Hindrances Faced by Literacy Mobilizers While Promoting Non-Formal Education Programs: A Case Study

Farhat Naseem[*]

Abstract

Literacy mobilizers face several hindrances while propagating NFE programs to improve the literacy rate in the marginalized communities. This qualitative case study was conducted to explore the hindrances faced by Literacy Mobilizers to promote Non-Formal Education (NFE). The population of this study was 335 Literacy Mobilizers of Punjab, out of which 07 purposively selected Literacy Mobilizers were participants in this research. Interview was utilized to collect data from Literacy Mobilizers. Thematic analysis was done for data Analysis. Major findings of the study revealed that Literacy Mobilizers face hindrances regarding religious belief system, gender roles, access to community, government support, community motivation and community participation while promoting an NFE program. A participatory approach may be utilized by literacy mobilizers while organizing and executing NFE programs to increase community motivation and participation. Moreover, continuous capacity-building training programs may be conducted by stakeholders to train Literacy Mobilizers to cope with the hindrances faced while promoting NFE programs.

Keywords: *Non-formal Education, literacy mobilizers, hindrances, community mobilization*

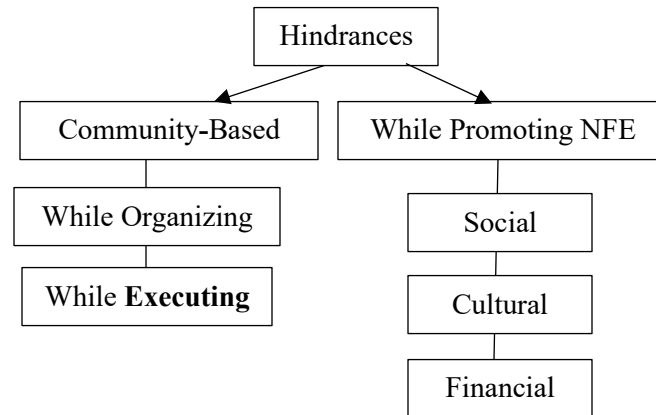[*]Primary School Teacher, GGCMS Dheedwal, imamsfarhat@gmail.com

Introduction

Making sure that education is accessible to everyone and that no one is left behind is made possible in part by Non-Formal Education (Fahmi, 2021). For those who have not had the chance to attend conventional schooling or who left school early, Non-Formal Education provides an alternate avenue for education (Lorenzo et al., 2021; Swenty & Swenty, 2021). It also plays a significant role in promoting equal opportunities for all and improving the quality of education (Rahayu, 2020; Shahzad, 2023). NFE is used to uplift the life standards of the community while addressing their core issues (Kienko, 2022; Noreen & Iqbal, 2024). NFE employs literacy mobilizers for community mobilization regarding a target program. The function of Literacy Mobilizers, in bridging the gap between educational institutions and the communities they serve, is crucial. They are also known as facilitators, educators, extension workers or volunteers. Literacy mobilizers, commonly referred to as community development specialists or field agents, are essential in aiding community mobilization initiatives (Swenty & Swenty, 2021). Literacy Mobilizers provide a strong link between the community people, government and non-government organizations.

Literacy Mobilizers provide technical and resource management support to the community (Gündoğan, 2019, p.894). But Literacy Mobilizers are not provided with adequate support from the government and NGOs as they ought to. It is very challenging to tackle serious issues while promoting NFE in a diverse community (Noreen & Iqbal, 2024; Shahzad, 2023). In any community, Literacy Mobilizers are utilized to support initiatives of different educational organizations for the improvement of the living standards of the people. Literacy Mobilizers are always putting their efforts into bringing positive changes in society through NFE. Literacy Mobilizers also provide support to the disabled members of the community. Literacy Mobilizers manage different events such as seminars, social gatherings and provision of useful resource materials in their target community (NRSP, 2023). There are different types of hindrances that are faced by Literacy Mobilizers while promoting NFE in their target community (Osman, 2019; Noreen & Iqbal, 2024). The importance of Literacy Mobilizers is recognized by all the stakeholders of the teaching and learning process in the promotion of NFE in their target communities. Literacy Mobilizers have been working in Punjab, Pakistan since 2002 but the hindrances they encounter in the field while promoting NFE programs are little unexplored (Noreen & Iqbal, 2024).

