



SELF-PERCEIVED NEEDS OF RURAL YOUTH IN PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Needs assessment is the systematic way to clearly define the needs and the gap that exists between existing and desired situation. Although there are various youth organizations playing their part to realize young individuals about their needs and role they have to play in the society. However, these people are not receiving desired attention especially those who live in rural areas. This study was conducted in the Department of Sociology, Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan during the year 2014 to assess the self-perceived needs of rural youth. Sargodha district was selected for this study. The people between the ages of 15 to 32 (regarded as youth) were selected as respondents and were interviewed. From four different villages, 60 young individuals were selected randomly for data collection. The results concluded that rural youth was keen in promoting its needs at international level. These people were interested in highlighting their problems. Low schooling years among the rural youth was the major considerable point as 28% of the respondents completed only eight years of schooling while 27% completed their secondary education. Access to internet facility was negligible among available information sources to rural youth while young respondents had major access to printed material including books and other literature. Ensuring employment opportunities was top priority need of the rural youth ranked by the respondents. Regression model showed that access to information sources and need identification skills played a significant role in enhancing the knowledge level of the respondents about their needs.

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INTRODUCTION

Needs assessment is an organized process commonly used for defining and addressing needs, or “gaps” between current and desired situation. In other words, it defines the space between what is, and what it should be. The difference between the current and future conditions are very much important to appropriately identify the needs. A need can also be a desire to improve existing condition or to correct a deficiency (Kizlik, 2010).

The needs assessment has a significant role in planning process. This process is often used for making improvement in individuals, organizations, or communities. It can also be used to refine and improve a specific product such as it may be training or service for a client. It can prove to be an effective tool to clarify major problems and identify appropriate interventions or solutions (Chauhdry *et al.* 2016). After clearly determining, classifying and categorizing the problem, limited resources can be directed towards developing

and implementing a feasible, cost effective, manageable and highly result oriented solution (Altschuld and Kumar, 2010).

Collection, correct, suitable and sufficient data notifies the process of developing an effective product that will address the needs and desires of the group (Anon, 2011). Needs assessment is only effective when it is highly focused and provides firm indication that can help us to determine which of the possible means-to-the-ends are most operative and efficient for accomplishing the desired goals (Kaufman *et al.*, 1993).

Currently, many youth services are available in different parts of the world to reduce or change their delivery points. However, these often have faced extensive resistance from local people. Normally this pressure stops youth services from making changes in resource utilization techniques, and maintains the existing state of affairs. In other well-funded services, this does not matter too much.

A well-organized needs assessment leading to robust management information will enable the youth service to show how its existing work helps council strategies for children and young people, and should ensure that this is taken into account in any budget pooling arrangements. Youth services will need to ensure that their expressed priorities are backed up by a thorough assessment of need. Most youth services and organizations are now working towards a system of results based accountability, which uses indicators or benchmarks to help quantify the achievement of a result (Hibbert, 2005).

Youth aged 15-24 years is 1.2 billion, which accounts for approximately 18 percent of the global population. Over half of them live in rural areas of developing countries. Upto 70% of the youth in sub-saharan Africa and South Asia live in rural areas, and over half of those engage in agriculture. Rural youth are facing major health problems, which include malnutrition, malaria, and HIV/AIDS. It is important, however, to keep the direct health threat posed by HIV/AIDS in proper perspective. The World Development Report, 2007 on youth concluded that 'youth policies often fail'. Youth policies in developing countries have frequently been criticized for being biased towards non-poor, males living in urban areas (Bennell, 2007). An estimated 93 percent of the jobs available to young people in developing countries are in the places, where earnings are low, working conditions are unsafe, and there is little or no social protection available for these young people for full utilization of their working potential (Anon, 2006). Initiatives aimed at rural youth remain scarce and rarely topic focused. For instance, only 10 percent of the World Bank's interventions on youth target rural areas. Bennell (2007) reported that 'youth unemployment' has become a crisis and a persistent concern of politician and policymakers in many countries especially developing nations but since the 1960s, youth development has remained at the margins of national development strategies in most of the countries. The author further suggested that this crisis must be met with innovative, broadly focused youth needs based and youth friendly policies. Luqman *et al.* (2013) concluded that training centers if established can be very vital in providing

training opportunities to rural people. Similarly the most significant and prominent competencies from technical point of view in which the extension agents require training, included plant protection as well as horticultural practices (Chaudhry *et al.* 2016).

