

A Study to Explore: Gender Inequality in Education in Flood-Affected Area, Naseerabad, Balochistan

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ABSTRACT

Education is a universal human right and an engine of social and economic advancement. Though in disaster-afflicted regions like Naseerabad, Balochistan, floods exacerbate pre-existing gender inequality, restricting girls' exposure to education and protection. This research investigates the ways that how gender disparity in education is expressed in disaster-afflicted regions and the community and policy responses to these issues. With a qualitative exploratory design, data were gathered using semi-structured interviews and document analysis of the policies; Balochistan Education plan, (2020-2025) and National Educational Policy (2007). A thematic examination was done by using Braun and Clarke's (2006) outline, to identify major trends regarding the infrastructure-related issues, sociocultural constraints and financial problems, hampering girls' education. Findings indicate floods worsen already existing disparities, with girls' experiencing increased dropout risks due to insecure school settings, mobility restrictions and economic difficulties. Despite the emphasis on inclusiveness by national and regional policies, discrepancies exist in their implementation and community outreach. The research calls for the gender-sensitive disaster preparedness, secure and accessible education and focused scholarships that guarantee the continuation of education for girls' during emergencies scenarios.

Keywords: Gender Inequality, education in emergencies, Balochistan, flood-affected regions, thematic analysis, document analysis

INTRODUCTION

One of the most urgent challenges facing global development is the persistent barriers that prevent girls from accessing education during emergencies and conflicts. Out of the 222 million children living in crisis conditions worldwide, approximately 118 million are girls (UNICEF, 2021). Many have already dropped out of school, while countless others remain at risk due to armed conflict, political instability, or climate-induced disasters. Research shows that a primary-school-age girl living in a crisis-affected area is 35% more likely to be out of school than a boy in the same context. This gap is significantly higher than the global average, where 7% of boys and 9% of girls are out of school (UNICEF, 2021). Girls' education in crisis and emergency contexts is shaped by multiple, intersecting vulnerabilities. According to UNICEF (2021), girls affected by natural disasters or conflict are 2.5 times more likely than boys to miss

school, and their chances of completing secondary education decline sharply as crises persist. Similarly, the Global Education Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2020) highlights that 20% of girls in crisis regions are out of school compared to 16% of boys a disparity that widens with age. These inequalities reinforce cycles of poverty, early marriage, and gender-based violence, impeding women's long-term empowerment and participation in public life (Plan International, 2019; UNICEF, 2020). Despite modest progress, humanitarian aid for education remains insufficient. The share of education in total aid rose from 1% in 2014 to only 2.9% in 2019—far below global needs (Hoiland-Carlsen & Naborri, 2023). Economic shocks from the COVID-19 pandemic and rising inflation have further reduced funding for girls' education. Budget constraints on both international and national levels have heightened exclusion risks for girls in vulnerable circumstances. The urgency for targeted, gender-sensitive strategies to safeguard educational access for girls in conflict and disaster contexts has never been greater. The consequences of disrupted education extend beyond the classroom. Emergencies often cause displacement, institutional breakdown, and the collapse of protective systems, leaving girls more exposed to gender-based violence, exploitation, and early marriage (CARE, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, widespread poverty forced many low-income families into arranging early marriages as a survival strategy, further curtailing girls' education (Boost, Jones, & Kwauk, 2020). In recent years, several "women-friendly states" have advanced global gender equality through policies emphasizing women's leadership and participation in peacebuilding and development. Evidence shows that women's involvement in peace negotiations and political processes leads to more sustainable and inclusive settlements (Laing, 2023; Krause et al., 2018). Major international milestones such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (2000) established the foundation for recognizing women's rights globally (Davies & True, 2019). Subsequent initiatives, including the Sustainable Development Goals—particularly SDG 5 on gender equality—have integrated gender mainstreaming into national and international development agendas (True & Mintrom, 2001). However, progress is hindered by enduring informal norms and unwritten social expectations. Acker (2006) described these as "inequality mandates," deep-rooted cultural structures that maintain gender stereotypes and limit women's advancement, often leading to prejudice and violence against women and gender-diverse groups. Field experiences highlight the importance of sustaining education access during crises. In flood-affected areas, community members have persistently urged humanitarian agencies to ensure ongoing educational support, demonstrating the essential role education plays in recovery and resilience-building (Karpińska et al., 2012). Climate change remains a critical factor exacerbating these crises. The UNFCCC defines it as a change in climate directly or indirectly linked to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere (Usman et al., 2024). Increasingly frequent floods, droughts, and extreme weather events have intensified social and economic challenges, particularly for women. Flooding, one of the most severe manifestations of climate change, disrupts livelihoods, displaces communities, and magnifies gender disparities (Mishra et al., 2022; Tabari, 2021). According to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA, 2024), the 2022 floods in Pakistan affected over 33 million people and damaged more than one million homes. Women and children were the most vulnerable.