Conceptual Framework

This study aims to study the hindrances faced by literacy mobilizers while promoting NFE. Mainly social, cultural, financial and community-based (while organizing and executing NFE programs) hindrances are faced by literacy mobilizers. The following is the conceptual framework of the study:

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework

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                          ┌──────────────┐
                          │  Hindrances  │
                          └──────────────┘
                         ↙                ↘
         ┌────────────────────┐   ┌────────────────────┐
         │  Community-Based   │   │ While Promoting NFE │
         └────────────────────┘   └────────────────────┘
                   │                        │
         ┌────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
         │  While Organizing  │      │    Social    │
         └────────────────────┘      └──────────────┘
                   │                        │
         ┌────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
         │  While Executing   │      │   Cultural   │
         └────────────────────┘      └──────────────┘
                                            │
                                     ┌──────────────┐
                                     │  Financial   │
                                     └──────────────┘
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Rationale of the Study

There are marginalized groups in every community, which can be brought into the mainstream with the help of NFE programs by enhancing their literacy and skills. Literacy Mobilizers provide a connection between deprived groups of the community and educational institutes (Mair & Seelos, 2021). They support the engagement and participation of the people of the community in initiatives taken for the betterment of that community. These initiatives are designed according to the needs of the target community (Namoog & Agyekum, 2024). As Literacy Mobilizers are aware of the dynamics of their target community, they provide adequate support to the community as well as the NFE programs to make these programs successful. Mainly, Literacy Mobilizers encourage the people of their target community to be part of NFE programs. They also provide them with adequate information about these programs at every stage. Literacy Mobilizers need to know about the hindrances they can face in the field while promoting an NFE program (Wu et al., 2015; Rusoja, 2022). Literacy Mobilizers have been working in Punjab, Pakistan since 2002 but the hindrances they encounter in the field while promoting NFE programs are little unexplored (Noreen & Iqbal, 2024). By

addressing these hindrances, the Literacy and Non-Formal Education Department Punjab, Non-governmental organizations working for the promotion of literacy and skill development, teachers of NFE, and other stakeholders will make such interventions which will be fruitful for the capacity development of the literacy mobilizers.

Statement of the Problem
Non-Formal Education is a vast field, and it plays a significant role in the promotion of literacy activities at the mass level. Pakistan is a developing country and literacy promotion activities are executed through government and non-government organizations. Literacy Mobilizers perform literacy promotion activities in Pakistan through non-formal education. They go into the community and may face many hindrances as they have to deal with community and its associated variables i.e. social, cultural and financial (Noreen & Iqbal, 2024). As they work in the communities, there is a requirement to get in-depth exploration of the hindrances faced by Literacy Mobilizers in their work as quantitative research has been done by Noreen & Iqbal (2024), Osman (2019), Rosuja (2022) and Wu et al. (2015) to investigate hindrances faced by literacy mobilizers. These researchers indicated that hindrances like community dynamics, resource limitations, student retention and educational infrastructure were observed by Literacy Mobilizers while promoting NFE. Literacy mobilizers may face some other difficulties as they work to advance Non-Formal Education initiatives in Punjab, Pakistan. Keeping in view this study aimed at an in-depth exploration of the hindrances faced by Literacy Mobilizers in Punjab.

Significance of Study
Individuals who take part in Non-Formal Education programs can have better access to high-quality education by recognizing and resolving the difficulties experienced by literacy mobilizers. This research has the potential to improve the way that educational services are delivered, giving individuals a worthwhile educational experience. By understanding the difficulties, they encounter, Literacy Mobilizers and NFE educators may create plans to go through these barriers. Better professional growth and more successful teaching strategies may follow from this research. This study adds to the corpus of information already available on DNFCE theories. It can provide insights into the creation of theoretical frameworks that take into consideration the real-world difficulties mobilizers face, resulting in stronger conceptions of education. Addressing the hindrances literacy mobilizers might have led to a more informed and empowered

community. Community members can get items that support their personal and collective development. The study's findings may have an impact on government initiatives and NFE-related regulations. This research will help policymakers to develop evidence-based regulations to help the community which will improve the effectiveness of NFE programs lately.

