



"Application Of Pragmatic Educational Theory In The Iranian Education System"

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ABSTRACT

The utilization of pragmatic educational theories, notably influenced by Deweyan perspectives, has resulted in substantial changes in global educational frameworks. Nevertheless, the incorporation of pragmatist theories in the educational landscape of Iran has encountered various impediments. This paper investigates the Iranian educational system, specifically addressing challenges in implementing pragmatist theories for children aged 8-12. It delves into the key features of pragmatist theories and scrutinizes three aspects of the Iranian educational framework: (1) the definition of childhood, child marriage, and child labor; (2) the societal contexts shaping education in Iran; and (3) the essential educational infrastructures required for effective pedagogy. The findings underscore political influences and the lack of a robust educational model as primary obstacles to realizing pragmatic pedagogy for Iranian children aged 8-12.

Keywords: Pragmatic theory, Pedagogy, Educational systems, Challenges, Iran

INTRODUCTION

Aristotle, in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, contends that moral understanding is cultivated through moral training and posits in his *Metaphysics* that knowledge is influenced by behavioral habits (Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics* 1104a). However, these insights were overshadowed by a dualistic metaphysical perspective, marginalizing voices that opposed this tradition. Within this dualism, human action was deemed irrelevant to truth, residing instead in a separate realm of ideas. Modern philosophers such as Nietzsche, Marx, and Schopenhauer challenged this tradition, but it was the pragmatists who systematically criticized the dichotomy between truth and practice, emphasizing their unity and expanding our understanding of the world and pedagogy.

John Dewey, a prominent philosopher of pedagogy, integrated pragmatism into his approach, asserting the alignment of pragmatism with Enlightenment ideals while critiquing certain principles like independent reason and ahistoricism (Putnam, 2004: 105). Pragmatists, loyal to Enlightenment humanism, focused on the concrete human shaped by practice, contending that truth and essence are constructed through this process. Truth, for pragmatists, is not preexisting but developed through practice, emphasizing the importance of fostering personal and critical thinking in education (Dewey, J. 1916).

Despite Dewey's influence on educational philosophy globally, the integration of pragmatist concepts into the Iranian education system faces challenges. While some works of pragmatist pioneers have been translated into Persian, core concepts such as experience and reconstructing experience remain largely unimplemented (Bernstein, R. J. 2010; Misak, C. 2013). This paper aims to investigate the key elements of pragmatist pedagogy and explore the reasons behind its limited implementation in Iran, particularly focusing on obstacles related to the accessibility of education and the core concept of reconstructing experience. The study's primary focus is on children aged 8-12, aiming to identify the challenges they encounter in their educational journey in Iran.

Drawing on Hegel's dialectical method, which asserts that understanding the whole is possible only through its connection with its parts, we argue that an analysis neglecting this interconnectedness would be incomplete (Hegel, G. W. F. 1977). Therefore, assessing the role of children in Iran and studying the obstacles they face necessitates an examination of the dominant structures of Iranian society. Adopting Hegel's methodology, we conduct an immanent critique of these problems, illustrating their interrelationships,

mutual influences, and impact on children's education (Hegel, G. W. F. 1969). It's essential to note that Iranian children face various educational challenges beyond the scope of this article, with this study primarily addressing the main problems while exploring additional issues in the main body of the text. Preconditions and secure environmental components are crucial for embracing the reconstruction of experience as a pragmatist theory, with research questions related to child marriage, child labor, teaching methods, and mother-tongue education highlighting some of these preconditions.

I. METHODOLOGY:

This study adopts a rigorous narrative review approach to examine and critically evaluate the impediments related to educational accessibility for children aged 8-12 in Iran. The principal aim of this review is to present a comprehensive overview of the fundamental issues influencing the educational experiences of this specific age group within the Iranian context.

Stage 1: Identifying the Research Question

The primary research question guiding this review is formulated as follows: "What challenges do children aged 8-12 encounter in their educational journey within the Iranian context?"

Stage 2: Identifying Relevant Studies

To gather pertinent literature, an extensive search was conducted across reputable academic databases, including PubMed, ERIC, JSTOR, Scopus, and Web of Science. The search process involved the use of relevant keywords such as "education challenges," "children aged 8-12," "Iran," and "educational accessibility," with Boolean operators "AND" and "OR" refining search results. The lead author conducted this initial search between January 2022 and April 2023, resulting in the identification of 350 peer-reviewed articles.

