

Sustainable and Holistic ECD Model for Rural Areas of Pakistan: A Case Study of AW-IP Model in Hasis Village

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Abstract

Grappling with the challenges in prenatal and post-natal health, antenatal care, nutrition of mothers and children are equally important in upbringing of a strong mind and body besides child care between 3-8 years age. Community based Agah-Walidain (Informed Parents) model takes into account cognitive abilities, social skills, emotional intelligence, ethics, parental engagement, health, nutrition and hygiene by engaging communities in discourse of ECD. The model is specifically designed and developed in Pakistan to address wide array of challenges faced by children, families and communities. The model has potential to be scaled up in rural settings with scarce resources, poor infrastructure and limited access. The family support motivators help the communities to establish conducive environments within homes and villages for holistic development of children. The participation of community based organizations ensures financial sustainability and continuation of Agah-Walidain Programme. This paper assesses the effectiveness and potential of Agah-Walidain model in remote, isolated and marginalized setting of Hasis Village in Gilgit-Baltistan. It also attempts to explore the potential of cost effective community based ECD model for extension to other parts of Pakistan. The integration between different stakeholders and agencies including parents, community members, teachers and other civil society agencies like VO's, WO's, makes the community based programs like AW-IP more sustainable by generating the social capital in terms of cooperation for mutual action to bring in long-term sustainable change.

Keywords: agah-walidain model, early childhood development, community, sustainability, rural areas

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Introduction

The educational landscape in Pakistan is diverse and different models of education are functioning diligently in various capacities to fulfil the needs of the huge population. Pakistan became signatory of UNESCO on 1950 to commit to 'Facilitating the International Circulation of Visual and Auditory Materials of an Educational, Scientific and Cultural character with Protocol of Signature and model form of certificate provided for in Article IV of the above-mentioned Agreement (UNESCO, 2017). In this regard, the notion of Early Childhood Development was adopted by educational institutions considering international scientific researches and neurological advancements. Whereas, ECD focus children of a 3 to 8 years, but new discoveries in neuroscience revealed that the most decisive phase in a child's brain development is prenatal stage. This early phase from conception to three years is referred as transitional stage as a child goes through tremendous changes in terms of cognitive abilities, emotional intelligence, communication skills and interaction with people. The learning capacities increase exponentially. The first three years are the most important in a child's life. It is during this period that the brain is most plastic, grows fastest and is most responsive to the outside world. Most of the brain's neural pathways supporting communication, understanding, social development and emotional well-being grow rapidly in these first three years (Grantham-McGregor, et al., 2007) .

Nestled among Hindukash and Karakoram Mountains, Hasis village is a small hamlet located near Ghakuch, the district headquarters of Puniyal. Hasis is linked to other villages of Puniyal through a jagged and bumpy dirt road and the only mode of transport is a public van that carries passengers to their destinations once in a day. Locals are usually settled along the main road but some of them also reside on the mountain. Mainstay of the residents is generally subsistence farming, horticulture, and trade, while some of the men are also enrolled in Pakistan army. Moreover, the population's economic dynamics are gradually shifting towards fruit production and sale, as it is considered more profitable. The main language spoken is Shina and Khuwar (Shah, 2016). The educational landscape of the area is also encouraging as majority of the youth is enrolled in local and national institutions, where two private Early Child Development schools are catering to the educational needs. Nonetheless they could not suffice the requirements of the whole population and one of the facilities is far off from the population that is causing accessibility issues. Apart from these

hindrances half of the residents are unfamiliar of ECD model education but gradually awareness of its structure and effectiveness is building up.

Nevertheless, in the light of research regarding a child's brain development and functionality, ECD model seems insufficient and ineffective in imparting social and physical skills required to fully evolve the potential and capacities of a child. To counter this gap in education, academic experts and scientists introduced a new model that specifically concentrates on children from prenatal stage to 3 years and the most important aspect of this model is that parents' participation is mandatory throughout the whole duration of learning period. In this regard, Rupani Foundation introduced the model of AW-IP to address this essential issue; it established centres in different villages that enrolls children of age 0-3 along with their mothers. A member of the family is required to accompany the student in absence of parents. This setup focuses on holistic development of cognitive and behavioral skills; classes include sensory games, physical movements, music and cognitive activities like signing and language games as age appropriate activities are valued. Parents gain an insight into their baby's development from birth onwards and learn a carefully designed range of physical, multi-sensory and cognitive games and exercises which can be enjoyed together in class and at home. Moreover, to make this practice, successful parents are engaged from the period of conception till the child graduates from the centre. It is compulsory to accompany the children by one of his family members at the centre, where parents and acquaintances are trained to inculcate social adaptability and behavioral/soft skills in their children by using non-traditional and nonviolent approaches. Additionally, the success of this setup is reciprocal to complete replication of learned knowledge in home environment. It is essential that a parent must follow the same learning patterns at home to ensure effectiveness of AW-IP model. Besides, the success of the centre is also linked to its sustainability; the residents of the locale are required to ensure the sustainability and, the functionality of the centre after the management is handed over to the committee.