Objectives of the study
- To explore the hindrances faced by Literacy Mobilizers to promote NFE programs.

Research Methodology
The following are details of the research methodology followed by the researcher in this study:

Research Design
To get in-depth exploration of hindrances faced by literacy mobilizers, a qualitative case study design was most suitable. The researcher utilized an inductive approach under an interpretive worldview.

Participants
The population consisted of 335 Literacy mobilizers in Punjab, Pakistan. "A sample is a smaller group of a population which is manageable to work on for research. A sample helps a researcher to collect data for research purposes, with the characteristics of the population. It is suggested by Creswell & Creswell (2018) that for a qualitative case study, 5 to 8 respondents are suitable. So, 7 literacy mobilizers were purposively selected for data collection.

Research Tool
Interview was used to get responses from the literacy mobilizers. A semi-structured questionnaire, which consisted of 5 questions regarding constructs of the research to explore hindrances regarding social, cultural, financial, organizational and executional hindrances had emerged while data collection:

Construct	Sub-construct
Hindrances	Social, cultural, financial, organizational and executional

The tool was validated by seeking the opinions of 5 field experts and revealed S-CVI/Ave .95*.

Key Concepts and Variables

The following are the key concepts and research variables which provided the foundation of the conceptual framework of this research.

> ***Literacy Mobilizers.*** Individuals appointed by the Literacy and Non-Formal Basic Education Department in Punjab, Pakistan to mobilize the community. They help to improve the literacy rate of the community using non-formal institutes.
>
> ***Non-Formal Education.*** The process of acquiring basic knowledge while performing other duties. NFE helps to promote education and literacy rates. Literacy programs imparted by literacy mobilizers are NFE programs.
>
> ***Hindrances.*** The different roadblocks and issues Literacy Mobilizers deal with on the job are considered hindrances. These hindrances were studied in terms of social, cultural, financial, organizational and executional hindrances faced by Literacy Mobilizers while executing literacy activities in their respective communities.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher followed the ethical protocols of research. In this regard, before data collection, an official of the Literacy and Non-Formal Education Department was approached personally, and the list containing details of Literacy Mobilizers was obtained officially. Then, the participants were approached to participate in the study through personal contact. They were briefed about the objectives of the study and told that their confidentiality would be maintained and the information they provided would not be leaked. Then the researcher conducted interviews with literacy mobilizers using personal visits. Respondents were asked frequently to share their experiences. After interviewing the literacy mobilizers, the responses were studied repeatedly to get familiar with the data. This helped to emerge codes, themes and sub-themes from the responses. The themes and sub-themes were reviewed for the refinement and accuracy of the data. After this, all the sub-themes were aligned with well-defined themes. Data was analyzed using following themes and sub-themes:

Themes	Sub-themes
Social, Cultural and Financial Hindrances	Religious Beliefs
	Value of Education
	Gender Roles
	Access to Key Stakeholders
	Element of Trust

Organizational and Executional Hindrances	Government Support
	Transportation Facility
	Plan according to the needs of the Community
	Motivation and Mobilization in the Community

RESULTS

Thematic analysis revealed following results:

Theme 1: Social, Cultural and Financial Hindrances Faced While Promoting NFE

The following sub-themes emerged from the responses of the literacy mobilizers.

Sub-Theme 1 Religious Beliefs: All the respondents revealed that the religious belief system of the community is one of the major hindrances to promoting NFE. R 1 stated,*" religious segments",* R 2 stated, *"Due to disbursed population in rural areas, as well as religious communities in the vast area are facing huge hindrances launching NFE to cover gender equality during training as well as communication"* and R 3 stated, *"religious beliefs are the root cause of hinderance"*. R 5 added to R 3 and stated, *"Religious leaders are most unsupportive segment of the community".* R 4, R 6 and R7 stated, *"People of community have strong influence of religious personalities. When religious personalities are against a program, the community becomes skeptical"* The religious belief system of any community has a great impact on any NFE program initiated by the government or any NGO. It is concluded from the responses of the literacy mobilizers that religious leaders have a more influential impact on the community where the literacy rate is low.