Stage 3: Study Selection

Inclusion criteria for article selection encompassed both qualitative and quantitative studies addressing the challenges faced by children aged 8-12 within the Iranian educational system. Criteria included studies published in English, focusing on educational challenges within the specified age group, and studies conducted within the Iranian context. Exclusion criteria comprised non-English articles and studies exclusively focusing on higher education. Through a systematic screening process, a final selection of 45 articles was deemed relevant and incorporated into this review.

Stage 4: Charting the Data

To ensure systematic analysis and organization of data, all selected articles were meticulously documented in an Excel spreadsheet. This spreadsheet cataloged essential information from each article, including author names, publication years, research methodologies employed, main findings, and key challenges identified.

Stage 5: Collating, Summarizing, and Reporting Results

The review process culminated in a comprehensive analysis of the charted data. Themes and findings extracted from the included articles were systematically organized into distinct sections. The presentation of results in subsequent sections is guided by their relevance to the overarching research question, focusing on highlighting the primary challenges and issues faced by children aged 8-12 within the Iranian education system.

By embracing a narrative review methodology and systematically adhering to the above-stated stages, this study endeavors to provide a thorough understanding of the barriers and obstacles affecting the accessibility of education for children aged 8-12 in Iran.

II. OVERVIEW OF IRAN'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

The examination of Iran's educational system necessitates an understanding of the pragmatic philosophy underpinning pedagogy, which serves as a lens through which we can elucidate the core issues facing education in the nation. However, a preliminary comprehension of Iran's governmental structure is imperative.

The "Islamic Republic of Iran" officially signifies the paramountcy of Islamic principles within the country's legal and societal fabric, as mandated by the Iranian Constitution. According to Article 15 of the Constitution, all laws, including the constitution itself, must adhere to Islamic laws, which take precedence in cases of conflict. Consequently, religious institutions wield substantial authority, tasked with ensuring legislative compliance with Islamic precepts (Afary, Janet, 1906-1911). Central to this structure is the Guardian Council, or Shoraye Negahban, entrusted with aligning enacted laws with Islamic tenets (Banakar & Ziaee, 2018).

It is pivotal to acknowledge the diverse interpretations inherent within Islam, encompassing mystical, rational, and fundamentalist perspectives. While various interpretations of the Quran exist, the Islamic Republic predominantly adheres to conservative and traditional views, emphasizing jurisprudence (Fiqh) (Saeed, 2006; Wael B. Hallaq, 2011). Fiqh, drawing from Islamic jurisprudence, governs personal conduct and societal rituals, thereby influencing various facets of individuals' lives, including children, due to the extensive nature of Sharia law (Ali, J. A., 2019).

Children in Iran encounter challenges stemming from their delineation within this religious and ideological milieu, diverging from international norms. This disparity complicates efforts to address issues pertinent to children, necessitating recognition of their distinct individuality and corresponding rights aligned with their age and developmental stage.

III. PEDAGOGY AND CHILD'S LIFE

In many educational systems, the needs and perspectives of children often take a backseat to adult-centric goals, leading to a neglect of children's well-being and a focus solely on preparing them for future adult roles. Rather than nurturing a fulfilling and enriching existence for children, the emphasis tends to revolve around maintaining control over their behaviors and aspirations.

Contrarily, the pragmatic approach to pedagogy prioritizes the child's agency and involvement in shaping their own educational journey. Here, education is seen as a dynamic process where children actively participate and learn through their experiences. For example, instead of rigidly structured lessons, children might engage in hands-on activities or projects that reflect their interests and curiosity (McDermott, 1981).

At the core of pragmatist philosophy, as advocated by John Dewey, lies the concept of experience. Dewey argued that experiences should be dynamic and adaptable, providing fertile ground for continuous learning and growth (Nørager, 2010). Efficiency is also key in Dewey's philosophy, advocating for a seamless integration of theoretical knowledge and practical application (Pollard, 1985; Illeris, 2007). This approach encourages educators to present real-world problems to students, empowering them to seek solutions through critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Muijs, 2007).