Review of the Literature

This review of literature summarized the empirical research discussing the overview of the phenomenon of early childhood development alongwith the role of parents, teachers and community as the key stakeholders, the possible strategies for a sustainable ECD Model

in a community and way forward for a stable future for the present and upcoming generations.

It is well understood and recognized globally that a child's early capabilities lay the foundation for later capabilities. This, when coupled with provision of quality education and care in all developmental domains in early years, increases the likelihood for a successful future of a child.

According to World Bank, Early Childhood Development known as ECD refers to the physical, cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development of a child from the prenatal stage up to age eight. This development happens in a variety of settings (home, school, health facilities, community-based centres); and it involves a wide range of activities from child care to nutrition to parent education (TheWorldBank, 2010). Early child development is seen as a natural and universal process of progressive transformations (or stages) in children's physical, mental, cognitive, socio-emotional and moral competencies (Vogler, Crivello, & Woodhead, 2008)

According to Canadian Council on Learning, learning in the first five years of childhood has critical implications for well-being and later success in school, at work, and in the community—more so than learning in any other stage of life (Crosser, 1996).

Throwing light on the importance of integrated learning approach which includes the support of parents, (Penn, et al., 2004) states that the programs that integrate opportunities for both children and parents are beneficial for children aged birth to 6. Early childhood development (ECD) programs that provide an integrated package of services to address the health, nutrition, education, social and economic needs of the underprivileged children have been found to produce tremendous improvements in children's early cognitive development (Engle, et al., 2007).

An experiment conducted by Landry, Smith & Swank in 2006 examined whether mothers' responsive behaviors could be facilitated and whether such behaviors would boost young children's learning. The researchers concluded that the mothers who had received the training showed improvements in their own behavior and caused change to their infants' behavior (Newfoundland & Labrador, 2011).

Discussing the importance of family environment (Siddiqi, Irwin, & Hertzman, 2009) are of the view that the family environment is the primary source of experience for a child because family members (or other primary caregivers) provide the largest share of human contact with children and, the families mediate a child's contact with the broader

environment. Perhaps the most salient features of the family environment are its social and economic resources. Family social resources include parenting skills and education, cultural practices and approaches, intra-familial relations, and the health status of family members. Economic resources include wealth, occupational status, and dwelling conditions. In a report for the World Health Organization's Commission on the Social Determinants of Health, Siddiqi and colleagues name the family environment as the primary source for children's experiences and contact with the larger community. As per their views, environments that are stimulating, supportive, and nurturing will benefit all children regardless of geography, ethnicity, language or societal circumstances (Siddiqi, Irwin, & Hertzman, 2009).

While highlighting the effectiveness of parents' involvement in community building initiatives, Epstein et al said that partnerships between parents, community members, and the school can improve school programs and climate, provide support and services to families, increase parents' skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and community, and help teachers with their work (Epstein, et al., 2002). Emphasizing residential and relational community, and its impacts on children, Putnam states that the child and family environment are shaped both by the residential community (where the child and family live) and the relational community (based on social ties among networks of people with a shared identity). Essentially, child outcomes relate to the social ties between community residents that facilitate the collective monitoring of children related to shared community norms and practices, as well as, positive role modelling (Putnam, 2003).

Research by leading economists around the world has linked investment in early childhood development with economic prosperity, productivity and competitiveness for both the individual and society (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2011). Economists now assert on the basis of the available evidence that investment in early childhood is the most powerful investment a country can make, with returns over the life course many times the amount of the original investment (Mitchell, Wylie, & Carr, 2008).