Sub-Theme 2 Value of Education: Literacy mobilizers helped to explore that most communities do not value education. The community prioritizes other activities over educational activities. R 1 stated,*" conservative societies",* R 2 stated, *"community not priority education",* R 3 stated, *"Lack of interest",* R 4 stated, *"the community's attitude towards education is more important, lack of knowledge about the importance of education districts and racism are big hard",* R 5 stated, *"people don't have an interest in education"* R 6 stated, *"Illiterate parents, lack of interest of people in acquiring education"* and R 7 stated, *"lack of awareness"*. It is concluded that there are some communities which do not

prioritize education over other activities. These communities need to understand the importance of education to improve their socio-economic status.

Sub-Theme 3 Gender Roles: R 1, 6 and 7 stated,*" Child marriages, teenage pregnancy/teenage mothers, household responsibilities at an early age",* and R 2 stated, *"Lack of gender equality".* R 3, 4 and 5 stated, *"employment responsibilities of boys do not allow them to participate in educational activities. Due to the burden of responsibilities, male participants of the community are not available for NFE programs".* R 3 extended the responses and stated, *"they send their children to the street begging", and* R 4 added, *"child labor".* R 5 further added and linked education with poverty, *"Poverty and illiteracy are main hindrances".* Hence, it is concluded that due to financial constraints, the participants go to work instead of attending an NFE program. This shows that most communities have limitations for girls as well as boys due to their household and financial responsibilities. Gender-related duties are a hindrance to their participation in an NFE program due to different reasons. This depicts that gender roles and low literacy levels are basic hindrances to the promotion of NFE in a community.

Sub-Theme 4 Access to Key Stakeholders: The literacy mobilizers emphasized that it is more challenging for them to access the key stakeholders for their program. They are not adequately identified, which makes it difficult to implement an NFE program successfully. R 1, 4 and 5 stated,*" identification of learners for NFE",* R 2 and 7 stated,*" a lot of fake promises by stakeholders",* and R 3 and 6 stated, *"fewer number of participants".* It is concluded that literacy mobilizers find it challenging to locate key stakeholders for any NFE program. This limitation in access reduces the effectiveness of an NFE program, which eventually turned into a failed program.

Sub-Theme 5 Element of Trust: Literacy mobilizers revealed that the lack of trust among them and their target community is a big hindrance to the promotion of the NFE program. R1 stated,*" community ownership",* R 2 stated, *"less cooperation of the community",* R 3 stated, *"awareness to community for education",* R 4 stated, *"behavior",* R 5 stated, *"awareness about the significance of education & knowledge, awareness about the differences of life of literate & illiterate person",* R 6 stated, *"lack of community awareness",* and R 7 stated, *"100% ownership and commitment required from the community to the successful*

implementation of programs, Strong bridging required between staff and community.". The responses of Literacy Mobilizers concluded that it is difficult for them to develop an element of trust among their target community. This leads to the failure of an NFE program.

Sub-Theme 6 Government Support: Most of the literacy mobilizers revealed that they do not get adequate and timely support from the government, which is very challenging for them. R 1 stated, *"funding from govt, inadequate funds, low salary of teachers",* R 2 stated, *"resources, as well as RR keys, will play a vital role, mobility allowance",* R 3 stated, *"financial problems",* R 4 stated, *"financial and mobilizers are underpaid, no risk allowance, no mobility allowance",* R 5 stated, *"resources is the biggest challenge for program and security issue also, lack of resources, inadequate resources, inconsistent literacy policies regarding HR. insufficient HR.",* R 6 stated, *"resource gap to promote NFE Centre, Lack of facility, lack of facility, Lack of resources for community mobilization e.g. mobility Allowance, vehicle, POL, etc., Job insecurity",* R 7 stated, *"Financial, lack fund in form of less stipend, lack of resources and ignorance to law".* These responses depict that the government is not paying much attention, and Literacy Mobilizers face hindrances regarding finances and resources. Literacy Mobilizers are underpaid, and due to an increase in the price of petrol and other commodities, it is difficult for Literacy Mobilizers to perform field duty. Similarly, there is always a risk in the job of field staff, but the government does not pay any risk allowance. This response tends to give a picture of security-related issues Literacy Mobilizers face during their visits to the target community.