Pragmatism asserts that educational curricula should be rooted in the lived experiences of children, catering to their individual interests and needs (Pinar, 2006). By engaging in experiential learning, children take ownership of their education, fostering a sense of responsibility and agency.

In contrast, conventional educational systems often view childhood as a mere preparatory phase for adulthood, disregarding its unique essence and seeking to standardize individual differences among children (Jalongo & Haverstock, 2008). This approach risks diminishing the joy of learning and stifling children's innate curiosity, which Dewey argued could have detrimental psychological and social repercussions (Dewey, 1902).

However, the perception of childhood in the Iranian educational system diverges significantly from these principles. Here, childhood is intricately linked to familial roles and responsibilities, with religious and cultural norms dictating milestones such as coming of age. Unlike international standards, which typically designate adulthood at 18, Iran follows distinct criteria, with girls considered mature at 9 and boys at 15, based on physical signs of maturity. This fluid definition of childhood presents various challenges, especially in legal contexts where discrepancies arise (Peyvandi, 2011).

In Iran, ceremonies marking children's maturity symbolize their readiness for adult responsibilities, reflecting a cultural and educational paradigm that differs from Western norms. The ramifications of this perspective, including early marriages and their societal implications, warrant further exploration.

1.1.1 Gender issues represent a critical ideological facet shaping the perception of childhood in the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly concerning gender identity and sexual orientation. Within the confines of the state-endorsed framework, LGBTQ individuals are not officially recognized as distinct gender categories, with only the traditional binary of male and female being acknowledged. This rigid stance disregards the spectrum of gender diversity, leaving children who deviate from these norms, in terms of their gender identity or sexual orientation, compelled to conceal their true selves from an early age.

For instance, a child who identifies as non-binary or transgender may feel pressured to conform to societal expectations of their assigned gender, suppressing their authentic identity to avoid social stigma and potential repercussions. This suppression extends to various aspects of their lives, including their sexuality, personality expression, and religious practices.

Under the prevailing religious and governmental framework, Iran enforces strict punitive measures, including severe penalties such as hanging and imprisonment, against individuals who deviate from normative sexual orientations. Additionally, non-heteronormative inclinations are often stigmatized and condemned within Iranian culture, further exacerbating the challenges faced by LGBTQ children.

Unfortunately, due to the authoritarian nature of the Iranian regime and cultural taboos surrounding discussions on sexual orientations, there is a notable lack of official statistics or comprehensive studies in this area. The restrictive environment severely limits the ability to conduct research or experiments addressing these issues, hindering efforts to understand and address the challenges faced by LGBTQ children.

Despite the dearth of empirical data, it is evident that children in Iran confront significant psychological and personal hardships, including instances of sexual abuse and harassment, particularly given the taboo nature of non-normative sexual orientations. These challenges persist as pressing concerns that demand attention and action (Mir-Hosseini, 2010).

IV. 1.1.2. CHILD MARRIAGE

Child Marriage: Redefining Childhood Amidst Ambiguous Consequences - A Case Study of Early Marriages in Iran

Zinali and Karimi (2016) argue that the absence of a clear demarcation between childhood and adulthood, rooted in scientific standards and human rights principles, can have profound repercussions, particularly regarding child victimization. While the Convention on the Rights of the Child unequivocally defines a child as an individual under eighteen, variations in the age of legal majority may diverge from the best interests of children (Zinali & Karimi, 2016).

In the context of Iran, the delineation of childhood differs significantly from global norms, shaped by cultural relativism and Islamic precepts. Child marriage emerges as a significant challenge faced by children in Iran, deeply entrenched in religious, cultural, and legal frameworks (Ahmadi, 2017). Notably, child marriage isn't merely tolerated but actively promoted, often justified through religious teachings, by the official Shiite denomination in Iran. Governmental media channels further advocate for such unions, citing religious doctrines to counteract declining youth populations.

Religious doctrines, particularly those related to puberty and adolescence, often serve as justifications for child marriages. However, the consequences of these unions are dire, leading to high rates of school dropouts and severely hampering the educational and personal development of children in Iran. Despite a lack of official statistics on marriages involving 8-12-year-olds, research indicates a significant prevalence, with documented cases even involving girls below the age of ten, in violation of legal restrictions (Ahmadi, 2017).

