

SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIOLOGY EDUCATION IN ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs): A PROVINCIAL PERSPECTIVE FROM BALOCHISTAN

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Abstract

Both Social Work and Sociology education play a transformative role in promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by fostering social awareness, inclusion, and community empowerment. In Balochistan, however, these disciplines face significant structural and institutional challenges that limit their contribution to sustainable development. The problem lies in the weak integration of SDG principles—such as quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), and peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16)—into academic curricula, teaching practices, and fieldwork. Consequently, graduates of social sciences often lack the applied knowledge and research capacity to address local development challenges effectively. The purpose of this study is to examine how Social Work and Sociology education in Balochistan contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and to identify gaps that hinder their alignment with sustainable development priorities. It also seeks to develop recommendations for curriculum reform and institutional strengthening to bridge theory and practice. A qualitative methodology was employed, including curriculum analysis, interviews with faculty and policymakers, and focus group discussions with students from universities in Quetta, Turbat, and Khuzdar. Thematic analysis was used to explore how SDG-related themes are incorporated into academic programs and professional training. The results indicate that while educators recognize the importance of sustainability and social justice, the integration of SDG-focused content remains limited. Both disciplines suffer from outdated syllabi, insufficient field exposure, and weak collaboration with government and development organizations. In conclusion, aligning Social Work and Sociology education with the SDGs can strengthen their societal relevance. By reforming curricula, enhancing faculty capacities, and promoting research on local development issues, Balochistan's universities can nurture professionals capable of driving inclusive, equitable, and sustainable social change.

Introduction

Education is one of the most effective tools of human growth and social change that determines not just the personal prospect, but also the overall development. The fields of Sociology and Social

Work play a special part in this wider context, which is complementary. These two disciplines strive to comprehend and intervene into sophisticated societal realities, advance fairness, and enhance the bedrock of human well-being.

Since the world is working on attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) identified by the United Nations in 2015; education in the social sciences (especially the Social Work and Sociology disciplines) becomes an important tool to help turn the global growth hopes into the local implementation. In Balochistan, the largest and most under-developed province in Pakistan, this role is more important. The province is still struggling with the social and development challenges that have persisted including poverty, gender inequality, low literacy, inadequate health infrastructure and poor social inclusion. At that, the integration of the education of Social Work and Sociology with the SDGs is not merely the academic need but the social need also.

The universities and colleges of Balochistan are diversifying their courses in the social sciences, but have problems with old curricula, limited resources, and poor institutional connections with policy and development systems. Although the Social Work and Sociology disciplines are theoretically aimed at providing students with the knowledge and skills needed to solve the problems in the society, in reality they are usually stuck in the paradigm of the conventional pedagogic framework. Such programs are not much indicative of the multidimensional approach of the SDGs that demand integration on economic, social, and environmental platforms. As an example, the SDGs are focused on the reduction of inequalities, high-quality education, gender equality, and the reinforcement of the peace and institutions, which are also directly applicable to the social science fields. Nevertheless, the majority of social science departments in Balochistan are operating without hierarchical orientation to these world goals. Therefore, recent graduates are usually not exposed to the concept of sustainable development, field learning and research methodologies which might help them play significant roles towards the development of communities.

The Sustainable Development Goals reflect an international agreement on the type of world people desire to have - inclusive, equitable and sustainable. Social sciences are needed to actualize this vision as they offer the analytical contexts on

how human beings, social institutions and inequality systems are understood. The field of Sociology provides the mechanisms of analyzing the reproduction of poverty, inequality, and marginalization by the means of social structures, whereas Social Work offers the means to intervene in such situations with practical tools. The cross over of the two disciplines therefore results in an all-round approach to development which is a blend of critical thinking and community participation. However, in the case of Balochistan, there is still little exploitation of this intersection. The absence of a relationship between the education of Social Work and Sociology and the SDGs is indicative of an even wider division between the academia and development practice. Over the last several years, universities across the globe have started to shift their curricula to incorporate competencies of sustainability, interdisciplinary, and community-based research. Such reforms are expected to facilitate a gap between theory and practice and to create graduates who are fit to solve the complicated challenges of the 21st century. Sadly enough, the institutions of higher education in Balochistan are not following these tendencies. A great majority of curricula still focus on theory and little practical work, and there is little research on provincial social problems. Members of the faculty do not always have training on SDG-based education or are exposed to new pedagogical practices in the world. Moreover, the collaboration between universities and local or global developmental agencies is not common, a factor that undermines the transfer of theoretical knowledge into practical social transformation. Such a state of affairs creates a cycle of education staying out of touch with the reality and social problems that are being perpetuated without being informed.