In rural areas lack of opportunities to educate youth for employment and to refine their skills resulting in encouraging urban-migration which results in wastage of rural youth potential. Migration to urban areas is not always a preferred choice among rural youth as it includes much personal sacrifices and uncertainties; and many would prefer to remain with their families in their rural communities if given opportunities for productive jobs and good working conditions (Puerto, 2007).

The International Labor Organization report published on Global Employment Trends for Youth described that today's youth represent a group with serious weaknesses in this complex world. Currently, slowing of global employment growth and increase in unemployment, under-employment and disillusionment have hit young people badly. As a result, today's youth is faced with a growing deficit of decent work opportunities and high levels of economic and social uncertainty. Rural youth tends to be poorly educated, especially in comparison to urban youth. The extent of 'urban bias' in the provision of publicly funded education and training services is large in most low-income developing countries (Bennell, 2007). The primary objective of the study was to assess the knowledge level of the rural youth regarding their perceived needs in Pakistani society.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in the Department of Sociology, Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan during the year 2014. For this study Sargodha district was selected randomly from Punjab province. Multistage sampling technique was used for data collection. The rural youth of the district Sargodha was taken as population of the study. The age criteria for youth was also set to choose only youth for data collection. The people between the ages of 15 to 32 (regarded as youth) (Anon 2014) were selected as respondents and were interviewed.

From four different villages, 60 young individuals were selected randomly for data collection. The questionnaire was reviewed by panel of experts for ensuring its face and content validity. Then the reliability of the instrument was checked using Cronbach's Alpha technique whose value was found to be 0.761 which shows that instrument used was quite reliable for data collection. Collected data were entered into SPSS software for further analysis. Frequencies of the demographics were obtained while mean and standard deviation score of all other variables was obtained. Regression analysis model was also applied to assess the variation in the data and identify the explained variation by independent variables on account of dependent variable of knowledge level of the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gender was the first demographic section included in the questionnaire. Demographic analysis displayed that quiet a large majority (92%) of the respondents was male and 8% was female. The second demographic question was age of the respondents. Majority of the respondents (71%) was of 23 to 26 years old which is quiet a mature stage of life where every individual is fully aware of its desires and needs. against 3% 15 to 18 years, 15% respondents between 19 to 22 years and 11% fell between 27 to 30 years age. Ven and Smits (2011) mentioned that changes in age structures are very important to study, because different types of age groups display different behavior. Age is very important independent variable as many activities depend on age. Research studies have showed that mature people show different behavior towards a problem as compared to younger ones.

Next question was related to number of schooling years of the respondents. The data indicated that majority (28%) of the respondents had only eight schooling years, while about 27% of the respondents had completed ten years of schooling. Only 3% completed 16 years while 7% completed 14 schooling years. Shockingly, 7% of young respondents were illiterate who had never attended the school. This shows pitiable condition of education in rural areas.

Major source of income was another demographic question included the questionnaire. The data showed that 80% of the respondents were of the view that major source of their income is farming. About 12% of the respondents' family was relying heavily on the laborer-ship for earning and have something to eat while 7% respondents' families were relying on small shops for income.

The next question included in demographics was related to major activities performed by the respondents. More than half (53%) of the youth was involved in farming. Only 3% respondents were having government job. About 8% of the respondents were involved in home assignments as they had no other work to do. It may be due to un-employment that they were unable to find any job. Similar percentage (about 8%) of the respondents was adopting laborer-ship as major activity to fulfill their family's financial needs. Ten percent respondents were having private job while similar percentage were students and study was their major activity.

The data were then analyzed according to the landholding of the respondents. The results depicted that majority of the respondents (about 40%) had 5-9 acres of land while 20% of the respondents had no land which shows that these respondents belonged to labor family who solely depend on this profession. Twenty percent of the respondents had 10 to 14 acres of land. Over-all about 80% of the respondents had 14 or less acres of land which clearly shows that majority of the respondents belonged to the small landholding families. The landholding is decreasing with the passage of time with the increase in population. Arable land is decreasing continuously which requires special attention from the policy makers. The last question included in the demographic profile was number of family members of the respondents. Majority (about 38%) of the respondents' families consisted of six members. About 23% had 5 family members and 5% had 8 members while similar percentage had four members.

With regards to knowledge level of the respondents, mean score and standard deviation of each question was collected and ranking was done for complete understanding the importance given by respondents to each question (Table 1).

Table 1. Knowledge level.