They faced disrupted access to education, healthcare, and sanitation; experienced gender-based violence in relief camps; and suffered from malnutrition and post-traumatic stress (Abro et al., 2023). Pregnant and lactating women were at particular risk, highlighting the urgent need for gender-responsive disaster planning. Education, however, remains both a right and a necessity in these contexts. Enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, education is essential for restoring stability and rebuilding communities. Historically, it has been treated as secondary during emergencies, but this perception is changing. The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) set the

first “Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies” in 2004, while the Global Education Cluster was formed in 2006 to improve coordination and preparedness in crisis education (INEE, 2004; Save the Children, 2009). These frameworks have transformed the humanitarian approach, making education a central pillar of emergency response. The INEE emphasizes that quality education “saves lives” by providing physical protection and safe learning spaces that reduce the risk of exploitation, recruitment into armed groups, and other forms of harm (INEE, 2004). Women are often disproportionately affected by disasters. Historical evidence shows higher female mortality rates in events such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the 2010 Pakistan floods (Gul & McGee, 2021). In Balochistan, the 2022 floods had devastating socioeconomic and environmental impacts, particularly on rural women and girls who were already facing poverty and limited educational access. Damaged infrastructure, loss of livestock, and destroyed agricultural land compounded food insecurity and restricted access to essential services like healthcare, education, and clean water (Manzoor & Adesola, 2022). Gender norms and the undervaluing of girls’ education remain persistent barriers. In many traditional societies, men are viewed as breadwinners, while women are expected to prioritize domestic roles. During crises, these norms often resurface, with education deprioritized in favor of immediate survival needs. Thus, gains achieved in stable times are frequently reversed. Gender-responsive education in emergencies—programs that ensure both girls and boys receive equal protection and learning opportunities—has proven vital in restoring hope and rebuilding futures (UNESCO, 2019; INEE, 2019). Girls are typically more disadvantaged due to social constraints, caregiving roles, and safety concerns. Structural gender inequality also means that after disasters, women and girls often bear heavier domestic and survival burdens, such as fetching water or queuing for relief supplies. These additional responsibilities further restrict their ability to attend school or work. In Ethiopia, for example, the prolonged drought of 2021 led many families to resort to child marriage as a coping mechanism (Welcome, 2025). The study aims to explore the existing gender-responsive policies that address the educational challenges faced by women and girls during emergencies, to identify the specific risks and barriers they encounter in accessing education amid crises, and to recommend effective strategies and policy measures for promoting gender equality and improving access to educational opportunities in emergency and conflict-affected situations. Studying gender inequality during crises is vital because emergencies affect men and women differently, often deepening existing social and economic disparities. Systemic injustices and cultural norms restrict women’s and girls’ access to safety, education, and decision-making, while heightened gender stereotypes force them into additional caregiving roles, limiting educational and economic opportunities (Neumayer & Plümper, 2007). Girls are 35% more likely than boys to be out of school during crises due to security concerns, financial hardship, and risks of gender-based violence (Hoiland-Carlsen & Naborri, 2023). Moreover, women’s limited involvement in emergency management and planning further reinforces these vulnerabilities (Wen et al., 2023).