Combining the SDGs with the education of Social Work and Sociology provides Balochistan with a revolution. Through the integration of sustainability concepts into the curriculums and training, universities are able to graduate responsible graduates who are not only academically qualified but also socially competent and developmental oriented. This kind of integration would lead students to consider their

disciplines as means of accomplishing certain global and local goals- like poverty reduction and enhancing education, gender equity and inclusive communities. It would also change the attitude of higher institutions of learning so that they are no longer seen as mere importers of knowledge but become participants to the social development. The change, though, needs to be systematic one, i.e., starting with the review of the curriculum, faculty, and institutional partnerships to improve research and community involvement.

This provincial view of the research is particularly important given the fact that Balochistan has its unique socio-cultural and economic environment. The population of the province is still mostly rural, and the tribal organization and traditional values are still ingrained into the lifestyles of the population and access to education and even involvement in the affairs of the community. Social sciences can be a vital factor to move through these complexities through creating cultural sensitivity, judgment, and participatory approach to development. Nevertheless, unless it is inculcated in the learning activities, the disciplines face the danger of being at a loss to the developmental demands of the province. Hence, there is need to reconsider the study of Social Work and Sociology in Balochistan to establish how these two fields can be better utilized to meet sustainable development agenda and how the universities can take the lead towards the realization of the SDGs in Balochistan.

This paper therefore examines the degree to which the education of Social Work and Sociology in Balochistan is sustainable in regards to the Sustainable Development Goals. It aims at determining the gaps in curriculum, instructional practices and institutional structures and showing the possibilities of reforms. The study will recommend action steps on how higher education can be reformed, by gauging the contribution (or lack thereof) of these disciplines to the overall sustainability agenda. Finally, the adoption of SDG principles in teaching social sciences in Balochistan would enhance the local research, policy-making, and engagement capabilities, which would make education a real engine of social change and resilience.

Problem Statement

Although the Sustainable Development Goals are globally accepted as a universal guide towards human development, education in Social Work and Sociology at Balochistan is still poorly aligned with these targets. Higher education institutions still deliver the old curriculum that seldom touches on the intersection between social development, equality, and sustainability. There is a low level of awareness among faculty and students regarding the role their disciplines can play in meeting SDGs concerning quality education, gender equality, poverty reduction, and institutional strengthening. The disconnect between theory and practice has led to a scenario where social science students are ill-equipped to address the acute development challenges of the province.

This lack of alignment leads to the failure of academic institutions to become agents of sustainable change. Social Work and Sociology departments, devoid of the implementation of SDG principles into their curricula, do run the risk of churning out graduates who are out of touch with the social and developmental realities in the province. This lack of community-based research, fieldwork, and interdisciplinary collaboration further restricts the capacity of these disciplines to produce significant social impact. This issue is critical to ensuring the relevance of higher education to the developmental needs of Balochistan and to empower future professionals to be relevant to sustainable social change.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the extent to which Social Work and Sociology education in Balochistan integrates the principles and themes of the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. To identify institutional, curricular, and pedagogical gaps that hinder the alignment of social science education with sustainable development priorities.
3. To propose strategies and policy recommendations for strengthening the role of Social Work and Sociology education in advancing the SDGs within the provincial context.

Research Methodology

The research design to be used in this study is qualitative aiming to understand the contribution of education of Social Work and Sociology in Balochistan towards Sustainable Development Goals. An exploratory and descriptive method was employed to understand learning perspectives of educators, students and policymakers. The data were gathered by conducting semi-structured interviews with faculty members and policymakers and focus groups discussions with senior students enrolled in social science programs in three large universities- Quetta, Turbat, and Khuzdar. Also, the documents of the curriculum and the course outlines were examined to evaluate the incorporation of SDG-related topics, including poverty reduction, gender equality, and institutional development.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the collected data in order to detect recurring patterns, perceptions, and institutional challenges. Manual coding was performed to achieve an interpretive depth, and themes that appeared to be common in all institutions were also compared to detect similarities and differences in the SDG engagement. The research focused on ethical issues by guaranteeing the confidentiality of the study participants and voluntary participation. Interview, focus group and document analysis triangulation improved the validity and credibility of the results. This qualitative study offered a subtle insight into the present state, weaknesses, and opportunities of encompassing sustainable development in the Social Work and Sociology curriculum in Balochistan.