Questions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Knowledge about basic needs desired by a young individual	60	3.7833	.84556	3
Knowledge about all youth problems in a society	60	3.7500	.91364	4
Knowledge about role of youth in national development	60	4.1667	.92364	1
Knowledge about all priority needs of rural youth	60	4.0000	.78113	2

*Mean: 1=Very high, 2=High, 3= Medium, 4 = Low, 5 = None

The data showed that respondents' knowledge about role of youth in national development was ranked first with highest mean score between low and none i.e. 4.1667. It means that respondents had low knowledge level about role of rural youth in national development while respondents' knowledge about all priority needs of the rural youth was ranked second with mean score of 4.00. Knowledge of respondents about all basic needs desired by a young individual belonging to rural area was ranked third (mean score 3.7833) while respondents' knowledge about all youth problems in a society ranked last (mean score of 3.75).

Access to information sources was another variable included in the questionnaire. There were total five questions included under this variable. The results (Table 2) clearly show that youth's access to internet was negligible with mean score of 4.8833 and was ranked first along-with standard deviation score of 0.37243. In addition, access to any exhibitions or trainings for youth, respondents'

mean score was 4.7167 with standard deviation of 0.45442 and ranked second. Access to other miscellaneous sources of information was ranked third (mean score 4.6167 and standard deviation 0.69115). Access to printed materials like pamphlets, brochures or other similar information sources was ranked fourth with mean score of 4.5167 and standard deviation of 0.83345.

Table 2. Access to information sources.

Questions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Access to any printed material	60	4.5167	.83345	4
Access to Television	60	2.5167	.89237	5
Access to Internet facility	60	4.8833	.37243	1
Access to attend any Exhibitions/ seminars/ trainings	60	4.7167	.45442	2
Access to any Other information sources	60	4.6167	.69115	3

*Mean: 1 = Very high, 2 = High, 3 = Medium, 4 = Low, 5 = None

The third variable was related to available services and facilities for rural youth. Rank order, mean score and standard deviation of each question under this variable is given in Table 3.

Table 3. Available services.

Questions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Existing education system for males	60	4.1667	.64221	10
Existing education system for females	60	4.7000	.53043	1
Existing rural health system	60	4.7000	.49745	1
Existing Infrastructure of the area	60	3.5000	.94779	12
Present agri. advisory services	60	4.1000	.62977	11
Current govt. policies for rural youth	60	4.4000	.94241	8
Current vet. services in the area	60	4.4167	.71997	7
Level of male participation in planning	60	4.5500	.56524	4
Level of female participation in planning	60	4.5833	.67124	4
Existing skill enhancement opportunities	60	4.5500	.53441	4
Existing marketing facilities	60	4.3833	.61318	9
Existing transport facilities	60	3.3167	.81286	13
Existing employment opportunities	60	4.6333	.80183	3

1 = Very good, 2 = Good, 3 = Satisfactory, 4 = Poor, 5 = Very poor

The data show that existing education system and existing rural health system both were ranked first i.e. between poor and very poor (more on very poorer side) with mean score of 4.70 and standard deviation score of 0.53043 and 0.49745, respectively. Existing employment opportunities for rural youth were ranked second with average

score of 4.6333 and standard deviation of 0.80183. Existing level of female participation in decision-making and planning process by government in youth projects or programs was ranked third with mean score of 4.5833 and standard deviation of 0.67124. Participation level of males in decision-making and planning process and existing skill

enhancement opportunities for rural youth both were ranked fourth with mean score of 4.5500 and standard deviation of 0.56524 and 0.53441, respectively.

The last variable was related to need identification of the respondents. Questions regarding different needs of rural youth were developed and respondents were asked to rate these needs on five point likert type scale so that most priority needs may be identified.

The data (Table 4) show that need for creating proper employment opportunities for rural youth was at top priority and ranked first with high mean score of 4.83 and standard deviation

score of 0.37582. Need for strengthening skill development opportunities for females and need for strengthening agri. marketing facilities both were ranked second with average score of 4.7500 and standard deviation score of 0.43667 and 0.57120, respectively. Need for developing females' skill is very much important because a skilled female can generate enough revenue to support her family financially. She may become skillful in managing house activities so that she may spare time for doing something extra as source of income generation. Need for strengthening rural youth policy and need for ensuring rural youth involvement in planning process both were ranked third.

Table 4. Needs prioritization.