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology used to explore gender inequality in education within the flood-affected areas of Naseerabad, Balochistan. The project aims to analyze the impacts of flood in educational access, especially for girls and to identify the tasks, copying techniques, and methods that can promote gender inequality in educational recovery. This chapter defines the research designs, data collection procedures, sampling process, variables, analytical tools, and the conceptual framework guiding the study. It also guarantees that the methods implemented are consistent with the philosophical stance and objectives of the study certifying reliability, validity, and ethical veracity throughout the research process.

Research Design

The study used a qualitative exploratory design, in order to document the lived experiences, viewpoints and difficulties of the educators and school administrators in flood-affected communities. Qualitative research enables a thorough understanding of participants perspectives; it is especially well-suited for investigating social and contextual factors influencing gender inequality. (McHugh, 2020). An exploratory approach was designated due to the paucity of the research on gender educational gaps on post-disaster Balochistan context. The researcher was able to examine new themes, examine gendered social realities, and evaluate the data in the light of the larger framework of structural and cultural disparities that impact education both, during and after the floods.

Research Method and Approach

A qualitative research method was implemented using semi-structured interviews and document analysis as the main methods for gathering data. A thorough investigation of participants opinions, experiences, attitudes regarding gender inequality in education after floods was made possible by the qualitative method. While maintaining a consistent emphasis on main study areas, semi-structured interviews provided the flexibility to explore new concepts during discussions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Document analysis heightened the interviews by providing policy settings by making it easier to compare official frameworks and real practices related to schooling and crisis management.

Data Collection Methods

Data Type

The primary data employed in this research were collected from the participants of flood-impacted region of Naseerabad, Balochistan, through semi-structured interviews or open-ended questionnaires. The respondents were school teachers and school heads and some community members, who had witnessed the educational setbacks following flooding. Apart from primary data, secondary data sources including official reports, academic studies, and publications by relevant organizations (e.g., UNESCO, UNICEF) were studied to enhance the background understanding of gender inequality in education during calamities.

Document Analysis

In order to understand how the gender is presented in official agendas, current education and disaster policy documents were studied utilizing document analysis. Key documents included:

- *Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP)*
- *National Education Policy (NEP, 2007)*

This analysis provided secondary insights that supported the primary interview data, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of both policy and practice dimensions.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were directed with school teachers and heads face-to-face, from selected government schools in flood-affected areas of Naseerabad. Each interview was taken within the preferred language of the participant i.e. Urdu and lasted between 10-15 minutes. Answers were recorded in written descriptions and later copied and translated into English for analysis. At every level, the confidentiality and identities of the participants were preserved.

Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling approach was used to select participants who had firsthand experience with the floods and were familiar about the educational challenges in their area. Purposive sampling makes it possible to choose cases with a wealth of information that are pertinent to the goal of the study and advance our knowledge of the phenomenon being studied (Palinkas et al., 2013). The final sample included 15 participants that were female teachers and school heads from diverse schools. The variety of participants guaranteed that the viewpoints recorded represented a range of institutional and societal aspects of the educational recovery that followed the disaster. Selection persisted until the interviews reached thematic saturation which is the point at which no new themes or insights emerged (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Data Saturation

Data gathering was said to have reached thematic analysis when no new topic or concept surfaced from the participants responses (Guest et al., 2006). At this stage, the data was judged sufficient and complete for the analysis. Though qualitative study does not systematically measure variables, this study was directed by key conceptual ideas:

- **Contextual Factors:** Flood impact, socio-economic status, communal norms, institutional response
- **Core Phenomenon:** Gender inequality in educational access and participation
- **Intervening Factors:** Safety, infrastructure, financial support, and cultural attitudes

These concepts formed the thematic coding and guided interpretation during the analysis phase. (Flick, 2014)

Research Analysis Tools

The data was studied using a qualitative thematic analysis, given by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-steps outline. This approach presented an organized and analytical way to find reappearing themes within participants responses. The analysis included:

- Getting to know the data by reading the interview transcriptions several times in order to fully comprehend the experiences of the participants.
- Generating initial codes to identify meaningful and relevant data segments.
- Searching for themes by clustering related codes under broader categories.
- Reviewing themes to ensure internal coherence and distinction from one another.
- Defining and naming themes to capture the central meaning of each.
- Producing a comprehensive account supported by direct participant quotations and relevant literature.