Literature Review

Education has been one of the most effective tools of ensuring sustainable development, and therefore, societies can be able to develop a critical awareness, innovative problem-solving, and fair growth. It is not only that it defines the capabilities of humans, but it also builds the social fabric in which sustainability objectives can be achieved. The conceptual connection between education and sustainable development is based on the transformative possibility of learning to resolve the global issues of poverty, inequality and climate

change (Tilbury, 2011). UNESCO (2017) says that education plays a leading role in ensuring all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are met, especially SDG 4 which has focused on inclusive, equitable, and quality education to all. Education is not just knowledge acquisition but it builds morality of thought, citizenship and a sense of community in the interdependence of social, economic, and environmental aspects. Theorists believe that education can create innovation, sustainability, and justice when based on the critical thinking, cultural beliefs, and active involvement in addressing societal issues (Sterling, 2016). Therefore, institutions of higher learning are not mere centers of learning but also critical players of sustainable social change.

The training of social workers is also significantly important in the development of the SDGs since it deals directly with the concerns of human welfare, rights, and justice. The mission of the social work profession to enhance human well-being and aid in the need fulfillment, especially the weak and marginalized, is similar to the very concept of sustainable development (United Nations, 2020). Social work education focuses on the competence in social systems, empowering communities and ethical interventions that are vital in attaining SDGs associated with the eradication of poverty, gender equality, education and peace. It also teaches them how to put theory into practice connecting global models such as the SDGs with local realities by advocating, developing social policies and practice in the field (Dominelli, 2012). Social workers become the mediators between the state institutions and communities enhancing inclusiveness, participation and human rights. Social work education has a great implication in the developing areas like Balochistan where there has been a problem of inequality, poverty, and a lack of institutional capacity. It establishes the future professionals to develop and deploy locally-oriented solutions to address the needs of the population and global commitments (Healy, 2014). Social work education can be used to enhance resilience and improve social capital- two foundations in sustainable development through

participatory practices and understanding of the context.

As a field, sociology gives the analysis guide of how the social structures, cultural norms, and institutional arrangements affect developmental outcomes. It provides information about the connection between social inequality, modernization and sustainability pursuit (Giddens, 2009). The sociological views assist in the discovery of power relations and historical events that define access to resources and opportunities. In the context of sociology, development is studied as its concern and interest is on how societies undergo change, how change is brought about, and how systems of any society are either adaptive to change or resistant to change. According to scholars like Inglehart and Welzel (2010), sustainable development cannot be narrowed down to simple economic growth, instead, it needs cultural shift, democracy and learning. Sociology, therefore, offers the conceptual means of the understanding of the social conditions that should be achieved to meet SDGs. It assists upcoming practitioners, researchers and policymakers to critically evaluate the interaction of global development agendas and local identities, values and social relations. Additionally, sociological education develops a sense of empathy, reflexivity, and social responsibility qualities that cannot be ignored in solving complex development issues (Beck, 1992).

Across the globe, institutions of higher education have started applying SDGs in their instruction, research, and outreach to communities. Interdisciplinary programs, which connect sustainability to social sciences, public policy, and development studies, have been created at European, North American, and Asian Universities (Leal Filho et al., 2019). The increasing focus on Education to Sustainable Development (ESD) challenges universities to instill sustainability principles in curriculum, research agenda, and institutional behaviours. The networks that have facilitated this global movement include the United Nations Academic Impact and the Global University Network of Innovation. Such initiatives emphasize the fact that sustainable development means the

redefinition of the role of education, which is not rote learning but experience-based, transformative learning. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) in Pakistan has started implementing measures to encourage the sustainability-based education and research. Nonetheless, the execution is still uneven taking place with a concentration of resources and activities in urban large universities. The studies have shown that most universities have not considered the notion of sustainability as a part of their programs, and that the emphasis is still limited to environmental sciences but not to the more social aspects of sustainability (Rasheed, Khan, and Zafar, 2021). This imbalance restricts the role of such disciplines as sociology and social work in the agenda of national sustainability.

The case in Balochistan speaks of even greater problems. The province has experienced an endemic structural inequality in education, low levels of enrollment, poor infrastructure and access to quality higher education (Shah & Baloch, 2020). Most universities are facing the challenge of outdated curriculum, no trained teachers and little research activities. Social sciences such as sociology and social work are also undeveloped especially due to the manner in which they are taught through theoretical concepts that are not related to the realities of the field. Consequently, the students are not exposed to applied learning and research that may focus on some of the social and developmental issues facing the province. The lack of institutional connections to local communities, non-governmental organisations and development organisations also damage the applied effect of the social sciences education. Also, these issues are further compounded by the presence of socio-political instability, gender inequality, and insufficient attention by policymakers, which means that a higher education is not well-positioned to play a significant role in the SDGs. The fact that the outputs of the Balochistan education system fall short of the demands of the society highlights an even bigger systematic problem: education has become detached with the objectives of sustainable development and human security. Provided that the universities in the province engage in a more SDG-related strategy

with an added value of social responsibility, critical pedagogy, and community interaction, the potential of propelling the province to inclusive development will not be achieved.