According to California Department of education, cultural groups promote child development through socialization norms and practices, and the emotional relationships they foster. Families differentially reinforce specific behaviors and nurture specific skills, while assigning a lower priority to other behaviors and skills. For example, in some cultures, young children are provided with outlets encouraging energetic activities. Others may value and reinforce stillness and quiet. In some

cultures, the notion of children's rights is well developed; in others, parental prerogative is more fully delineated (Faye & Bridges, 2016). Maggi and his fellows, in a report to World Health Organization, mentioned that culture and tradition regulate several aspects of the relationship between parents and children including feeding and eating routines, the behaviors that are tolerated and those that are punished, and the household economic arrangements. For programs promoting changes in the community, program approaches should be applied incorporating cultural and traditional practices as much as possible (Maggi, Irwin, Siddiqi, Poureslami, Hertzman, & Hertzman, 2005).

It is well understood phenomenon that the socio-economic development can never rely on donors or funding agencies like NGOs for longer term, and it must not. For the reason that it stagnates the essence of making efforts in the community people making them to do no hard work for themselves in particular and for community at large, consequently eroding the chances of the project to be sustainable in the future. It is, thus, the community who is primarily responsible for empowering the grass root communities through resource mobilization for the sustainability of any project implemented for them. When done well, community-based ECD centre programming can meet the needs of the caregiver and the family as well as the child (Messner, Lyn, & Marcy, 2012)

The sustainability of the Community Based Childcare Centres (CBCCs) approach to ECD programming lies in the fact that it is a community-owned and managed initiative. It has been argued that it is important to invest in ECD programs as it is a major mechanism through which inter-generational cycle of poverty can be broken (Munthali, Mvula, & Silo, 2001).

Objective of the Study

The basic objective behind the initiation of AW-IP model under ECD component was to invest in the rural communities to make a sustainable and more sound future for upcoming generations through focusing on the pre-natal to 3 years old young children and their primary care givers. The purpose of study under consideration was to check the strategies adopted for the sustainability of community based AW-IP model so that it can be scaled up for replication on more wider scale. So, this study would specifically investigate the contextual feasibility of AW-IP model in terms of perception of people on ECD learning, economic and cultural adaptability, mobility and access.

Methodology

Keeping in view the nature of research question under consideration, the qualitative methodological technique of case study was adopted. Case study enables the researcher to closely examine the data within a given context as well as it selects a small geographical area or limited population as subjects of study and investigates detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions (Zainal, 2007). The population of case study selected for this research was Hassis village which is located in Ghizer District. The reason behind selecting the case study area for research was that it is a remote area with diverse population matrix in term of lingual and religious affiliations, and the program activities carried out by the community are sufficiently prospering as compared to the other areas. Apart from this, the profile of area precisely depicts the picture of South Asian societal dynamics. The sample was selected through purposive sampling in which the stakeholders directly involved with the activities of ECD were included; thus, the groups included are; Parents, FSM'S, and the members of ECD committee. The major reason for selection of purposive sampling strategy was that the program emphasized on the people involved in child rearing practice as well as it also allowed us to select those people who have adequate knowledge of the topic. The tools for primary data collection were focus group discussion, collection of field stories and key informant interviews to get a deeper understanding of subject.

Data Analysis

The thematic analysis technique was used to analyze the qualitative data from focus group discussion and in-depth interviews. The researcher pinpointed the recurring patterns in data which were further reconsidered for coding to identify the necessary themes linking the research objectives. It emphasized pinpointing, examining, and recording patterns (or "themes") within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Findings and Analysis

General Perception of Committee

When asked about the general perception of community regarding ECD for 0 to 3 years old children, the FGD participants told us that

although there were two groups in the society who have different opinions about AW-IP but it is gradually evolving in a positive way. Most of the participants from ECD committee reflected that those who are old and having no kids at their homes and have not experienced the AW-IP by themselves are relatively bit reluctant and have reservations. While the people who enrolled their children at AW-IP were of the view that it has brought substantial change in their kids. Taking inspiration from them, other parents have also enrolled their kids at the centre. Addressing the performance of a kid enrolled at AW-IP, one of the member of ECD committee said that,

My own nephew is enrolled here; his elder brother is studying in another school. The youngest one can read books of his brother and can identify pictures and maps but the eldest can't. This shows that the education being provided at infancy can substantially help in the development of a child.