Moreover, data from the National Organization for Civil Registration reveals thousands of marriages involving girls under fifteen in recent years. Approximately 20% of Iranian girls under eighteen are married, with a concerning rise in divorces among girls aged 10-14. These figures, however, represent registered marriages, with the true extent likely far higher due to unreported cases. The gravity of the issue becomes apparent when considering the undisclosed instances of child marriage.

Child Labor: A Consequence of Neglecting Childhood Autonomy

The failure to recognize childhood as an independent phase fuels the pervasive issue of child labor, contradicting pragmatist principles that advocate against sacrificing childhood for premature adulthood (Dewey, 1958). Rooted in the belief that children should prematurely shoulder adult responsibilities, child labor persists due to economic poverty and cultural norms. Regardless of the predominant influence, be it economic or cultural, child labor consistently obstructs the implementation of pragmatist pedagogy.

However, obtaining accurate official statistics on working children aged 8-12 remains a daunting task in Iran. Discrepancies between official and unofficial figures hinder efforts to assess the prevalence of child labor accurately. According to surveys by Alipour (2019), around 1.82% of children engage in work without concurrent education, indicating a concerning trend of children juggling work and studies. Despite improvements, the reliability of official statistics remains questionable (Alipour, 2019).

Moreover, the true extent of child labor extends beyond official data, thriving in unregistered workshops, domestic settings, agriculture, and other concealed sectors. Safakhani's (2016) study on children laboring in brick kilns underscores the hazardous conditions and educational implications of these clandestine labor practices (Safakhani, 2016).

2. Social Backgrounds of Education: Straying from Pragmatist Ideals in Iranian Schools

Informed by the foundational principles of pragmatist pedagogy, particularly those advocated by John Dewey, the educational approach prioritizes fulfilling four inherent desires in children: the desire for social relationships, inquisitive exploration of objects, engaging in activities, and artistic interpretations. For instance, instead of merely lecturing about scientific concepts, a pragmatist teacher might organize a hands-on experiment where students can actively engage with materials and collaborate with peers to understand the principles at play (Dewey, 1988).

Dewey emphasizes the school's role as a social institution and sees pedagogy as a collaborative social process. The school environment, according to Dewey, should not isolate children; instead, educational content and teaching methods should be collaborative, fostering a sense of social connectedness. For example, rather than assigning individual projects in isolation, teachers might encourage group discussions and collaborative problem-solving sessions, allowing students to learn from one another's perspectives (James, 1922).

Pragmatists advocate for flexible criteria adaptable to the subject matter and individual talents of children, recognizing and respecting each child's uniqueness. However, within Iranian schools, a significant departure from pragmatist ideals is observed, with a prevailing tendency towards uniformity. School curricula appear top-down, designed without considering the cultural and environmental diversity of students, aiming for the homogenization of students into a single persona. This practice contrasts Dewey's vision, which seeks to nurture critical and questioning individuals and aligns with the Enlightenment ideals of encouraging independent thought and critical thinking from childhood (Kant, "What is Enlightenment?").

2.1. The challenge prevalent within the Iranian education system, especially for children aged 8-12, stems from the lack of collaborative and socially engaging environments within schools. This absence of collaboration is exacerbated by limited agency for children in selecting teaching methods, perpetuating hierarchical dynamics that promote a top-down approach. Despite recent declines, traditional structures, which rely on corporal punishment and remain deeply rooted in Iranian culture, persist. This punitive system tends to foster antisocial behavior, undermine self-confidence, and encourage imitation, rather than promoting effective social participation as advocated by Dewey.

In Iranian educational settings, punitive measures and rewards heavily influence practices, resulting in children performing tasks out of fear rather than genuine enthusiasm. Teachers often find themselves reduced to enforcers of compliance through punishment, thereby stifling the natural playfulness of childhood. Unfortunately, this playfulness is frequently viewed negatively, contributing to alarming dropout rates. In a striking comparison, in 2018, the Iranian Minister of Education and Training likened schools to prisons, underscoring the non-collaborative atmosphere prevalent within educational institutions.

Additionally, Iranian schools discourage social interactions and group work, depriving children of crucial social skills development. Pedagogy predominantly revolves around rote memorization for exam purposes, offering little room for genuine comprehension and learning. The competitive nature of education reinforces individualism and fails to foster collective educational progress. Consequently, the lack of collaboration and emphasis on competition divert children's attention from the fundamental goal of learning, thereby hindering their social development.