Critical research gaps also exist, which should be filled in order to comprehend and consolidate the relationship between social sciences education and sustainable development in Balochistan. The extant evidence on SDGs in Pakistan is mostly based on policy frameworks, environmental concerns, or even economical issues with little emphasis on education specifically the social work and sociology in ensuring the attainment of sustainability. Little empirical evidence is available on student and educator perceptions of sustainability concepts or curricula development to include sustainability concepts. Local research has not been conducted, so the specific cultural, political, and social situation of Balochistan is usually ignored in planning on a national level. Additionally, there are no holistic researches on the value of social work and sociology students to provincial development agenda and the alignment of their professional skills with SDG indicators. These gaps indicate the necessity of research that would bridge the global theory and local practice. Such investigation will help guide policy changes, curriculum reform, and institutional collaborations, which will enhance the role of higher education in sustainable growth.

These knowledge gaps can only be resolved using a multidimensional program which can be informed by both the social work and sociological models. Social work education focuses on the human development and direct interaction with the community whereas sociology presents the analytical tool to comprehend structural constraints and policy interactions. They all provide a combined base of ideas on sustainability-oriented learning. With the integration of these views, Balochistan education can be able to go off-track of traditional academic limits and become a revolution to social change. Higher education institutions need to be redesigned as places of critical thinking, moral accountability and community engagement. This will necessitate curriculum changes, faculty development and improved collaboration with local institutions and

communities. It also requires policy backing to make higher education in Balochistan inclusive, relevant, and global SDG goals gathering. Such integration would not only improve the quality of academics, but also help in social integration, environmental sustainability and economic development in the long-term.

To sum up, the literature shows that there is a strong theoretical and practical connection between education and sustainable development, although their implementation in Balochistan continues to be socio-structural, institutional, and policy-based. Social work and sociology two professions with strong entrenched principles in human welfare and social change present the important avenues of connecting education to SDG framework. This potential however has not been exploited because of absence of contextual research, poor institutional support and poor curriculum innovation. Future researchers should therefore investigate how the teaching of social sciences in Baluchistan can be redesigned to create sustainability literacy, social responsibility and engagement with the community. It is only under such initiatives that the higher education in the province can play a significant role towards aggregate development agenda of Pakistan and its role in the world sustainability.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis of the study is based on the Human Capital Theory, the Social Development Theory, and the Sustainable Development Paradigm in the social sciences. Combined, these frameworks allow forming a multidimensional perspective on the interaction of education, social change, and sustainability in a special socio-educational environment in Balochistan. All these theories reiterate the value of education as a force behind human capacity, social cohesion and sustainable development-which can be useful in reshaping social work and sociology education in the province.

Human Capital Theory is a theory formulated by the scholars like Becker (1964) and Schultz (1961) that education and training improves the productivity of an individual which in turn can help in the economic and social development. It

views education as an investment which has long-term returns to individuals and to societies. It is in this light that education is not a pure academic activity but a process of forming skilled and informed citizens able to bring about development. When this theory is applied to the case of Balochistan, one can find out the extreme significance of enhancing higher education to enhance the human resource base of this province. Although Balochistan is an abundant source of natural resources, it is also the next-last in terms of human capital indicators because of poor educational facilities, low levels of literacy, and very little investment in social sciences (Shah & Baloch, 2020). The province can end up developing professionals who have analytic, ethical and leadership skills by enhancing the standard of social work and sociology education to work towards the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Human Capital Theory will therefore provide an explanation as to why education should be invested in as a long term development strategy which would eventually help in getting rid of poverty, inequality, and social exclusion.