The community members who were not aware of AW-IP model, viewed it as a waste of time and worthless activity. One of the major reason highlighted by the community members is lack of awareness because they were not directly linked with the activities nor have they experienced the change it brings in children, reason being rather they have no kids at their home or not being aware of the program. So, unless and until they come and experience the proceedings of the AW-IP centre by themselves, it is not possible to make them understand it. One of the community member has further elaborated the issue of reservation and said that,

People used to bicker regarding learning practices being implemented here and accuse mothers of visiting centre for leisure; they say what the children will learn from playing with toys and pictures.

Another member added, "My mother told me while taking my nephew to school that why children are being sent to the centre they just play with toys", because majority of the people believe that if the children cannot learn to write, it is worthless. Another member of the committee while commenting on the perception of parents who are not aware of early childhood development stated that *some mothers during enrolling their children to AW-IP centre request teachers to enroll them even if they are over age; and say that children are playing with toys in other centres just like this*". This is because they do not know that

children are learning from toys and this learning pedagogy targets those children who are under three years. Further adding to the stance, another committee member told us, *“The only concern of parents who have recently enrolled their children to the centre is about their writing and reading skills.”* This shows that the perception of early childhood learning for community members who are not fully aware of early childhood development is limited to acquisition of writing and reading skills.

The committee members related the general perception of the masses regarding AW-IP; the data gleaned from focus group discussions showed that community are not properly aware of the model and rely on their own assumptions. Mothers and family members who visit the centre are targeted with taunts and biased accusations of indolence. However, in committee’s opinion, AW-IP model is creating an impactful difference in children that can be witnessed through their enhanced cognitive abilities, social skills and emotional resilience.

The perception of Parents

Sharing the past perception and comparing it with perception built after the AW-IP program, a respondent said that, *“Before AW-IP program we were not aware that child can be reared since inception else, we had the concept of normal ECD which starts when child reaches the age of 4.”* Adding to their stance other respondents further narrated that,

R1. If the child will come to school soon after his birth than it will be better for both of us, else at home he would have been learned same things, but here at centre he can learn things like how to behave how to read, how to write and how to eat.

R2. Children after coming to centre learn things like caring and sharing like he shares the toys at centre with his friends. Before coming to centre, my child was so possessive with things but now he shares his toys with other siblings.

R3. It is a new experience for us; as we have also learnt certain things which we never knew before like phonics. We only knew that our children have to memorize the alphabets.

R4. My elder kids have not received the ECD education because at that time there was no such concept of it, now my younger kid

who is going to ECD is more talented from his older siblings, even he can read and understand much better than them.

R5. Earlier we were giving our children whatever was available at home in meal, while ignoring their health and hygiene. Now my kid washes his hands before meal and maintains decorum.

It can be deduced from the narratives that the perception of parent regarding AW-IP is related to acquisition of both new and inclusive knowledge which includes learning social behavior, most advanced forms of academic education, and practices relating to personal health and hygiene. Along with change in perception of the parents, it also has impacted on grandparents according to our FSM,

I met three grandmothers whose grandchildren come to our centre. I asked them what changes have they observed in their grandchild, to this they said that they sing rhymes to them and make them imitate the actions on the rhymes. They seemed very happy as they find their younger children becoming more active and confident than the elder ones.

Cultural Adaptability

The question of cultural adaptability was asked in terms of livelihood activities, homes chores, family issues, societal issues, health and nutrition practices.

According to the respondents of ECD committee group discussion, the common chores of women in the society are domestic work as well as agricultural work and husbandry practices, because most of the men in the area work outside home town, i.e. either they are in army or some have public or private occupations. This has been substantiated during the group discussion held with parents. According to a mother, who came to attend the centre with her two kids:

We work in fields as well as carry out other activities at home like cooking, washing clothes and so on. We have to do this because our husbands work outside Hasis, as majority of them are employed in Army while others are working in public and private organizations. The reason they are unable to lend us a hand is their duty stations. But our father-in-laws do work like irrigating fields.

