

Entry to school is the starting point for continuous movement on the path of education; however, along such a way, some factors result in a slow movement of students on the path of education or dropout from school. Academic failure whose obvious manifestation is academic dropout, grade repetition and drop from school has an adverse and irreparable effects on the personal and social life of humans every year in addition to wasting a lot of financial and human resources of the community. An initial investigation indicates that Iranian education system has not experienced the desired success to accomplish these objectives. This lack of success has often occurred as grade repetition, early dropout and learning failure and directly or indirectly make damages on the economic and social sectors of the society, families and students and has totally faced internal and external efficiency of educational system with shortcomings. These losses will be more in the periods imposing high cost per capita on education (Javanbakht, 2014).

Persistence rate in education which is one of the factors determining the internal efficiency of an educational system indicates an educational system in students’ retention. To calculate the persistence rate in each educational grade, the whole dropout in each educational grade is subtracted from the total students in the same grade and the result is divided by the whole students who have been in the first grade. For instance, if the persistence rate per year is 6.3 in the primary curriculum i.e. it has lasted for 6.3 years other than 5 years as a result, it can be said that the more the obtained figure is larger, its interpretation is that the longer the educational course is and the lower the curriculum internal efficiency will be (Demitro and Sybrsky, 2010). Several factors can affect student’s persistence rate. They can be classified into four factors of individual, family, school and environmental ones (Taheri et al., 2010). The most important factors can be categorized into internal factors referring to educational system and school and external (social and family causes) factors for dropout and decrease in persistence rate in education in Iran; however, they do not have a clear boundary and can have overlapping with each other (Rahbarinejad, 2011). Despite of the fact that intelligence and talent are the important and decisive factors for learning, academic achievement, and academic persistence, other factors are important and effective as well among which motivational beliefs can be mentioned. Motivation is an internal process enabling, guiding, and preserving behavior over time. Students with learning motivation use higher cognitive processes in learning. Two general types of motivation including internal and external motivations are ariased for learning and progression. People are externally motivated when they do an action to receive rewards or avoid punishment. In contrast, motivation is internal when people successfully do a task for internal willingness. Motivational beliefs are a host of personal and social criteria that people use to perform an action. These beliefs involve criteria on individuals’ argument to select procedures of task and are affected by the consequences resulted from behavior, identification with others and other factors and may change in different situations; however, there are many factors affecting students’ motivational beliefs (Taheri et al., 2000).

As a native teacher in Fenouj, the researcher has closely observed rural students dropout. Thus, he sought to identify factors influencing the persistence rate of these students so that he can provide practical suggestions and their application to the relevant authorities and can formulate plans and strategies to enhance the persistence rate of rural students. So the main...
issue of this research is to identify the factors that increase the persistence rate of rural students in Fenouj.

**Review of the related literature**
The results of the study by Niaz Azeri (2012) showed that freshness, vitality, gender, and socioeconomic status of the family are effective in educational planning, especially high school students’ academic achievement and prevention of school failure and dropout which lead to decreased persistence rate among students.
The results of the study by Muhammad Ali-Zadeh et al (2012) suggest that promotion rate among female students is more than that among male students in the school. The performance of students in the city has always been better than rural students; consequently, the persistence rate among urban students is higher than those in rural areas.
In their study, Ahmadi and Yousefi (1391) found that motivation variables play a fundamental role in students’ decision to continue or drop out of school and that these variables are reinforced in the classroom by the teacher support of high perceived value of education; however, it is weakened through the strict control on the part of the teacher and low perceived value of education.
The results of the studies conducte by Aghdasi and Zainalfam (2011), Asgari (2003), Naderi Boldaji (2002), Sakha’ii (2003), Mohseni (2000), Motahari (2002), Amjadian and Seyyedi (2001), Sultani (1996), Seif ( 1999), Torkashvand (1997), Mehran (2003), Motamedian and Mousavi (1991) and Anzabi (1993), Husseini (1996), and Mc Millen et al., 2007 showed that Factors affecting grade repetition and school dropout of students in the first grade of secondary school include the loss of parents, family and cultural and educational poverty, teachers’ inability to control the class, lack of educational space, increase in the density of students in the class, family problems such as addiction, divorce, etc., large number of children in the family, lack of teachers’ attention to poor students, students’ lack of interest in the first grade of secondary curriculum as well as factors such as poor nutrition, lack of mother or father, cultural poverty and lack of education in the family, lack of continuous auditing of students’ assignments, teachers lack of communication and appropriate behavior.
The results of the research by Mbuva (2011) emphasis on the methods to help students develop in them the desire for retention in school. Their research also revealed that employees who focus on the students' educational needs, increase student retention and positive attitude.
The results of the study by Salyns (2010) indicated that government-sponsored vocational-technical high schools in new residential areas are the first and the most basic place for the education and socialization of students in order to prepare them for college and job market.
The results of the study by Bernie and Osman (2009) suggests that the efficiency of the public education system in Kuwait was low during the analysis and high rate of grate repetition in all school grades was high; therefore, persistence rate was low.
In his study, Tinto (2008) showed that research, practice, and exploration are essential needs of students. They are related to the issue of organizational behavior program and that fight to promote the success of students with low financial income continues because economic problems reduce persistence rate.
Rumberger (2001) considered students’ rank in the classroom and his grade as the main predictors of school dropout.
The results of the research carried out by Chow (2003) on the situation of children at risk of school dropout, negative experiences with the students, teachers and school principal, personal problems and negative experiences with other students in the school environment and the feeling of loneliness among lower class students were mentioned as the most important causes of school dropout.