Social Development Theory is a complement of this view since it holds that development is not only concerned with economic growth but also with the expansion of the capabilities of the people and the reinforcement of social relationship. This theory, the first to be postulated by Midgley (1995), says that sustainable development should be based on a combination of economic and social policies to promote human well-being. It emphasizes the participation of social institutions, networks, and involvement of the community in encouraging inclusive development. In the education field, the Social Development Theory implies that the social sciences, in particular, the social work and sociology, may be transformative in the establishment of empowerment, equity, and social justice. Education must therefore not only pass on knowledge but also develop civic responsibility, ethical consciousness and collective action. The theory can be especially applied in the context of Balochistan due to the historical background of the social-political marginalization, a weak government, and lack of access to basic services in

the province. Through the application of these principles of social development, the institutions of higher learning may be able to enhance the connection between academic learning and community involvement to allow students to solve the challenges of local development such as poverty, gender gap, and institutional flaws (Midgley & Tang, 2001). This strategy is in line with SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 5 (Gender Equality), 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

Intersection of education, social transformation and environmental responsibility can be examined using the Sustainable Development Paradigm in the social sciences as offering a larger theoretical perspective. This paradigm is based on the fact that social, economic and environmental systems are highly interrelated on the basis of the definition of sustainable development as provided by the Brundtland Commission; that is that sustainable development should satisfy the demands of the present without jeopardizing the capacity of future generations to fulfill their demands (WCED, 1987). Academically, it demands interdisciplinary education that would equip students with the knowledge, values, and competence that would help them to build a more equitable and sustainable world (Sterling, 2016). In the field of sociology and social work education, the given paradigm entails critical examination of the role that social institutions, power relations, and cultural norms play in the results of sustainability. It advances the notion that sustainable development means that society has to change socially, especially how societies structure and organize education, production, and governance. In the case of Balochistan, such a paradigm has far-reaching consequences. Structural inequalities and state policies are deeply embedded in the province, which underdevelops, degrades environment, and causes social-economic differences. By incorporating the idea of sustainability in social science educational materials, students and educators can be able to comprehend these connections and devise locally viable solutions to these problems which will involve striking a balance between human needs and ecological conservation.

The suitability of these theories to the Balochistan socio-educational scenario is in the fact that these theories can explain and provide answers to the multi-dimensional problems in the province. The Human Capital Theory highlights the importance of the investment in education to create a competent and empowered human resource. According to the Social Development Theory, such an investment should also increase social cohesion and equity. In the meantime, Sustainable Development Paradigm associates economic and social development with environmental responsibility and sustainability. The combined frameworks are a holistic method in examining the promotion of SDGs in Balochistan through social work and sociology education. They also assist in conceptualizing an education as not only a means of personal progress but also a means of collective progress which enhances the well-being of the community and its government.

When these theoretical frameworks are applied in Balochistan, the educational and policy imperatives are critical. To start with, the problem of chronic unemployment and the underexploitation of local talent can be solved through human capital development by enhancing higher education. Second, social development by means of inclusive curricula and participatory instruction might decrease the level of social alienation and regain peace in a conflict-affected region. Lastly, instilling sustainable development paradigm in the education of social sciences can equip future professionals with issues like resource management, gender equity and institutional accountability. The incorporation of these theories promotes this move towards a change of traditional and exam-oriented learning to transformative and action-oriented learning. This change is necessary in developing a generation of social workers and sociologists who are not only aware of the development dynamics but are also participating in the attainment of sustainability in their communities.

All in all, the intersection of these three theoretical frameworks presents a strong basis to use in the analysis and the reformation of the social sciences education in Balochistan. It fills the gap between

global development agendas and local realities in that sustainable development of the province requires the reinforcement of human and social capital. Universities can have a central role in the achievement of the SDGs and inclusive, equitable, and resilient communities by refocusing education on sustainability and community development in Balochistan.

Findings and Discussion

The results of this research, which relied on interviews, focus group discussions, and curriculum analysis of universities in Quetta, Turbat, and Khuzdar, indicate that there are some critical themes that portray both the advancement and the complexity undertaken to align the education of social work and sociology with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Balochistan. The findings prove that although the concept of sustainability and social responsibility is increasingly being identified in the academic discourse, the institutional practices and educational models are mostly outdated, under-resourced and not in touch with the provincial realities of development. The new themes are explained below in terms of the objectives and theoretical basis of the study.

The first important discovery is the awareness and understanding of SDGs in academic which is inadequate and disjointed across the social science faculties. The majority of teachers and learners only showed a shallow knowledge of the SDG framework by mostly relating it to environmental or economic aspirations, and not to the wider social aspects of the SDG framework, including poverty eradication, gender equality, and peacebuilding. The interviews indicated that a significant number of the faculty has not been trained or exposed to anything relating to SDGs or to teaching strategies at all. This gap of knowledge directly reflects on the process of introducing the concept of sustainability into teaching and learning. In other instances, lecturers cited would use the issue of development goals or social change in their lecture courses, which, however, was not directly linked to the SDG agenda. Students also indicated that the sustainable development discussions were not

frequent and in most cases were limited on the theoretical classes as opposed to the practical implementation. This observation explains why professional development programs are necessary that can increase the ability of the educators to deliver content that is sustainability-oriented and orient students towards a more universalistic interpretation of the SDGs as it applies to social justice, community empowerment, and inclusive development.