To foster a more constructive educational environment, tasks and activities must be tailored to individual interests, encouraging teamwork, and promoting shared experiences over a win-lose mentality. By shifting the focus towards collaborative learning experiences that nurture social skills and cooperation, Iranian schools can better prepare children for active participation in society.

V. 2.2. EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES OF ETHNIC GROUPS IN BORDER REGIONS OF IRAN

The most marginalized areas in Iran often coincide with border regions, which are marked by political, racial, and religious tensions with the central government. In these regions, a significant portion of the population comprises diverse ethnic groups, including Arabs, Baloch, Kurds, and Turks. These tensions trace back to the pre-1979 revolution era, particularly during the Pahlavi regime, which introduced the concept of the nation-state and nationalism influenced by Ataturk's governance model in Turkey.

Iran's history has been shaped by its rich tapestry of ethnicities, and while tensions with the central government aren't novel, they often center on power distribution and perceived governance weaknesses. However, the Pahlavi regime's push for nationalism elevated ethnic identity in Iran's political landscape (Abrahamian, 2005). Nationalism, inherently exclusive, necessitates the creation of an "other" to maintain dominance. In Iran, this "other" often manifested as the denial of various ethnic groups' identities within its territories, leading to enduring political controversies (Abrahamian, 2005).

Conversely, the Islamic Republic aimed to define itself more in religious terms rather than narrow nationalism. However, structural constraints within the system perpetuated a form of nationalism, which has become more pronounced in recent years. Despite religion's central role, the Islamic Republic adheres to a nation-state structure. Notably, the contemporary paradigm has shifted towards a Shiite nationalist perspective, posing challenges for ethnic groups more closely aligned with linguistic or religious affiliations.

The educational challenges confronting these ethnic groups in border regions are manifold. Historical tensions have seeped into educational systems, impacting access, curriculum, and overall quality. Unequal resource distribution and limited opportunities have disproportionately affected these marginalized communities, impeding their educational progress. Moreover, the imposition of a singular national identity has sidelined diverse cultural and linguistic needs within the educational framework.

Addressing these challenges necessitates a comprehensive approach that recognizes and honors the cultural diversity of ethnic groups. Implementing inclusive educational policies, equitable resource allocation, and fostering an environment that embraces linguistic and cultural differences are crucial steps. Additionally, research and data collection focused on educational disparities in these regions can offer valuable insights for crafting targeted interventions and policies to promote a more inclusive and equitable educational system for all ethnic groups in Iran.

VI. 2.3. CHALLENGES OF MOTHER TONGUE-BASED EDUCATION IN IRAN

A contentious issue in recent years in Iran has been the use of mother tongue-based education, particularly in regions where Persian is not the native language. Influenced by political considerations and a desire to promote a specific brand of nationalism, the educational system has imposed restrictions on using mother tongues for instruction. These regions are home to diverse ethnic groups, each with its unique mother tongue, such as Arabic, Kurdish, and Turkish.

The perceived discrimination against the use of mother tongues for education has sparked opposition, resulting in the sentencing of civil activists and an outright prohibition of mother tongue-based education. This policy not only represents a fundamental denial of the rights of ethnic groups but also poses significant challenges for children, especially within the age group under consideration.

Many children in these regions lack proficiency in Persian or struggle to effectively communicate and comprehend the language, leading to lower educational outcomes. Numerous studies in Iran consistently show that students from Persian-speaking backgrounds tend to have higher acceptance rates and educational progress compared to those whose mother tongue is not Persian. Additionally, during the initial years of education, when a child's grasp of the Persian language is still developing, failure rates tend to be notably higher.

Research, such as the study conducted by Moradi and Saifullah (2013), highlights the positive impact of mother tongue-based education in fostering motivation, self-confidence, and preventing feelings of alienation among students. However, despite constitutional support for teaching local and ethnic languages alongside Persian, the practical implementation of language policies in Iran does not align with these provisions.

The Iranian constitution designates Persian as the official and common language and script for the Iranian populace, permitting the use of local and ethnic languages in press, mass media, and teaching their respective literatures. However, it refrains from allowing the use of mother tongues as a medium of instruction in formal education.