Janoz and others (2007) showed that the performance and behavior of school constitute important dimensions of school dropouts. They expressed the cultural gap as one of the factors of dropout, namely in areas where the gap is more, it is most likely for dropout to happen in those areas.

In another study, Wells (1989) emphasized the effect of school internal factors on school dropout. The researcher concluded that the structure and size of educational departments can be influential in the arbitrary dropout of students. Weakness in relations between teacher and student, teacher specialized in the subjects, negative growth in self-value among the minority students can be effective in their dropout.

Research questions
According to the above-mentioned points, this study aimed to answer the following research questions.

1. Do cultural, social and economic factors play any role in the persistence of rural students in Fenouj city?
2. What is the rating of each of the factors affecting the persistence of rural students in Fenouj city?

Methodology
Given the nature of the issue and objectives, the research is a descriptive survey study. This study examines the current status and regularly and systematically addresses its current state. It also studies its features and characteristics and, if necessary, examines the relationship between the variables (Delaware, 2010).

The statistical population included all teachers in Fenouj in the school year of 2014-15 who were employed in rural areas of the county. According to the Department of Education in Fenouj, they are of 537 persons (401 males and 136 females). Given that the size of the population of male and female teachers were not the same, random stratified sampling technique and based on Cochran's formula, 224 teachers (57 female teachers and 167 male teachers) were studied as the study sample. To collect data, the researcher-made questionnaire of the factors affecting persistence rate and continuing education of rural students was used. The questionnaire had 35 items and 7 factors: cultural (items 1 to 5), Family (items 6 to 10), individual (items 11 to 15), economic (items 16 to 20), social (items 21 to 25), school (items 26 to 30) and environmental factors (items 31 to 35). The whole questionnaire was set in a five-point Likert scale from very high (5) to very low (1). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability whose amount for the entire questionnaire was obtained as 0.84 and 0.776, 0.837, 0.725, 0.836, 0.802, 0.788, and 0.807 for each factor, respectively. The content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by the Faculty of Educational Science and Psychology, University of Sistan and Baluchistan who had expertise in the field of the research. To analyze the data, one sample t-test and Friedman test was used in SPSS software v.21.
Demographic characteristics of the study sample
A total of 224 teachers were investigated in the present study whose demographic characteristics are given in terms of gender; marital status; level of education; work experience and employment status. Table 1 shows these indicators:

**Table 1:** demographic characteristics of the participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Associate degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>Less than 10 years</td>
<td>10-20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 10 years</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above than 20 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Status</td>
<td>Official</td>
<td>Contractual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research findings

**Question 1:** What is the role of cultural, social and economic factors in the persistence of rural students in Fenouj city from the perspective of teachers?
To answer this question, one-sample t-test was used. The results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** One sample t-test report of the factors in students’ persistence and continuing their school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SEM</th>
<th>d.f</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural factors</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>0.853</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>21.93</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social factors</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.12</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic factors</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.881</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.30</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the results of the above table, the value of t for all the factors examined are significant at the level of less than 0.01. So with more than 99% of level of confidence, it can be stated that from the perspective of teachers, all factors involved in persistence and continuing school are important. However, the role of social factor is more than other factors and the role of economic factor is less than other factors in persistence rate.

**Question 2:** What is the ranking of each of the factors affecting the persistence of rural students in Fenouj city?
To answer this question, Friedman test was used. The results are shown in Table 3.
Table 3: Friedman test for ranking factors in students’ persistence and continuing their school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Average ranks</th>
<th>Chi-square statistic</th>
<th>Level of freedom</th>
<th>Level of significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factors for persistence in and continuing eduction</td>
<td>Social factors</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>143.208</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural factors</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic factors</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the results of the above table, factors of students’ persistence and continuing school in order of rank are: social factor (with an average rating of 3.83), cultural factor (with an average rating od 4.01), and economic factors (with an average rating of 3.4).