In addition to thematic analysis, a document analysis was conducted to support and validate the results of the interviews. To determine how gender sensitivity and education-in-emergencies matters are presented within Pakistan's policy framework, such as, the National Education Policy Review (NEP 2007) and the Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP 2020-2025). An in-depth understanding of the interaction between institutional pledges and ground realities was made possible by the combined approach of thematic analysis and document analysis, which also exposed the strategical goals and the actual educational background of girls in flood-affected regions of Naseerabad.

The next part presents the data analysis and its interpretation, systematized according to the primary topics that occurred during the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study based on semi-structured interviews conducted with participants from flood-affected areas of Naseerabad, Balochistan. The qualitative data were thematically analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework. In addition, a document analysis was carried out to examine key policy frameworks, including the National Education Policy Review (2007) and the Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP 2020–2023), to assess the extent to which gender-responsive and emergency-specific measures are integrated in Pakistan's educational policies, particularly in remote areas of Balochistan. This dual approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the intersection between policy and practice during emergencies. The integrated findings reveal socio-cultural, infrastructural, financial, and familial barriers affecting girls' education. Meanwhile, the document analysis offers a policy-level perspective on these challenges. Together, the results highlight how participants' lived experiences align with or diverge from existing policy frameworks, helping to identify key gaps in gender-responsive implementation.

Document Analysis

Section 1. Policy Landscape: Gender-Responsive Education and Emergency Preparedness

This segment construes the NEP and BESP to highlight their current commitments to gender equality and education in emergencies.

Pakistan National Education Policy (NEP, 2007)

The National Education Policy (NEP) review reaffirms Pakistan's commitment to inclusive and equitable education, emphasizing gender equality through goals like reducing literacy gaps, recruiting more female teachers, and increasing girls' enrolment and retention. However, its approach to emergencies remains broad, treating disasters as general access issues rather than systemic disruptions requiring gender-sensitive strategies. As a result, while the NEP promotes gender parity, it lacks concrete, emergency-specific measures—such as contingency funding, gender-responsive displacement plans, and female-friendly learning spaces—limiting its effectiveness in flood-affected areas like Naseerabad.

Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2020–25

The BESP 2020–25 takes a more regionally grounded approach, prioritizing girls in rural and flood-prone areas and linking gender, poverty, geography, and climate risks. It integrates gender-responsive measures into disaster-risk reduction, including flood-resilient schools, emergency education protocols, alternative learning pathways for girls, and DRR-focused curricula. However, the plan lacks clear timelines, facilities, and gender-linked monitoring indicators. Unlike the NEP, the BESP connects gender and disaster resilience, but it falls short in practical implementation, limiting protection for women in flood-affected areas like Naseerabad.

Gaps Between Policy and Practice

Despite their stated commitments, both the NEP and BESP reveal a gap between vision and implementation. The NEP promotes equity but lacks a national emergency education framework, gender-disaggregated post-disaster data systems, and contingency plans for school closures. Likewise, the BESP's strong rhetoric is undermined by the absence of district-level operational plans, limited

psychosocial support for affected girls, and unclear community involvement strategies. These shortcomings are especially critical in rural areas like Naseerabad, where existing barriers—such as distance, security, and cultural restrictions—are intensified by disasters, further hindering girls' education.

Relevance to Emergency and Gender-Sensitive Planning

Educational flexibility during crises must be context-aware, gender-sensitive, and community-based. Global best practices (INEE, 2010; UNESCO, 2020) call for teacher training in gender-sensitive disaster response, safe temporary learning spaces for girls, re-enrolment drives for displaced learners, and real-time tracking of gendered dropout rates. While the NEP and BEP reference some of these measures, they lack effective implementation and enforcement. Consequently, their preparedness for gendered disruptions remains weak—especially in flood-prone areas like Naseerabad. Despite policy recognition of gender inclusion, practical interventions are minimal due to poor governance, limited funding, and sociocultural barriers that continue to hinder girls' education in disaster-affected regions of Pakistan.