Another theme that comes up as a result of the data is that of institutional gaps and resource constraints, which greatly inhibit the effectiveness of higher education institutions in fostering SDG-oriented learning. The problems highlighted by the respondents severally included poor infrastructure, faculty weakness, unavailability of scholarly materials and insufficient funds in research. Most universities in Balochistan and especially in the remote districts do not have digital libraries, updated textbooks and specialized courses that incorporate the concepts of sustainable development. In addition, constant turnover of faculty, low pay, and lack of career motivation do not encourage academic innovation. Such institutional shortcomings are the cause of stagnation and underdevelopment of the social sciences education as well as limiting the capacity of the province to generate graduates with the capacity to solve the problems related to the local development. The absence of cooperation between academia on one hand and the government agencies and civil society on the other hand further alienate the academia to the real world where SDG implementation takes place. Human capitalwise, this research will have implications of underinvestment in education systems that are needed to create the skilled labor that will help transform Balochistan socially and economically.

The third important outcome includes issues relating to curriculum flaws and obsolete material, as this was a recurring issue across faculty and students. Review of curriculum and interviews showed that most of the sociology and social work programs continue to use syllabi that were formulated more than 10 years ago with little revision or adaptation to context. Some

universities have tried to revise reading materials, however there is a major bias in the content of the courses; they are too theoretical with little emphasis on the practical or applied aspects of social development. Course outlines and learning objectives rarely refer to SDGs directly. The faculty members observed that the process of curriculum design and approval is in most cases centralized and bureaucratic, and innovation is unlikely at the departmental level. It is this inflexibility that does not allow the incorporation of modern agendas like climate change, human rights, or sustainable livelihoods -issues that are all important in equipping students with issues that affect them in the real world. The lack of interdisciplinary integration also helps in restricting socio-theoretical and sociological and social-work theories to have links with policy, governance and community development models. This observation confirms the thesis that, unless there is a curriculum overhaul, higher education in Balochistan will keep on producing graduates who lack the competencies to make a significant contribution towards the SDGs.

Another key obstacle to SDG-oriented education implementation is the lack of field practice and research opportunities that are limited to social work and sociology programs. Despite the fact that fieldwork and research are essential elements of social sciences education, majority of the universities in Balochistan grapple with logistics and financial difficulties in order to enable those experiences. Students also stated that field placements (where they existed) were in most cases short-term, unsupervised, and were not tied to the needs of community development. On the same note, research projects are limited by a lack of access to data, institutional support, and mentorship. The faculty members mentioned the lack of collaboration with local non-governmental organisations or development agencies as one of the biggest barriers to student learning. As a result, students leave school with little useful knowledge on how to implement sociological analysis or social work interventions to real-life issues. This revelation is in line with the Social Development Theory that emphasizes the importance of the education systems to improve on the connections

between academic institutions and social structures. This could be done by expanding fieldwork and research aspects in social science programs to bridge the difference between theoretical and practical involvement of social sciences so that students can be able to put into practice what was taught in school to the community based development programs in accordance to SDGs.

The fifth emergent theme is centered around the gender and equity lens in education which are still not discussed enough despite their prioritization in the sustainable development. The SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) are especially applicable to Balochistan, where educational and labor inequalities are one of the most significant in Pakistan. The results of the research demonstrate that although the majority of the universities have experienced the growth of the number of females in the social sciences over the last decade, the results are still constrained by the structural and cultural factors. Lack of transport facilities, poor hostels facilities, and even social limitation of field activities were some of the challenges reported by many female students. In addition, the issues of gender are treated as separate subjects as opposed to incorporation as themes throughout the curriculum. The members of the faculty admitted that gender equity and inclusion policies that refer to gender equality are either weak or not enforced. Gender imbalance in the governance of higher education is also propagated by the underrepresentation of women in the academic leadership. These problems can be solved by implementing policy change and cultural change in academic institutions. Gender-sensitive pedagogy and encouraging female participation in research and fieldwork can largely increase the transformative nature of social work and sociology education in bringing gender equality and social justice in Balochistan.