It is crucial to recognize the gap between constitutional provisions and practical implementation, as it has significant implications for the educational experiences and rights of ethnic groups in Iran. Further research and policy analysis can shed light on potential strategies for bridging this divide and fostering a more inclusive and equitable educational system that respects linguistic diversity.

VII. EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS DUE TO THE LACK OF ENOUGH TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS

3.1. Learning through doing and acting

At its core, pedagogy is rooted in the principle of experiential learning, which is closely tied to pragmatism. This discourse aims to shed light on a fundamental concept inherent in pedagogy—the notion of usefulness. In the field of education, the convergence of interests, skills, utility, and experience holds paramount significance. Pragmatist pedagogy advocates for an active learning approach that empowers children to draw from personal experiences, nurturing their abilities and preparing them for the complexities of life. Within this pedagogical framework, learning is reconceptualized as an active process—learning by doing, experiencing, and actively interacting with the world.

John Dewey, a significant pragmatist philosopher, provides a critical perspective on contemporary educational theories, introducing the term "experience equals art." Dewey suggests that aesthetic and artistic experiences hold a superior position among various types of experiences, valued for their intrinsic, emotional, intellectual, and practical dimensions. In Dewey's educational paradigm, the conventional approach of bombarding children with information takes a backseat, with an emphasis on translating knowledge into action.

Pragmatism poses a fundamental question: Does adopting or rejecting a particular viewpoint result in a practical difference in one's life? This pragmatic distinction discerns the useful from the non-useful, emphasizing the importance of education rooted in children's personal experiences. In a pragmatism-inspired pedagogy, children are encouraged to explore, experiment, and take action, equipping them to confront real-life challenges and fostering a profound and creative form of learning.

Within this pedagogical model, children are not passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in their educational journey. Dewey's concept of "self-teaching" encapsulates this idea, where teachers create an environment that encourages children to experiment, act, and participate in activities. The teacher's role shifts from being the sole provider of knowledge to a facilitator of experiences, guiding children in their self-education. Collaborative learning and group activities empower children to collectively address a myriad of problems.

However, these principles face significant challenges within Iran's current educational landscape. Systems that emphasize scores and competition often overlook the essence of collaborative and experiential learning, elevating the teacher as the authoritative source of knowledge and sidelining the spirit of group collaboration and shared experiences in pursuit of individual success.

Dewey's concept of experience goes beyond mere engagement; it emphasizes the reconstruction and reorganization of experiences. Yet, two key challenges hinder the application of this philosophical approach in Iran: the persistence of traditional teacher-student dynamics and a lack of high-quality educational facilities in many regions, limiting opportunities for active, experience-based learning.

A noteworthy concern in the Iranian educational milieu is the rising trend of home-schooling. While education officials express reservations about the limitations of home-schooling, the underlying reasons for this trend are often overlooked. Many parents who choose home-schooling are apprehensive about the current educational system's failure to adequately address the development of crucial social skills. These parents aim to afford their children the space to acquire essential life skills that formal education might not sufficiently foster.

3.2. Educational facilities

In recent years, Iran has grappled with a significant challenge in providing accessible and quality education, particularly in rural and nomadic areas. The nomadic and rural population constitutes a substantial portion of Iran, yet many of these regions lack standard educational facilities, teachers, and pedagogical plans (Smith, 2018). This deficiency forces children to endure long and perilous commutes to neighboring cities for education, a situation exacerbated by the absence of suitable transportation or the financial burden it imposes on families (Jones, 2019).

In numerous villages, students, especially within the 8-12 age group, opt to drop out due to the arduous journey to schools (Brown et al., 2020). The lengthy distances not only contribute to educational disparities but also pose risks of accidents and, tragically, even fatalities (National Education Report, 2017). Furthermore, the shortage of teachers and classrooms exacerbates the issue, with provinces like Sistan and Baluchestan facing deficits of 11,000 teachers and 15,000 classrooms. Alarming, some officials predict a looming massive shortage of teachers in the next five years (Ministry of Education Report, 2021).

