

# **90 Minutes** Schooling for Out-of-School **Afghan Refugee** **Children**

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## Key Insights/ Abstract

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This research is based on the issue of illiteracy of Afghan refugees living in Pakistan. The rate of out-of-school children in camps and rural areas is very high. Many Afghan refugee children work in markets and local businesses. The reason they are not attending school is that they are supporting their families due to poverty. They work for daily wages and don't have enough time to attend school. Therefore, I came up with an innovative idea to introduce 90-minute schooling which will help refugee children get education and continue earning as well, since majority of their families are poor, and they don't have any other source of

income. The purpose of this research was to study whether the refugees would be interested and willing to attend this schooling idea.

The data was collected by interviewing refugee children from different areas in Charsada, Peshawar, and Mardan. Then it was summed up and analysed. The overall results showed that Afghan refugees' children are highly interested in education, but their economic condition and future uncertainty has made them earn instead of learn at a very young age.

## Research Context

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The evidence shows that rate of out-of-school children is a serious issue across poor and low-income regions of the world. According to Population Profiling, Verification and Response Survey of Afghans in Pakistan in 2011, only 36% of the children and youth between the ages of 6 and 24 were enrolled in school. 44% of the children (5 to 14) and 20% of youth (15 to 24) were studying at the time.

The survey stated that the literacy rate of the Afghans living in Pakistan was only 33%. In another survey conducted by Danish Refugee Council in 2013, 46% of the Afghan refugees were illiterate, and a major reason for children not attending school was reported to be poverty.

There are numerous reasons for not attending school in the refugee camps but the main issue is that many of these children do not attend

school because they have to work and earn for their families. Most of their time is consumed by work, and they do not have much time to focus on studies. For this reason, we wanted to find out whether they would be willing to attend a 90-minute school. Through this school, the idea is that they can still earn alongside getting an education. The main purpose of this study is to enrol out-of-school children in schools and to reduce the rate of illiteracy in society.

Moreover, since 2013, not many studies have been conducted on the refugees in Pakistan. Therefore, it is necessary to further understand these issues and conduct another research with Afghan refugees.

My research questions will be: Is 90-minutes schooling good to apply? And are children willing to attend 90-minutes schools?

## Research Design

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This study is concerned with Afghan refugee children who are of school-going ages (5 to 16 years) but are not enrolled in school or have dropped out for any reason including decisions by their parents. The data was collected by interviewing 60 out-of-school Afghan refugee children (after getting permission from their

guardians). These children were from different refugee camps in Charsadda, Peshawar and Mardan. The interview questions were focused, open-ended questions to prompt the interviewees and get their opinions. I recorded the answers and compiled them for further analysing and evaluating.

## Key Findings and Discussion

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90% of the children interviewed agreed to join this opportunity and get education. Many of the interviewees said that they love education and want to be educated, but they were facing many issues which are stopping them from attending schools formally. Some issues discussed included lack of their parents' interests and their poor economic conditions. Many students are simply out of school due to pull-out, push-out and dropping out factor which is because of no education environment at home. Pressure of domestic responsibilities force many children be out of schools.

On the other hand, about 5% of the children did not want to join a 90-minute school. They stated that education is not important in this economy because there are no job opportunities for Afghan refugees. They gave examples of some educated youth who are still unemployed, live below standard life and work for daily wages. The remaining 5% of children couldn't answer the questions well because of lack of confidence. These children could not discuss things well.

Overall, the results indicated that a 90-minutes schooling system would do well if implemented effectively.

## Policy Recommendations

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This is one of the biggest issues for Pakistan and this region, and it can be handled with this 90-minutes schooling idea. We can start this program by having a separate class in schools with a special teacher where the previously out-of- school children can attend for 90 minutes. The syllabus of this program has to be more practical and concise. In some areas where the nearest

school is too far for the children, we can hire local tutors with fee-per-student system.

This will truly bring resilience in our community and will reduce rate of illiteracy which will be a good contribution towards society.

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