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was used to interpret recurring patterns in participants' views, revealing gender disparities in flood-affected Naseerabad, Balochistan. Guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, the process involved systematic stages to derive meaningful insights. The key themes identified are discussed in the following sections.

Theme 1: Infrastructure and Learning Disruption

This theme defines that the floods have caused an extensive destruction to educational infrastructure, resulting in hindering the learning process for both the boys and the girls. The participant continuously mentioned the loss of school buildings, educational materials, and other learning resources,

"The recent floods have damaged many schools, and other institutions in my area and stopped children from going to classes. Books and supplies were lost so students' studies were badly disturbed as a result." (P1)

Interpretation:

After a prolonged school closure, the girls are more likely to be dropped out (Samad & Sheikh, 2024), this illustrates the immediate effects of flooding on the educational environment. The loss of the buildings, infrastructure and all other learning material not only interrupted the regular routine but also produced a very long-term learning gap.

"Roads and transport issues also kept children from attending the schools and institutions, causing a big gap in learning." (P2)

Interpretation:

The statement basically depicts how damaged and poor infrastructure alongside with the destroyed vehicles for transports poses a very big challenging obstacle in pursuing the education, leaving the students specially girls totally unable to travel safely (Balochistan Education Foundation, 2022).

"The recent floods had a very devastating impact on education in our area. Most of the schools were damaged or completely destroyed, and children could not attend classes for several months." (P3)

Interpretation:

This point of view basically shows the prolonged disruption in pursuing the knowledge from a large-scale destruction of school facilities. Long absences often lead to permanent dropout from the schools. Khan and Qidwai (2021) observe that post-flood recovery efforts in Pakistan faced major setbacks because many schools' buildings were destroyed and roads were completely wiped

"The recent floods badly disrupted education in my area. Many schools and institutions were damaged or destroyed, some turned into shelters, and thousands of students lost access to classrooms, books and other materials." (P4)

Interpretation:

This statement shows the true consequences of using the educational facilities as temporary shelters for people. While it is necessary for human relief, such measure usually delay the continuation of formal learning. According to the Pakistan Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (2022), more than 6000 schools were completely destroyed and nearly 12,000 were partially damaged during the major 2022 floods, depriving around 2.5 million children from basic educational facilities.

"The recent floods badly affected education processes in our area. Many school buildings were damaged or used as shelters for displaced families." (P5)

Interpretation:

This statement basically points to the secondary effects of infrastructure loss, the temporary transformation of schools into shelters which temporarily displaces students and disrupts academic routine has a very bad effect in an overall manner. Such disruptions mirror experiences across South Asia, where converting the schools into relief centers has repeatedly caused extended interruptions to the learning phase (Clarke et al., 2022).

"The most serious challenge after the floods is the loss of school buildings and learning spaces that used to exist prior to the disasters. Many schools were either damaged or turned into shelters, which left girls without a safe place to study." (P6, P7)

Interpretation:

This particular statement further highlights the fact that infrastructure plays a very crucial role, in the education process. But once the educational institutes are damaged and gone, that particular space is also gone no matter what, and what remains is replaced as a shelter for the flood victims. Around the world evidences indicates that when learning places are destroyed, girls are significantly less likely to resume as compare to the boys (Kousky 2016)

Thematic Interpretation

The analysis shows that flood-related destruction severely disrupted education, with girls disproportionately affected by delayed reconstruction and inadequate learning spaces. This prolonged recovery deepened existing gender inequalities, hindering girls' social, mental, and academic development.

Theme 2: Gendered Challenges in Education

Participants emphasized that post-flood, girls faced greater educational setbacks than boys due to cultural norms, safety concerns, and patriarchal priorities that amplify existing gender inequalities.

“Girls were affected more harshly than boys in coming back to school after the floods. While boys generally recommenced classes as soon as momentary arrangements were made, many girls were kept at home due to cultural norms, safety concerns, and household responsibilities.” (P1)

Interpretation:

The findings highlight that deeply rooted cultural norms, safety concerns, and post-flood hardships—such as household duties, early marriages, and mobility limits—restricted girls from resuming education and pursuing their goals.