Questions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Need for educational development for males	60	4.4333	.64746	9
Need for educational development for females	60	4.6333	.58125	6
Need for upgrading rural health system	60	4.5167	.67627	8
Need for infrastructure development	60	3.4833	.91117	12
Need for strengthening agri. advisory services	60	4.0000	.58222	11
Need for strengthening rural youth policies	60	4.6500	.65935	3
Need for ensuring rural youth involvement in planning	60	4.6500	.48099	3
Need for ensuring employment opportunities for rural youth	60	4.8333	.37582	1
Need for skills development for males	60	4.5833	.59065	7
Need for skills development for females	60	4.7500	.43667	2
Need for strengthening veterinary sector	60	4.1833	.50394	10
Need for strengthening agri. marketing facilities	60	4.7500	.57120	2

*Mean: 1 = Extremely not required, 2 = Not required, 3 = No Response, 4 = Required, 5 = Extremely required

In this study, multiple liner regression model was used to determine the variance between the dependent (criterion) variable of knowledge and independent (predictor) variables such as need prioritization skills, age of the respondents, access to information sources, family size, number of years of schooling, land-holding and need identification skills.

The results (Table 5) show the value of R, R-square and Adjusted R-square. The value of R-square was found to be 0.655 which shows about 65% explained variation in the dependent variable of knowledge. By looking at ANOVA (Table 6) and using Alpha level of 0.05, the model was statistically significant i.e. $F = 13.845$ and $P < 0.05$.

Table 5. Model summary.

Model	R	R-square	Adjusted R-square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.809a	.655	.608	1.74521

Table 6. ANOVA.

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	295.174	7	42.168	13.845
	Residual	155.334	51	3.046	
	Total	450.508	58		

a. Dependent Variable: knowledge, b. Predictors: (Constant), need prioritization, age, info sources, family members, years of schooling, land, need identification.

The Table 7 indicates independent variables of schooling years, number of family members, access to information sources and need identification skills played a significant role in enhancing the knowledge level of the respondents about their needs. However, number of family members and years of schooling were statistically significant demographic variables. Standard coefficients showed that net effect on knowledge level (dependent variable), was associated with one unit change in independent variables such as schooling years, number of family members, access to information sources and need identification skills.

Table 7. Coefficients.

Model	Un-standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	5.949	5.759		1.033	.306
Age	.020	.100	.018	.200	.842
Years of schooling	-.319	.072	-.417	-4.462	.000
Family members	-.580	.148	-.369	-3.921	.000
Land	.036	.035	.097	1.025	.310
Info sources	.387	.122	.275	3.159	.003
Need identification	.246	.080	.333	3.072	.003
Need prioritization	-.126	.100	-.128	-1.256	.215

a. Dependent Variable: knowledge

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that rural youth was found to be very keen in promoting its needs at national and international level. They took interest in highlighting their problems and conveying these to policy makers for taking special attention. Low schooling years were found among the rural youth as 28% of the respondents completed only eight years of schooling while 27% completed their secondary education. Most the respondents' families (80%) were relying on farming as major source of income. More than half (53%) of the respondents were doing farming as their daily activity. About 40% of the respondents had 5 to 9 acres of landholding. Youth respondents' knowledge about role of youth in national development was ranked first with mean score of 4.16 while respondents had enough knowledge regarding all youth problems and was ranked fourth with mean of 3.75. Access to internet facility was ranked first while young respondents had major access to printed material and was ranked fourth. Existing education facilities for females and existing rural health system both were ranked first with high mean score of 4.70. Existing transport facilities was ranked 11th with lowest mean score of 3.31. Need for ensuring employment opportunities was ranked first and top priority need of the rural youth with mean score of 4.83 while need for infrastructure development was ranked 9th with mean score of 3.48. Regression analysis showed significant role of schooling years, family members, access to information sources and need identification skills of the respondents in explaining the dependent variable of knowledge.

Based on the results, it is recommended that standard of rural education system should be improved so that youth literacy rate may be

increased. Secondly, land holding is decreasing which is promoting rural poverty. Therefore; rural youth must be provided with enough skill development and employment opportunities to uplifting the financial condition of the rural areas. Thirdly, rural areas should be equipped with latest information sources including access to internet facility so that youth may benefit from such sources and technology and communication gap between rural and urban areas may be curtailed. Rural education system for females should be revived keeping in view the traditional norms and values. Separate female schools would be more appropriate for promoting female education in rural areas. Rural health system should be re-established with full devotion and it must be equipped with latest facilities. Strengthening of agricultural marketing system must be ensured to reduce post harvest grain losses facilitating farmers to sell their crops with ease.

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CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS

Ayesha Chaudhry	Planned and conducted the whole research
Muhammad Younis Afzal	Collected the data
Khalid Mahmood Chaudhry	Critically reviewed the data
Rana Muhammad Amir	Statistically analyzed the data
Sobia Naheed	Helped in statistical analysis