While responding to the question about management of home chores, most of the participants in discussion shared that they finish their home chores before coming to the centre. According to a respondent living in joint family from where three parents have enrolled their children, *“Three females from our family come to the centre along with our kids. But before coming to the centre, we distribute our work and get it done on time to bring our kids here.”* While asking the response of their family members when they have to leave their homes for attending the centre, they said that they do sometimes have to face harsh comments, but altogether there are as such no issues. This opinion was not only limited to the nuclear families, rather those coming from joint families have also stated that their in-laws are cooperative regarding the education of their kids. In contrary to this, their neighbours usually have no acceptance of bringing their children to the centre, so while on their way to ECD center they have to hear comments from other members of the society especially old ladies, as per our respondents the ladies say, *“You don't have any work at home that's why you go to the centre just to pass your time and hide from the work.”* Moreover, the response of FSM's regarding the issues faced by the mothers has also substantiated the argument, according to a FSM: *“The mothers particularly have to face issues like bearing remarks being passed by the people in their community. They are told that they go to centre for passing their time leaving behind bundle of home chores.”* Probing the question about issues of health and hygiene from both mothers and committee members, the responses depicted that health is only about getting a problem checked with a doctor, although the concept of pre-natal checkups exists in society, but health in its holistic sense in terms of hygiene, nutrition and dietary practices is yet not understood.

We do proper pre-natal and post-natal check-ups. Our home members do also cooperate with us in health matters. But when it comes to dietary practices and nutrition, our mother in laws tells us that in their time they used to do all the work both inside and outside the home during and after the pregnancy, and still gave birth to healthy children and nothing happened to them. They further tell us that we take rest, take milk and do unnecessary health practices.”

Along with the perception of health which at times hinders healthy dietary and nutritional practices, most of the respondents who have their husbands working outside hometown have narrated that due to absence

of their husbands they can't easily share their health problems, one of them shared her concern and said:

Our husbands are away from home, so we can't share our problems with them especially regarding health. We have to bear and compensate on minor health issues. The visit to hospital becomes possible only when the case gets worse or the severity of the disease increases.

Another respondent while pointing to home chores during the harvesting stated:

The diet and nutrition which is necessary for a child is still lacking in practice, and at domestic level, it is still ignored. When we go to field for agriculture and other work, we keep our children with their grandparents and they give them whatever is available at home. In the season of harvesting from June to July, there is a lot of work load and in those days, we cannot take our children to the centre and cannot give our children proper time.

Other than the parents' response, the positive changes FSMs noticed in the nutritional practices of children, *"The children do not bring any market item for their lunch. The mothers make home-made lunch for their children, and children have it happily."*

Economic Adaptability

According to our respondents, the locals rely on agriculture especially, the ones who are unemployed. The second main source of income is services as most of the men serve in armed forces and other private-public organizations. Reacting further to the question a respondent from ECD committee told us that:

Trend of pastures and husbandry was in past, now the pattern is changing, people have now started to sell their livestock and focusing more on selling and earning from fruit trees. Because this method is more profitable, and there is less physical exertion.

While talking about the modes of investment, a lady respondent from group discussion held with parents said that, *"Our father in law takes all*

the income which comes from agriculture which is mostly spent on domestic expenses and health issues.”While responding to the same question, another lady told us that *“In our home, we spend it on health insurance and education of our children because all the members of our family are well educated and doing good jobs.”* On asking the question of fee structure and affordability, parents said that, *“Initially it was 500 but the enrolment gradually started to decrease as parent raised objection on amount and thus the committee decided to lower the amount to Rs. 300; this again led to increase in enrolment.”*

On the affordability of fee, the ECD Committee said, *“There are still few families who can't even afford the fee but have enrolled their children with the help of Local Support Organization,”*. The committee further added, *“Even at times the fee of FSM's is arranged from the accounts of Local Support Organization (LSO).”*

ECD Committee Operations

The committee members have told us that apart from centre maintenance and paying rent, they also pay fees of under privileged students with the help of LSO. Along with this, the committee members also buy learning material from their own pockets. According to the respondent serving in ECD committee, *“A mother was worried that she could not afford to send her daughter to this facility then we helped her financially to get her child enrolled.”* On asking about future plans, the committee members told us, *“We are looking for arranging a transport system for those parents for whom the accessibility is a major issue.”* The committee members on asking the question of financial management and administration of the centre told that they have people who are looking after the financial matters of ECD to maintain transparency, they deposit fees in our society account, and with drawl from the account is being checked by different members of the committee. They further added that for the smooth running of the centre and avoid discrepancies, they have also made long term agreements with the owner of building.

Discussion

The study under consideration was focused on investigating the contextual feasibility of AW-IP model in terms of community perception regarding early childhood learning i.e. in 0 to 3 years old children, cultural and economic adaptability, and strategies adopted by the

community for the sustainability of AW-IP model, and to check the replicability of model for other rural areas of Pakistan.