“Girls were more affected because many parents did not permit them to travel far or go back to damaged schools. Boys on the other hand returned earlier but girls’ education was delayed more.” (P2)

Interpretation:

The findings reveal that parental fears of unsafe travel and gender-based violence after disasters often lead to restricted mobility and permanent school withdrawal for girls in Pakistan.

“Girls were affected more than the boys after the floods. Many families prioritize boys schooling so girls usually have higher dropout ration. Alongside this there are safety concerns, lack of proper infrastructure (washrooms, restrooms etc.,) and being kept at home for household work also contributes in this.” (P3)

Interpretation:

The statement highlights that poor infrastructure, inadequate sanitation, and gendered expectations collectively hinder girls’ education, with limited facilities often reserved for boys, further widening gender disparities (Lassa et al., 2022).

“Cultural and family restrictions always remained as the top tests, because when families and societies do not prioritize girls’ education or trust that girls should stay at home instead of going to school, it usually becomes very difficult to bring them back to classrooms and learning environments.” (P4, P5)

Interpretation:

The quotation illustrates that patriarchal traditions reinforced by disasters continue to devalue girls’ education, restricting their mobility and school enrolment even during recovery phases (Underhalter, 2023).

“In my view, the most serious challenge is cultural and family restrictions that are present even today. While financial problems, lack of transport, and safety concerns are important, all these can sometimes be solved somehow. However, still when families and communities/societies do not prioritize girls’ education, or believe that girls should stay at home instead of going to school, it becomes very difficult to bring them back and indulge them again” (P6)

Interpretation:

The response highlights that despite resolving logistical and financial issues, deep-rooted gender norms and cultural beliefs remain major barriers to girls’ education after crises (Pradhan et al., 2022).

“Yes, floods didn’t just damage schools they further deepened gender inequality. Many boys eventually returned, but a lot of girls stayed home to help with chores or due to safety concerns and many other reasons.” (P7)

Interpretation:

The reflections show that floods amplify existing gender inequalities, as girls' education is deprioritized due to cultural norms, safety concerns, and household roles (Dahlin & Barón, 2023). Economic stress further worsens this gap, with many girls withdrawn from school or married early to ease financial burdens in post-flood Pakistan (Birhmani, 2024).

Thematic Interpretation

Findings reveal that floods intensified pre-existing gender inequalities in education, especially in areas like Naseerabad where cultural norms already deprioritize girls' schooling. Early marriages, violence, and harassment further limited their educational opportunities. These insights emphasize that recovery efforts must be gender-responsive, addressing socio-cultural barriers that hinder girls' education.

Theme 3: Financial and Resource Barriers

Flood-induced economic hardship severely reduced girls' school enrollment in Naseerabad. The loss of homes, jobs, and belongings left parents unable to afford school expenses or transport, reinforcing evidence that post-disaster financial strain disproportionately hinders girls' educational continuity.

"Parents were not able to afford fees for school, uniforms, books that is why girls were forced to stay at homes instead of continuing their education" (P1)

Interpretation:

This version illustrates that how families are compelled with financial issues to prioritize survival over education. For most poor families in Pakistan, even basic schooling expenditure become unaffordable, which causes girls to withdraw considerably from studies than boys (Khalid, 2023).

"From my point of view, transport and financial support is the main challenge. The poor governance is the reason why scholarships are not provided, for motivating them and can sponsored their education." (P2)

Interpretation:

This declaration is calling for governance attention towards challenges and lack of adequate financial support. Poor institutional control and poorly managed education resources further strengthen these disparities (Rafique & Khawaja, 2020).

"Most required help is secure transport support and scholarships as well as providing free resources, to reduce economic pressure." (P3)

Interpretation:

The reply makes the strong connection between ongoing education and secure infrastructure and financial assistance. Offering allowances, educational resources and dependable transportation inspire them to place a high priority on education. According to the data from Brazil and Pakistan, that cash transfers and scholarships significantly increase girl's enrollment. (Naz et al., 2023).