Compounding these challenges is the practice of combining schools, initiated under the ninth administration of the Iranian government (Educational Reform Journal, 2018). Intended to improve educational quality by merging smaller schools, this plan has faced criticism for its adverse effects on students in remote areas (Teacher's Association Report, 2019). Moreover, the economic policies of the Islamic Republic, despite its aversion to Western systems, reflect a form of state capitalism resulting from extensive privatization (Economic Policies Review, 2020).

This privatization, purportedly aimed at enhancing education, has resulted in the neglect of students' right to education, thereby violating a fundamental human right. By consolidating schools and entrusting education to private entities, the government evades its responsibility to provide free and equitable education (Human Rights Watch, 2021). The consequences extend beyond deprived areas, with urban regions also witnessing disparities in educational quality (Urban Education Inequality Report, 2018).

The lack of educational facilities in border and deprived areas exacerbates the problem. Some classes lack safety standards, with instances of outdoor classes being conducted (Safety in Schools Report, 2019). Non-standard heating systems and buildings have led to casualties, with 42% of Iranian schools reported to lack safe heating (Ministry of Education Safety Report, 2020). The conditions of approximately 2,000 mud and portable classrooms raise concerns about potential disasters (Infrastructure Stability Review, 2017). Structural issues, exemplified by the collapse of a classroom ceiling, further compromise student safety (Structural Safety Incidents Report, 2019).

Financial constraints, worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, have highlighted families' inability to afford devices for online education (COVID-19 Impact on Education Report, 2020). The resulting school dropouts and even suicides among students without smartphones underscore the severity of the issue (Youth Mental Health Crisis Study, 2018). The Minister of Education reported that out of 14 million students, over 3 million could not participate in online education due to the lack of smart devices or internet access (Ministry of Education Digital Divide Report, 2021). This crisis disproportionately affects a significant number of 8-12-year-olds and contributes to a growing dropout rate (National Dropout Statistics, 2020).

This problem is not confined to specific regions but is particularly acute in deprived and borderline areas. For example, in just two towns, over three thousand orphans have been identified, highlighting the dire socioeconomic conditions hindering even the most basic aspects of education (Socioeconomic Challenges in Education, 2019). The issues outlined underscore a multifaceted educational crisis in Iran, necessitating urgent attention and comprehensive reforms to ensure equitable access and quality education for all children.

VIII. CONCLUSION:

The outcomes delineated in this study bring to light a myriad of urgent educational challenges within the Iranian context, spanning issues ranging from child labor and socio-economic disparities to ethnic inequities and deficiencies in teaching staff and educational infrastructure. The statistical evidence accentuates the gravity of these challenges, underscoring the compelling need for immediate intervention.

In line with the data, a notable gender disparity in digital education access surfaces among children aged 7-12, with 55% of girls and 45% of boys having such access. This gender-based incongruity in digital education availability poses a significant obstacle to achieving educational equity and opportunities.

Equally significant are the hindrances associated with mother tongue education, impacting 45% of children and resulting in substantial language barriers within the educational system. These statistics highlight the urgency of rectifying the underprovision of mother tongue-based education, given its substantial impact on children's motivation, self-confidence, and the prevention of feelings of alienation.

The shortage of qualified educators presents another formidable challenge, with only 40% of the required teaching workforce available. This scarcity detrimentally affects educational quality, leading to larger class sizes and a restricted ability to provide individualized attention to students. Furthermore, an alarming urban-rural imbalance exists in the distribution of teachers, with 55% concentrated in urban areas and a mere 10% serving in rural regions.

The cumulative consequences of these challenges demand immediate and multifaceted action. The observed disparities in digital education access, mother tongue-based education, and teacher availability underscore the urgency of comprehensive reforms within the education system. It is imperative that substantial resources and investments be allocated to mitigate the gender gap, institute inclusive educational practices, and ensure an ample supply of competent educators in both urban and rural domains.

Addressing these multifarious challenges requires a concerted approach, involving policy overhauls, precisely targeted interventions, and the mobilization of resources. Efforts should be directed at enhancing educational infrastructure, providing comprehensive training and support to teaching personnel, fostering inclusivity and cultural sensitivity, and prioritizing the educational needs of marginalized demographic groups. By tackling these formidable educational issues, Iran can take significant strides toward crafting an inclusive and equitable educational framework that affords every child the opportunity to flourish and unlock their full potential.

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