The parents who had their children enrolled at the centre, clearly expressed that their perception regarding the rearing has substantially changed, along with this, they also mentioned the remarkable change they noticed in their children in terms of cognitive abilities, social skills, communication abilities, physical fitness, and personal hygiene. According to World bank, Early Childhood Development known as ECD refers to the physical, cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development of a child from the prenatal stage up to age eight. On the contrary, the findings also indicate that there are other groups that are not directly involved in child rearing lack the perception of early childhood development. The perception of parents regarding the development of their children is not limited to the writing and reading skills, instead they take it in its holistic sense which ranges from acquisition of cognitive skills to sense of personal hygiene and social skills.

Information garnered on cultural adaptability exposed the gender roles of men and women in Hasis society which is similar to those in other rural areas of South Asia, where men are assigned with the task to earn and take decisions whereas, women are designated the responsibility to prepare food, nurture and rear children, take care of wellbeing and hygiene of the family members, and working in the fields. Findings also validated that in the absence of husbands, the burden of responsibilities is doubled; for instance, if a husband works out of the village, wife has to carry out all the tasks in household, in the fields, and the responsibility to take her children to the centre. This phenomenon becomes more comprehensible if the family dynamics and societal structures are further probed into. The area profile shows that alike other areas of South Asia, the society is patriarchal, according to Asiyanbola; the term patriarchy has been defined as a system of male authority which suppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions (Asiyanbola, 2005). The gender division of labour and disproportionate burden put on the women can be understood in relation to the perception of marriage in patriarchal societies, where the concept of bringing wife to a family is directly related to labour work, according to an article published by South Asian concern. Most South Asian families see it as their duty to care for elderly relatives at home (South Asian Concern, 2016). This perception of societal role ignite remarks whenever mother accompany her child to the centre for learning, which is proclaimed to be an instrument to evade domestic chores. This, according to the respondents (parents), was one of the major issues they face on way to the ECD centre.

These difficulties posed by gender role on women make them prone to health issues. According to the findings, mothers go for prenatal and postnatal checkups but lack the holistic understanding of healthcare which includes nutrition and dietary practices. This lack of holistic approach towards healthcare along with the working conditions of women who mostly have to go to fields leaving the children with grandparents has a direct impact on the dietary practices of both the mother and the child as she can neither feed her child as per instruction by the FSM's nor can she provide herself with a healthy diet to compensate for the energy consumed by physical labour. In line with the findings, another research conducted on maternal health stated, "The Women's health and nutritional status is inextricably bound up with social, cultural, and economic factors that influence all aspects of their lives, and it has consequences not only for the women themselves but also for the well-being of their children" (Hariharan, 2016). One of the major attitudinal changes mentioned by FSM was that children have stopped consuming unhealthy, unhygienic market available food and instead consume food that was prepared at home. Mothers also tried hard to use seasonally available varied food items that are available and grown locally. That practice was not only affordable but also high nutritional value.

According to the findings, major sources of income in the area were agriculture and services sector where most of the men were employed in armed forces and other private/public sector organizations and the average household income in the village was 20000 PKR including the monthly proportion of annual earnings from selling of fruits. Owing to the patriarchal norms, the accumulation of monthly income remains with the male head of the household usually the father in laws. Thus, the lack of direct access to finances in the absence of their husbands limits the mothers from adopting the healthy dietary practices as well as in facilitating their children with quality education and health care facilities. The OECD and WHO, in a report on poverty and health, mentioned that socio-cultural beliefs about the roles of men and women contribute to this inequality in health. Poor women and girls may experience even deeper disadvantage in access to resources for health such as cash and financing schemes, services, and voice (OECD, 2003). As it has been indicated in the findings that money earned through selling of fruits and other agricultural items was spent on priority basis, where the gains are more certain. In terms of health, the concerns became more serious when it reaches the final threshold of pain, thus by setting aside the importance of nutrition and dietary practices. As per our respondent, "*Our husbands*

are away from home, so we can't share our problems with them especially regarding health. We have to bear and compensate on minor health issues". While, in the case of education, the more certain gains resulted in terms of writing skills and memorizing the text; cognitive abilities and social skills which were seemingly less prominent were out of consideration. According to Engle and Black, children raised in low-income families were at risk for academic and social problems as well as poor health and well-being (Engle & Black, 2008). In contrast but substantiating the abovementioned arguments, it came into notice during the data collection that those households where men were earning enough and well educated were spending on health insurance and education of their children. Thus, it can be deduced that economic pursuits have direct bearings on the practices pertaining to health and education.