"In my opinion, the most wanted support is scholarships and free uniforms/books, because financial difficulties prevent girls from attending school." (P4)

Interpretation:

This reflection underscores the need and importance of regular financial support. When direct budgets are raised, families more willingly re-enroll their daughters back to school. Research demonstrates that tuition

waivers and scholarships schemes greatly enhances girls' retention in poor families. (Filmer & Schady, 2008).

"The utmost significant support is studentships and free learning resources so that parents don't have to worry about their expenditures." (P5)

Interpretation:

This observation highlights that how alleviating financial burden perpetuates girls' enrollment. Paying for books, school uniforms and transportation enhances girl's enrollment and reduces gender inequality (Fatima et al., 2025).

"The most serious challenge is the high dropout rate of girls, because once they leave the school, it's very difficult for them to return." (P6)

Interpretation:

This statement highlights that how financial exclusion is a long-term issue. Returning back to school, once they left the school, becomes evidently impossible for them following financial reasons, entrenching inequality. Evidence from all over Pakistan supports that girls in flood-stricken areas face an increased risk of dropout and lower chances of returning back to school. (Ahmed et al., 2022).

"The most critical problem for me is financial difficulties. In the districts where there is high rates of discrimination, tends to give priority to boy's education while ignoring their daughter's education due to lack of money." (P7)

Interpretation:

This clearly shows that how gender discrimination and poverty interact to enhance educational inequality. Families under financial pressure will allocate limited resources for their sons while daughters' education is being sacrificed. This perpetuates disadvantages between generation's and constrains women's empowerment in the long-term (Ejaz & Qayum, 2023).

Thematic Interpretation

Participants identified poverty, cultural restrictions, and security issues as key barriers to girls' education after floods. Even with material aid, social norms hindered girls' re-enrollment, often making dropouts permanent. The findings stress the need for targeted socioeconomic measures such as scholarships, material support, and community incentives—to reduce post-disaster gender gaps (Pope et al., 2022).

Theme 4: Recovery Efforts and Support Programs

After the floods, government bodies, NGOs, and community groups launched initiatives like temporary learning centers, supply distributions, and awareness drives to encourage girls' return to school. Respondents noted that these efforts helped restore education access but remained short-term and unevenly implemented.

Thematic Interpretation

Findings reveal that floods exposed and deepened pre-existing gender inequalities in education, with girls' schooling hindered by cultural norms, early marriages, and safety concerns. Recovery efforts by government, NGOs, and communities such as Temporary Learning Centers and material aid offered short-term relief but lacked sustainability. Teachers and local leaders played key roles in rebuilding trust and restoring access.

Theme 5: Support Mechanisms for Girls' Educational Continuity

Participants highlighted the need for both financial and non-financial support, including scholarships, free learning materials, safe transportation, and gender-responsive facilities. Psychosocial counseling and community awareness programs were also viewed as vital for restoring girls' confidence and encouraging re-enrollment.

Theme 6: Recommendations for Future Emergencies

Respondents called for flood-resistant schools, rapid rebuilding, emergency scholarships, and coordinated efforts between government, NGOs, and communities. They emphasized that girls' education must be treated as a long-term national investment, not charity, requiring resilient systems, gender-sensitive infrastructure, and psychosocial support to ensure continuity during and after disasters.

DISCUSSION

The study reveals that floods in Naseerabad, Balochistan, significantly intensified pre-existing gender inequalities in education. Participants emphasized that cultural norms, economic hardships, and parental priorities disproportionately affected girls' schooling, viewing boys' education as an investment and girls' as secondary. Although temporary learning centers and NGO support provided short-term relief, these initiatives lacked sustainability. Consistent with global findings, the study concludes that recovery efforts must integrate gender-sensitive strategies addressing both structural barriers and deep-rooted social norms to ensure equitable and lasting educational resilience.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that gender inequality in education in flood-affected Naseerabad stems from the intersection of natural disasters, cultural norms, and social injustices. Floods amplify rather than create these disparities, restricting girls' mobility and access to safe schooling. Achieving gender equality requires more than rebuilding infrastructure; it demands integrating gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction (DRR) into all stages of preparedness and recovery. Sustainable progress depends on inclusive, participatory approaches that address social, economic, and psychological factors to ensure girls' right to education even amid future crises.

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