Some responses highlighted the need for the latest and revised curriculum by the government. R 1 stated, *"Skills development program will enhance the program when launching the NFE",* R 2 stated, *"We have to work on improving Aoswa e Hasnah, Special Akhlaqe Hasnah, morality, equality, etc.,"* R 3 stated, *Tough syllabus for education and Documentation of institution",* R 4 stated, *"Need to improve NFE kit items and NFE programs or projects should cover the challenges of the community according to the new age."* and R 5 stated, *"increase academic month 8 months to one year".* These responses highlighted the importance and need for rethinking the curriculum and period of the NFE programs. Another government-based challenge which was faced by Literacy Mobilizers during the promotion of an NFE program is the lack of staff. It is necessary to register the NFE institutes to build trust among the target community. R 4 stated, *"Lack of field staff to cover all the needy areas",* R 5 stated, *"Shortage of field staff",* and R 6 stated, "*In remote areas Teachers not*

available". These responses pointed out that there is a lack of field staff and teachers, which leads to the failure of an NFE program.

Theme 2: Organizational/Executional Hindrances faced while Promoting NFE Programs

Sub-Theme 1 Transportation Facility: All the respondents replied that *"Transport facility"* is a huge challenge for them while promoting NFE programs in their target community. R 3 and 5 added, *"it is very difficult to access far-flung areas of Punjab, especially in Pothowar region, as well as in South Punjab. Mostly, communities do not have adequate transportation as they do not value education."* R 1 stated, *"Due to a lack of infrastructure, it is very challenging for literacy mobilizers to move towards their target community. Once literacy mobilizers are reached, they have to settle themselves till the completion of the program to refrain from the hectic travel routine.* This concluded that for Literacy mobilizers, it is challenging to manage transport facilities for the organization/execution of an NFE program. Communities do not provide support to the literacy mobilizers, and this leads to delays and unsuccessful programs, which eventually affect the literacy efforts planned by the government.

Sub-Theme 2 Plan according to the Needs of the Community: Literacy mobilizers revealed that NFE programs can be modified after interaction with the community. R 1 stated, *"Plan changes according to the community"*. R 4 replied, *"Plans are adjusted according to the needs and willingness of the target community."* R 3 and 7 stated, *"After communicating with the community leaders, we tend to find out the interests of the target community. This helps us to alter our program to improve the number of participants in our program."* Hence, it is concluded that literacy mobilizers alter/modify an NFE program according to the needs of their target community. This modification helps to maintain the participants of their programs to organize/execute a successful NFE program.

Sub-Theme 3 Motivation and Mobilization in Community: It was discussed by the Literacy mobilizers that motivating and mobilizing the community is a challenging task. People do not tend to participate in or propagate NFE programs. R 1 and 2 stated, *"Motivation & Skill working are a big challenge. Individuals usually prefer skill development related programs but participation in these programs is not significant."*, R 2 stated, *"It's a time-consuming process and it's very tough to mobilize*

people about NFE at start", and R 3 stated, *"Motivation and mobilization were serious challenges in the community*". These responses described that available strategies may not work for some literacy mobilizers. New and latest strategies should be introduced to Literacy Mobilizers for better results. Literacy mobilizers may be trained adequately to utilize the latest and concrete community mobilization techniques.

Findings and Discussion
The following are the findings regarding hindrances faced by literacy mobilizers while promoting NFE programs:

Thematic analysis revealed the social, cultural, financial, organizational and executional hindrances faced by literacy mobilizers in NFE programs.

It was found by literacy mobilizers that the religious belief system of the community is one of the major hindrances to promoting NFE. Literacy mobilizers helped to explore that most communities do not value education. The community prioritizes other activities over educational activities. It was found that gender roles limit the participation of individuals due to their specific responsibilities. The literacy mobilizers emphasized that it is more challenging for them to access the key stakeholders for their program. They are not adequately identified, which makes it difficult to implement an NFE program successfully. Literacy mobilizers revealed that the lack of trust among them and their target community is a big hindrance for the promotion of the NFE program. Most of the literacy mobilizers revealed that they do not get adequate and timely support from the government, which is very challenging for them. Literacy mobilizers revealed that it is very difficult for them to manage transport facilities while organizing/executing NFE programs. It was further stated that an NFE program can be modified after interaction with the community. It was discussed by the Literacy mobilizers that motivating and mobilizing the community is a challenging task. People do not tend to participate in or propagate NFE programs.