There is always the problem of access and mobility in rural settings where the villages are built on mountainous terrains. The results have indicated the major issues of accessibility as; financial limitations which includes higher costs of school transportation and tuition fees, lack of awareness, and seasonal chores especially in the months of harvesting which limits the mobility of parents and which is directly linked with the economic pursuits. In a study focused on universal access to Early Childhood Development, the factors that prevent ECD children from attending school are; hunger, economic hardships, fees, parents' ignorance on importance of ECD, mobility of parents, and lack of infrastructure among others (Chikwiri & Musiyiwa, 2017). It is evident from the findings that major factor which hinders the mobility is directly or indirectly associated with financial matters.

Amidst the difficulties posed by cultural ecology, economic pursuits, perception of community members and access, the stakeholders including parents and ECD committee have developed its own strategies for the sustainability of the AW-IP model. According to Indakwa and Miriti (2010), a healthy community development programme requires a steady flow of human, material and financial resources to implement, monitor, evaluate and sustain it. Hence, the committee in collaboration with the Local Support Organization helps the needy parents who are willing to send their children to the ECD centre but can't afford it. The ECD committee formed under the program also look after the financial management and administration of the centre which includes maintenance of the centre, managing pays of FSM's, paying rent and buying learning material for the kids because the revenue generated from fees are not enough to cater the expenses. Moreover, the ECD committee

in collaboration with Local Support Organization is also carrying out activities regarding community sensitization on ECD matters.

The objective behind understanding the contextual feasibility of current model under investigation was to assess the replicability of AW-IP model on a more wider scale i.e. throughout the country where the societal structures at area of investigation are more or less similar to those in other rural settings of the country with an exception of high elite areas. According to a research conducted by Aga Khan University, Pakistan is a patriarchal society where men are the primary authority figures and women are subordinate (Ali, et al., 2011). Considering the hurdles regarding division of gender roles, health and dietary practices, economics pursuits, financial stability of households, and strategies adopted by the community to overcome the difficulties, it is understood that integration among the parents, teachers and community is first and foremost step. According to Epstein, partnerships between parents, families and community members is most effective way for improving school programs (Epstein, et al., 2002). Apart from this, it is evident from the findings that the existence and collaboration of civil society organizations in the form of Village Organizations, Women Organizations, and other forms of social capital is necessary for the smooth running of community lead programs. The review of literature on sustainability and smooth flow of development programs in low economic settings of South Asia indicates that the existence of social capital is more effective in terms of creating awareness and sustaining community based programs. According to a report on the role of social capital in early childhood development in rural India, it has been found that parents who are involved in community cooperation, have their children enrolled at the early childhood learning centres and are more aware about the importance of education, and health and hygiene practices of their children. Along with this, the study also suggests that social capital enhances the sense of collective action and cooperation between the community members. Thus, for the replication of AW-IP model on a wider canvas where the societal dynamics including cultural notions and economic limitations are less favorable, it is important to induce the concept of social capital in terms of cooperation for collective action, which can be made possible by integrating different stakeholders of the community including parents, community members, teachers and other civil society agencies like VO's, WO's .

Conclusion

This study has offered an overview of the phenomenon of Early Childhood Care and Education based on the AW-IP model. Based on the findings, a general perception of the parents and community directly or indirectly involved in a child's development has comparatively changed after the implementation of AW-IP model. This change in perception focuses on holistic development of child in terms of cognitive abilities, social skills, emotional intelligence, health and hygiene, and dietary practices. Although the model has made a significant effect in changing the perception of health, hygiene and dietary practices but owing to the segregation of gender roles, it limits the caregivers from practically applying the knowledge learnt. Further, it is deduced from the findings that economic pursuits have direct bearings on the practices pertaining to health and education i.e. the cultural perceptions regarding health and education have their roots in economic stability. In terms of access and mobility, this research concludes that along with physical geography in terms of distance, financial affordability are the major causes which limits the mobility of parents. The sustainability of the model is drawn on the basis of strategies adopted by the community to overcome the financial limitations. One of the major approach to counter the financial limitation is done through collaboration with Local Support Organization, which will assist them financially unless and until the Centre becomes self-sustainable. Lastly, the results also conclude that the social capital in terms of communal cooperations and integration of stakeholders is key for the sustainability of community lead programs.

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