

BOARDING SCHOOL EDUCATION: CONTROVERSY IN BRITAIN AND SITUATION IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Britain has a time-honoured tradition of boarding school education. Some reputed schools have included Eton and Harrow whose students went on to become Prime Ministers, famous generals, and other men of public affairs. The tradition expanded to territories of the British Empire including British India of late. The system of boarding school education has come under criticism. The system is alleged to have promoted/ perpetuated elitism and inequity in society. More damning criticism relates to the insufferable impact on the mental health of several boarders. It has been argued by professional psychotherapists that induction in boarding school at an early stage is accompanied by a series of emotional ruptures often leading to such psychological problems as have been summed up in the phrase 'Boarding School Syndrome'. Newer research at some centres of psychology in Britain, based on surveys and in-depth interviews of ex-boarders has tended to challenge the boarding school syndrome concept catapulted by psychotherapist literature, on two main counts: (1) the new research emphasizes more than the previous literature that younger the child at the time of induction, the more traumatic the boarding school experience, and (2) the border that enjoyed the boarding school, took the boarding house to better than their home environment which, one way or the other, came to lose its charm for them.

Pakistan inherited the boarding school tradition since colonial times. The literature relating to boarding schools in Pakistan tends to be more in consonance with the two findings of the post-syndrome literature in Britain. The present study reviews both the controversy in Britain and the

literature from Pakistan. It contributes to the subject of boarding school education by utilizing two sources. These comprise, firstly, of extensive personal experiences of two of the authors as teachers, housemasters and principals at several boarding schools/colleges in Pakistan including cadet colleges. The third author possessed knowledge of Eton and Harrow during his school education in Pakistan, lived in Britain for a decade, served there for five years as a lecturer in English and Communication Skills and visited famous Boarding schools. The study thus seeks to provide comparative context to the discussion related to the boarding school education controversy.

KEYWORDS: British Boarding School Tradition, Boarding School Syndrome (controversy), Cadet Colleges in Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

The time-honoured British tradition of boarding school education has come under criticism for some past decades (Lambert, 1968). Pakistan inherited the boarding school tradition since colonial times. Lawrence College (Murree), Military College Jhelum, Sadiq Egerton School (Bahawalpur) and Aitchison College (Lahore) were the earliest institutions established during the colonial times. During Pakistan's post-independence period, a lot more have been established under a variety of names such as Divisional Public Schools, Cadet Colleges, Army Public Schools/Colleges, etc (Admin, 2021). Such institutions usually follow the British boarding school pattern. Lately, considerable literature has appeared on the subject of such schools in Pakistan. The literature usually focuses on individual students and/or individual institutions (Khan & Ahmed, 2017). This study attempts to extend the literature by taking into account the personal experience of one of the authors who has been a teacher and headmaster at many boarding schools/ colleges in Pakistan. This source is further extended by the inclusion of letters of complaint by boarders addressed to the principal of a Cadet College. The study aims to add to the discussion on the ongoing controversies both in Pakistan and in Britain regarding the strengths and weaknesses of boarding school education.

Sources and Methods

The study utilizes both secondary and primary sources. The secondary sources include writings about the British tradition of boarding school education and ongoing controversy regarding the strengths and weakness of the same. The primary sources are of two types. One comprises experiences that one of the authors gained as teacher/housemaster in army boarding schools/colleges. The other source comprises letters of complaints by boarders written to the principal of a Public Cadet College (where a students' complaints system has been instituted).

The British Boarding School Tradition

Definition

Boarding schools are mainly associated with Britain and are places where students reside within premises and receive formal education. The word “boarding” is used to mean “room and board”, i.e. lodging and meals. In Britain, boarding schools have existed for many centuries (Miner, 1990), albeit with changes overtime resulting from recommendations made by government appointed commissions or on the self-initiative of such schools (Fleming, 1944). Boarding schools now extend across several countries, and, as such, their nature as educational places comes to vary greatly. Children in boarding schools study and live with the other students and, quite often, the persons who functions as teachers and/ or administrators. Ages of children for admission to boarding schools differ, ranging from 4 years to 13 years. The system of vacation in various schools has become quite different with the coming of what is called the prep-school which takes in pupils of small age, 4 years old (Partridge, 2010). Children may be sent for one year to twelve years or more in boarding school, until the age of eighteen. As such, the boarders can be classified according to the arrangement of their visit home: (a) Full-term boarders visit their homes at the end of an academic year; (b) semester boarders visit their homes at the end of an academic term and (c) weekly boarders visit their families at weekends. In boarding schools, boarders spend a good bit of their childhood and adolescent life away from their families (“Boarding School,” 2024).