Discussion and conclusion

Based on the results, the average social factors was 4.23 with a standard deviation of 0.77. t-value is significant for all social factors at the level of less than 0.01 which means that from the perspective of teachers, all components of social factor i.e. the equal distribution of educational opportunities for girls and boys, continuing education by most children in the area, preventing girls from early marriage, lack of prejudice to girls' education under the supervision of male teachers, the relationship between education and social status for a person in the future play a role in persistence in and continuing education for students. This is consistent with the results of the previous studies. For instance, the studies by Askari (2003) and Sakha’ii (2003) indicated that the prevention of early marriage causes the persistence in and continuing education of students, especially girls. The study by Dashkhaneh (2003) conducted in six provinces (Kohgilouye, Fars, Kurdistan, Isfahan, Ilam and Sistan-Baluchestan) in the country showed that there is a difference between girls and boys on the accessment to educational opportunities which is in the field of more deprivation of girls in comparison with that of boys. Also, studies reveal that most of today's students do not only consider education as an opportunity for further learning but also deem it as a means for achieving social and material objectives. As a result, such approach causes little interest of students believing that education has no much suitable impact on employment and the future life in lesson and their lower academic motivation (Taheri et al., 2010). To imagine having a career in the future that have a social value increases students’ self-esteem, on the contrary, if a given community tells its individuals that it does not need them and their employment is not possible, a sense of doubt and frustration and low self-esteem and amotivationa will be created in them (Turk et al., 2004). Based on the results, the mean cultural factors was 4.25 with the standard deviation of 0.853. t-value for all cultural factors are significant at less than 0.01 which means that from the perspective of the teachers, all the components of cultural factor i.e. the existence of a public library or school or mosque in the village, villagers’ access to newspapers and periodicals, the Internet, the existence of reading culture among family and village, positive attitude to education and literacy and impartiality of local residents to continue the education of girls have an impact on the persistence and continuing the education of the students. The study by Salsabili and Ghasemi (2005) shows that factors such as cultural deprivation resulted from traditional values and old and
cumbersome customs, especially for female dropouts, poverty of social and cultural literacy, and lack of value for science, cultural gap, ill-equipped media and communication have an impact on academic failure and school dropout. Cultural factors and social conditions and the motivation of students is remarkable in this regard.

To imagine having a career in the future that have a social value increases students’ self-esteem, on the contrary, if a given community tells its individuals that it does not need them and their employment is not possible, a sense of doubt and frustration and low self-esteem and amotivation will be created in them (Turk et al., 2004). Based on the results, the mean on economic factors was 4.08 with the standard deviation of 0.881. t-value for all economic factors are significant at less than 0.01 which means that from the perspective of the teachers, all the components of the economic factors i.e. appropriate economic and financial status of parents, lack of need for families to child labor, the ability of families to provide books, and other office stationery, employment opportunities for educated people in the region, lake of the availability of career fields and working environment for child are involved in persistence and continuing the education of students. The results of the study by Torkashvain (1997), which examined the role of career fields in dropout of middle school students in the Osh远离 mel village, Toiserkan, Hamadan shows the availability of career fields and working environment for young people is the factor for dropout of school in the village. Macmillan and Kaufman's study (2007) showed that dropouts are more form families with low income. The results of this study show that students from low-income families of 20 percent of the population usually doubles the chances of quitting of their studies compared to the families with incomes above 20 percent of the population. In other words, socio-economic status of the family is inversely related to dropout. Students who had the most dropout, came from families that had low income (Zablocki and Krezmien, 2013).

Based on the results, the average social factors were 4.23 with a standard deviation of 0.77. Also, the value of t for all social factors are significant at less than 0.01/ which means that from the perspective of the teachers, all the components of the social factor i.e. equal distribution of education for girls and boys, continuing education of most children in the area, preventing girls from early marriage, lack of prejudice to girls' education under the supervision of male teachers, the relationship between education, and social situations in the future play a role in continuing education of students. This finding is consistent with the findings of previous studies. For instance, studies by Askari (2003) and Sakha’ii (2003) indicate that prevention of early marriage results in continuing education of students, especially girls. The study by Dashkhaneh (2003) conducted in six provinces (Kohgilouye, Fars, Kurdistan, Isfahan, Ilam and Sistan-Baluchestan) in the country showed that there is a difference between girls and boys on the accessment to educational opportunities which is in the field of more deprivation of girls in comparision with that of boys. Also, studies show that most of today's students do not look at education as an opportunity for further learning, but as a means to accomplish material and social objectives, as a result of such an attitude, students who believe that education does not have any effect on future life does not, have little interest in school and have lower academic motivation (Taheri et al., 2010). To imagine having a career in the future that have a social value increases students’ self-esteem, on the contrary, if a given community tells its individuals that it does not need them and their employment is not possible, a sense of doubt and frustration and low self-esteem and amotivation will be created in them (Turk et al., 2004).
Education process in every society is realized in the context of the education system. One of the most controversial issues that often grappling with it all global educational systems is the issue of dropout that imposes a significant portion of the annual budget, manpower and wastes facilities and brings about unpleasant psychological effects on students. It also creates numerous difficulties for the family (Azadyekta, 2012). Like many developing or developed countries, educational system of our country faces with failure and dropout issue (Ghasemi, Hasanvand and Valizadeh, 2014) and the issue of dropouts in rural areas of Balochistan is important. Accordingly, the identification of factors affecting the persistence and continuing the education of this group of children will be very significant. In so doing, this research aimed to investigate the factors affecting persistence and continuing education of rural students from the perspective of teachers of schools in the academic year of 2015-16 in Fenouj. The findings revealed that cultural, economic and social factors can affect the persistence and continuous education of rural students.

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