It is stated by Poliner & Stefkovich (2016) and confirmed from the analysis of this research that the religious belief system of any community has a great impact on any NFE program initiated by the government or any NGO. It was revealed by literacy mobilizers that religious leaders have a more influential impact on the community where the literacy rate is low. Al-Samarrai (2012) and Rusoja (2022) stated that there are some communities which do not prioritize education over other activities. This

research confirmed that these communities need to understand the importance of education to improve their socio-economic status. Due to financial constraints, the participants go to work instead of attending an NFE program as stated by Rusoja (2022). It was revealed by Namoog & Agyekum (2024) that most communities have limitations for girls as well as boys due to their household and financial responsibilities.

It was reassured from this research that gender-related duties are a hindrance to their participation in an NFE program due to different reasons. This depicts that gender roles and low literacy levels are basic hindrances to the promotion of NFE in a community. Kaskazi & Kitzie (2023) reported that access to the community is challenging, which is further confirmed by this research that literacy mobilizers find it challenging to locate key stakeholders for any NFE program. This limitation in access reduces the effectiveness of an NFE program, which eventually turned into a failed program. The responses of Literacy Mobilizers concluded that it is difficult for them to develop an element of trust among their target community. This leads to the failure of an NFE program. Nweke et al. (2023) highlighted the role and support of government, which is confirmed from this study, that the government is not paying much attention, and Literacy Mobilizers face hindrances regarding finances and resources.

Literacy Mobilizers are underpaid, and due to an increase in the price of petrol and other commodities, it is difficult for Literacy Mobilizers to perform field duty. Similarly, there is always a risk in the job of field staff, but the government does not pay any risk allowance. This response tends to give a picture of security-related issues Literacy Mobilizers face during their visits to the target community. Twikirize (2022) highlighted the importance and need for rethinking the curriculum and period of the NFE programs. It was pointed out that there is a lack of field staff and teachers, which leads to the failure of an NFE program. Shahzad (2023) stated that transportation and venue are a big barrier in the promotion of NFE activities. It was revealed that for Literacy mobilizers, it is challenging to manage transport facilities for the organization/execution of an NFE program. Shahid et al. (2021) revealed that community motivation and participation is limited while promoting NFE programs. It was reassured that communities do not provide support to the literacy mobilizers, and this leads to delays and unsuccessful programs, which eventually affect the literacy efforts planned by the government. literacy mobilizers alter/modify an NFE program according to the needs of their target community. This modification helps to maintain participants of their programs to organize/execute a successful NFE program. available

strategies may not work for some literacy mobilizers. New and latest strategies should be introduced to Literacy Mobilizers for better results. Literacy mobilizers may be trained adequately to utilize the latest and concrete community mobilization techniques.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on thematic analysis, it is concluded that there are some social, cultural, financial, organizational and executional hindrances faced by literacy mobilizers while promoting an NFE program. The most significant challenge among all hindrances is the community motivation and participation. Followed by the availability of transportation facilities and the belief system of the target community. This is evident that the literacy mobilizers found it challenging to promote NFE programs in their target community. Following is concluded:

- The primary hindrances to promote an NFE program by literacy mobilizers are religious belief systems, gender roles and elements of trust among the community.
- The community is not aware of the NFE programs and their impact on their socio-economic life, which limits the participation of the community.
- Transportation facilities are not properly provided, which tends to delay the organization and execution of an NFE program.
- The government is usually delayed and most of the time government does not provide adequate support in terms of availability of funds, provision of resource materials and security of the literacy mobilizers.

It is recommended that Literacy Mobilizers may be trained regarding the utilization of a participatory approach to motivate their target community to participate in an NFE program. continuous capacity-building training programs may be conducted for Literacy Mobilizers as a refresher course. This may be done with the help of online learning systems. It is also recommended that Literacy Mobilizers may be sensitized to overcome community attitude, culture and finance-related challenges while promoting NFE in their respective communities.

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