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No. 1, 2007

Ghuman, Sharon and Cynthia B. Lloyd. "Teacher absence as a factor in gender inequalities in access to primary schooling in rural Pakistan," *Poverty, Gender, and Youth Working Paper* no. 1. New York: Population Council. ([PDF](#))

ABSTRACT

Public-sector education in many countries in western and southern Asia, including Pakistan, is characterized by separate schools for boys and girls at the primary and secondary levels. We examine the case of Pakistan, where primary school enrollment among girls in rural areas is substantially lower than among children in urban areas and boys in rural areas, owing to lack of access to government girls' schools. Our focus is on teacher absence as a further barrier to schooling for girls. Absence rates among the all-female teachers in government girls' schools are substantially higher than among the all-male teachers in government boys' schools. In 1997, about 35 percent of teachers in government girls' schools and 22 percent of teachers in government boys' schools in our sample from Northwest Frontier Province and Punjab were absent during unannounced visits to schools. About 25 percent of enrolled girls and 17 percent of enrolled boys in government schools did not have a teacher present to teach their class. By 2004, the percentage of enrolled children without a teacher was lower because of reduced absences of teachers in both Punjab and NWFP, but the gender gap remained. Whether they teach in government or private schools, women who live in the same community as the school are substantially less likely to be absent. In government girls' schools, better basic amenities are also related to lower teacher absence. Both findings suggest the importance of recent government investments in schools and the higher inter-village travel costs faced by women relative to men.


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