British Boarding Schools: History

In the medieval time, a practice developed in Britain to send children, particularly boys, to educated households and/ or to schools so that they could learn together. One finds this in classical

literature and in UK records going back to several hundred years (Gathorne-Hardy, 1977; Miner, 1990). Canterbury, boasts of on of the world's oldest boarding school namely The King's School. Foundation of that particular boarding school goes back to the development of the monastery schools around 597 AD (Miner, 1990). Monastic schools in England as such were generally dissolved with the monasteries themselves under Henry VIII, but he preserved another very old boarding school, namely the Westminster School under the King's letters patent ("Boarding School," 2024). Two public schools, Eaton and Harrow stand out for their alumni played vital role in the governing of both Britain and the British Empire. Eton College was founded by King Henry, the VI in 1440 (Clutton-Brock, 1900). Harrow was expanded in 1552 by John Lyon, a landowner and farmer, to facilitate education of boys aged 13-18 years (Tyerman, 2000). The two classic British boarding schools became highly popular during the colonial expansion of the British Empire (Wilkinson, 1964). One of the reasons that the British colonial administrators abroad wanted to bring up their children in British culture at public schools at home in the Britain. Local ruling elite in colonies also wished that their sons be educated in such prestigious boarding schools (Clive, 1994; Winslow, 2010).

The Legacy of British Boarding Schools

The British boarding school system, with its pronounced "stiff upper lip" ethos, ranks among the most enduring and influential institutions in the United Kingdom. This system's development, deeply rooted in social, political, and economic contexts, significantly shaped British society and culture over centuries (Mack, 1939). According to an ex-boarder "the phrase "stiff upper lip," a hallmark of British, solid attitude finds its origin in the halls and dormitories of such exclusive schools, where emotional restraint and resilience were fostered as essential virtues" (Renton, 2017). To understand the legacy of British boarding schools, one has to remember that these institutions were primarily designed to educate the elite, preparing young boys for leadership roles in the military, government, and civil service. Schools like Eton, Harrow, and Rugby became synonymous with prestige, producing some of the most influential figures in British history (Hurst, 2007; Wakeford, 1969; Wilkinson, 1964). Inculcation of the ethos of the "stiff upper lip" formed part and parcel of in the curriculum and everyday life (Lambert, 1968). Its emphasized suppression

of emotion tenacity in difficulties, and maintain a serene appearance upon agitation and confusion (Pascoe, 1889). The boarding school system's influence extended far beyond individual development: its deeply impacting the cultural fabric of British society. These schools instilled values of duty, honor, and perseverance. Such values were subsequently reflected in Britain's imperial ambition and wartime resilience. The imperturbable attitude cultivated within boarding schools became a national characteristic, symbolizing strength and stability in the face of adversity. Boarding schools had side-effects. Its role in perpetuating class differences was pivotal. Education at well-known boarding schools often corresponded to membership in the upper echelons of society. Producing a palpable division of privilege and power (Wakeford, 1969). The legacy of British boarding schools is not merely confined to their past glory but has continued to resonate in contemporary discussions about education, class, and identity. "While the "stiff upper lip" concept has been both celebrated and criticized, its influence remains palpable in modern British culture, revealing the extensive and enduring impact of these institutions in shaping the national character" (Renton, 2017).

The Case for Boarding Schools Education

Providing Structured Educational Environment

Duffel (2000) suggests that the highly regimented and disciplined environment of boarding schools with set schedules for classes, study periods and extra-curricular activities help students focus more intensely on their studies, in the structured environment of boarding school wherein, students develop discipline, responsibility, time management, self-reliance and self-advocacy.

Fostering Independence and Self-Reliance. In the words of Loren Pope, students in boarding institutions are provided with a supportive environment which encourages them to take risks, make mistakes, and learn from them (Pope, 2006). They are encouraged to develop self-motivation, setting goals and working towards them. Without the immediate supervision of their parents student must learn to navigate social interaction independently. In boarding schools, separation from family for an extended period of time necessitates that students learn to become more independent and self-reliant (Duffell, 2000). Lisa Damour argues that independence is not an innate trait, but rather a skill that can be taught and developed. According to her, boarding schools

offer a chance to develop independence and self-reliance away from family and familiar surroundings (Westtown School, 2018).

Forming Strong Bonds with Peer. Peer can become a second family in boarding school, providing a sense of belonging and connection. They form a valuable professional and personal network in future. Duffel (2000) asserts that living within a communal environment from diverse backgrounds can facilitate the formation of strong friendships and bonds. They share various experiences and activities leading to deep and lasting connections. Peer relationship in boarding schools encourages collaborative learning, teamwork and mutual support. Further, forming strong bonds with peers help develop essential social skills and emotional intelligence (Duffell, 2000).

Imparting Leadership Skills. Boarding schools encourage participation in sports, clubs and organization allowing students to take on leadership roles. Nelson argues that boarding schools provide opportunities for students to hold positions of responsibility and make decisions. Through programs and workshops focused on developing skills, such as communication, problem-solving and teamwork, boarding schools play a crucial role in creating future leaders (Wilkinson, 1962).