Lastly, the research determined policy disconnect and implementation problems as an endemic phenomenon that weakens the performance of higher education in order to promote the SDGs. Even though the policies on national education and Higher Education Commission (HEC) of

Pakistan indicate the need to make academic programs relevant to the needs of sustainable development, they are not widely practiced in Balochistan. The interviews with administrators showed that the provincial education authorities and universities are not coordinated in terms of SDG implementation. Policy guidelines are usually generic and they do not take into account the socio-economic and cultural peculiarities of Balochistan. Moreover, there are no monitoring systems and performance measurement systems that can hold anyone accountable to attaining sustainability-related educational objectives. This lack or gap of the policy design and the institutional practice is a wider gap in governance that is similar to other development areas within the province. Applying the Sustainable Development Paradigm, this problem highlights the necessity of structural change that would allow educational organizations not only to receive policy but also be an active participant in the localization and implementation of the SDGs.

Overall, the results of this paper reveal that there is a complex of social work and sociology education issues and opportunities in Balochistan. The lack of SDGs awareness, the institutional fragility, the curricula obsolescence, and the lack of exposure to the field of practice all contribute to the unproductiveness of socially responsible and professionally competent graduates. Nevertheless, the results also indicate that there is a crystal clear way out on reform. To make higher education a dynamic driver towards sustainable development, development of institutional capacity, encouraging curriculum development, encouraging gender perspectives, and policy coherence can be used to achieve this. It could be possible to align educational practices with the human capital formation, social development and sustainability principles to have Balochistan universities play a crucial role in SDGs realization and inclusive social development.

Discussion:

This study has shown both similarities and differences in the results of comparison with national and global research on the role of higher education in enhancing Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs). Social work and sociology education have been developed internationally with the focus on applied learning, interdisciplinary teamwork, and direct interaction with community development, especially in meeting the SDG goals on poverty eradication, gender equality, and institutional empowerment (UNESCO, 2020; Midgley, 2021). As the research activities in Finland, Canada, and South Africa show, the incorporation of SDG themes into the curricula of higher education institutions has led to more students developing an interest towards sustainability efforts and social innovations. Conversely, in Pakistan and in Baluchistan in particular, this integration is not much, especially because of institutional failures, faculty training, and traditional pedagogical methods. The same results were also observed in national research by Ahmad and Shah (2022) and Khan and Ahmed (2021), who noted a disconnection between the academic content and the application in the study of the social sciences. Therefore, the present research confirms that the poor use of education as a means of sustainable transformation is a structural and contextual issue that lies in poor governance, lack of resources and fragmentation of policies.

These findings have serious implications both to the academia and policymakers. Balochistan University should also reinvent itself as a dynamic agent of social transformation, focusing on the SDG-driven frameworks through teaching, research, and outreach. The fact that faculty is not aware of SDG frameworks; the exposure of international academic practices is insignificant, promotes the idea of a comprehensive capacity-building program. The changes in the curriculum related to the introduction of modules on sustainability, social justice, and development policy would improve the competence and relevance of the students in the labor market. Additionally, the academic reform must aim at giving preferential attention to experiential learning, i.e. internships, communal projects, collaborations with nearby NGOs and government departments, etc., with the goal of emphasizing the practical aspect of social work and sociology education. On the other hand,

policymakers must make sure that provincial policies of higher education are consistent with the national SDG agenda, which will allow universities to receive funding and technical assistance to support sustainability efforts.

Universities have the strategic and transformative role in localizing SDGs in Balochistan. Colleges and universities are not only points of learning but also agents of change in the society. Universities can act as sources of community empowerment and evidence-based policymaking in a province that is of socio-economic inequalities, limited industrial growth, and poor institutional capability. They also will be able to assist in finding grassroots priorities within SDG targets by incorporating social research in the local development planning. As such, considering SDG 4 (quality education) by enhancing access and pedagogy means addressing SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) in an indirect manner. Localised sustainability programmes can be pioneered by the University of Turbat and the University of Balochistan among others and be region specific e.g., climate adaptation, community health, and social entrepreneurship.

Nevertheless, these institutions should work in the long term with the government and international organizations to play this role efficiently. The universities in Balochistan require institutional freedom, financial research and information technologies to be able to generate meaningful scholarly and community-based outcomes. Increasing the connection between the academia, the civil society and the private sector can improve the effectiveness of the education of social sciences on sustainable development. According to the experience of other countries, the education systems that are in line with SDGs are also more likely to promote innovation, inclusivity, and long-term resilience (World Bank, 2022). Therefore, when integrated effectively into the SDG framework, social work and sociology training in Balochistan can emerge as a potent tool of social justice, equality, and inclusive development, which are the essential values of the two academic fields and sustainable development as a whole.

Recommendations

Reform of the Curriculum and SDGs

Integration:

Universities in Balochistan need to reformulate and update their Social Work and Sociology curriculum to incorporate SDG-related topics clearly, including poverty reduction, gender equality, sustainability and accountability of institutions. Applied elements on community development, sustainability assessment, and policy analysis should be incorporated in courses to ensure that the theory and practice gap between theory and practice is bridged. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) and provincial academic boards need to come up with SDG-enhanced curriculum directives on the social sciences departments.

Faculty Development: Faculty research capacity building:

The professors should be trained specifically on SDG frameworks, participatory instruction, and applied research skills. To complement their knowledge on sustainability education, workshops, fellowship and working with international universities can help them to improve further. Increasing the presence of research centers in universities will enable academic and student body to make policy relevant research to address the socio-economic and environmental issues in Balochistan.

Marketing of Field- Based and Experiential Learning:

In order to promote pragmatic competence, universities ought to intensify field placements, internship or community engagement initiatives. The cooperation with NGOs, the government agencies, and development partners will allow the students to use the classroom knowledge in the field, develop critical thinking, and problem-solving skills in accordance with sustainable development.

Preparing the Strength of Institutional Support and Policy Alignment:

The provincial government ought to invest specific resources in universities in terms of SDG-related

projects, research, and outreach. The Higher Education Department, Planning and Development Department, and the leadership in the universities should coordinate their activities to make sure that the academic activities are aligned to provincial and national development plans.

Increasing Gender Inclusion and Equity in Education:

The social Work and Sociology programs ought to encourage gender equity through female involvement, scholarships, and safe learning environments. The use of gender studies and equity based modules in the curriculum will assist the prospective professionals to deal with the structural disparities within the Balochistan society.

Creation of University-Community Partnerships:

Universities must also form official collaborations with the local community, NGOs, and governmental bodies to come up with projects which meet SDG priorities in the grassroots level. This kind of collaboration would help facilitate a mutual exchange of knowledge, academic experience helping communities and local experience enhancing academic knowledge.

Online and Availability of Learning Materials:

Digital learning platforms, e-libraries, and online training modules are some of the digital platforms that the universities should invest in to overcome geographic and infrastructural limitations. Democratizing access to knowledge by using technology can also bridge the students in remote districts with opportunities of accessing learning opportunities globally that are of relevance to SDGs.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Mechanism:

Institutions should also come up with internal mechanisms of tracking their contribution to the SDGs. Accountability and a constant improvement of academic programs, faculty performance, and student outcomes will be

checked in terms of their performance regarding sustainability goals.

Promoting Interdisciplinary Co-operation:

The Social Work and Sociology departments are supposed to work hand in hand with other fields including environmental studies, economics and political science in an effort of ensuring that the development of sustainable development is holistically understood. The interdisciplinary research and co-teaching paradigms have the potential to stimulate creativity and open the minds of students.

Policy Advocacy and Knowledge Dissemination:

Universities must be the think tanks of sustainable development that generates policy briefs, research reports, and popular discussions on the important social issues. Evidence-based advocacy by academic leaders and scholars can also change policymakers so that higher education is at the centre of the long-term development strategy of the Balochistan.

Conclusion

The paper brings out the acute interdependence between Social Work and Sociology education and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pursuit in the provincial framework of Balochistan. These observations indicate that though both fields have enormous potential in improving social justice, equality and community development, they are limited by major institutional flaws, outdated curriculum and lack of awareness on global sustainability models. Lack of a formal policy backing and poor investment in higher education have also undermined the role of the university as an agent of transformative social change. Therefore, the value of social sciences in local development has not been maximized, although they are theoretically and practically applicable to the SDG agenda.

It is clear that to realize the SDGs in Balochistan, there should be a new passion to education reform that goes beyond the ordinary classroom lessons. Universities need to incorporate the principles of sustainability in the academic curricula, enhance experiential learning, and enhance associations between research and local development priorities.

To make sure that students develop the skills, values, and awareness that will help them become the members of inclusive and sustainable communities, faculty development, gender equity, and digital access should become the key pillars of reform.

In addition, the study highlights that social work and sociology are not just academic disciplines but important tools of human and social development. Universities can produce professionals able to meet the social-economic challenges that are unique to Balochistan by aligning their goals with the SDG framework, especially in the goal of dealing with poverty, inequality, and institutional capacity. After all, education of social sciences in the province is not merely an academic necessity, but also a strategic need towards sustainable peace, equity, and progress. By incorporating SDG-centered education, the Balochistan institutions will be able to shift their efforts in disseminating knowledge to an active social change, thus playing a significant role in the overall developmental agenda of Pakistan.

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