Controversies about Boarding Schools in Britain

Controversies regarding boarding schools in Britain have been gathering momentum for the past few decades (Duffell, 2012; B. Fry, 2014; Partridge, 2012; Standish, 2011, 2012) and have come from various quarters, such as journalists, historians, film writers, TV producers, politicians, teachers and, for the past two decades, psychotherapists. The literature has come to profusely depict socio-political and psychological issues, the later found among a lot of ex-boarders.

Socio-Political Impact

In 1967, Lambert Rayston published his researches written testimonies of ex-boarders who had attended boarding schools especially prep schools. Many of such stories were quite vituperative of children's life in boarding schools, as the one produced below indicates:

Well, they got me in the prefects room. They made me put my hand out, fingers spread on an old desk, then T.H [a perfect] got compass and began to stab the gaps between my fingers with the compass point, back and forwards, faster and faster. Then when he was doing it faster, he shut his

eyes. I was terrified. Thank Christ he didn't miss. They sometimes do and boys go to Matron they daren't split 'My finger got hit by nail' (Lambert, 1968).

Royston's compilation contains several stories about the negative side of boarding school education hitherto so prized in the British system; apparent emphasis on self-discipliner and stiff upper lip' also led to unacceptable overconfidence and loss of respect for the people as people. A onetime boarder lays charges on his school which bear quoting in full:

I think it changed me a lot and not for the best, in some ways. I'm not such a decent person. Before, if I had done something wrong, I felt rotten for two weeks or so, you felt everyone at school knew, you felt everyone was looking at you, you just couldn't tell a lie to get yourself out of things but now I can lie quite easily and couldn't give a damn. I could tell the biggest lies right now just to save my skin, I could go outside and smash the bloody silly picture of Cromwell and come in and tell you I hadn't. I could look you straight in the eyes and say I hadn't. It's made me more brutal but it gives me much more spirit, much more drive, the trouble is it's against other people. They aren't interested in self discipline, they couldn't give a damn what you're really like, only what you appear to be like in that grey straight jacket. I've lost respect for people as people. You just want to take the piss all the time anything that puts you one up on someone else (Lambert, 1968).

Critical stances have come against boarding school education from several quarters. Alongwith critical books (Kynaston & Green, 2019; Verkaik, 2018), there is criticism in the form of documentary TV films. One was produced by Collin Lube in 1994 titled 'The Making of Them' (Luke, 1994). In this film 8-year boys tell about their ordeal during their first term in Prep School. Another film was produced as an item in the program, *Chosen*, on channel 4, shown in Nov 2008. This film presents four men, in their 40s, who tell about sexual abuse. Each of them was, individually, subjected to such abuse. Perpetrators were school master. The four persons belong to the same school. In the words of a psychotherapist, "Their lasting sense of injustice, angers and injury is evident; psyche and soma remain profoundly affected. All admit that they could not have disclosed the abuse, nor made the film, whilst their parents were alive" (Schaverien, 2011). More recently, there has been political rhetoric attacks on the type of leadership training imparted in some famous public schools, particularly The Guardian (May 2, 2021) carried an opinion:

“Britain’s overgrown Eton schools have turned the country into their playground”. In the writers view, Eton seemingly “taught its students the desire to govern, not giving the knowledge how to.” The same Guardian carried another opinion citing the journalist, Cyril Connolly’s book, “The enemies of Promise” published in 1938. Connolly, reflecting on his time at Eton, suggested that the effect of public schools on their students was to arrest their development, terming it in theory of “Permanents adolescence” (The Guardian, 2021).

Psychological Impact

Most important criticism of the Boarding school seems to be summed up in the phrase: “Boarding School Syndrome” (Schaverien, 2011, 2015) The criticism is that removing children from family homes and educating them in institutions located far away has deleterious effects on those children. It refers to a cluster of symptoms such as Inability to trust others; Isolation & self-reliance to an extreme degree; difficulties with relationships; (feel love only towards their children) Substance abuse; An inability to relax; A sense of failure, even despite any successes; Sleep disorders and sexual problems.

Practitioners of psychotherapy, have begun to innovatively look at the long-established boarding school education in Britain and offer a new understanding of the time-honored British tradition. Such understanding has sought to demonstrate how some form of distress among ex-boarders could be traced back to the early losses of home and family. Boarding school syndrome as a new term was adopted after a lot of clinical research. Pivotal to the development of the term boarding school syndrome were two important theories namely the theory of attachment and the theory of child development.

The following two sections deal with the boarding school syndrome and then with the two theories on which it mainly stands. The term boarding school syndrome demonstrates how boarding school may damage the later lives of ex-boarders. Psychotherapists working with ex-boarders have developed a framework that enlightens ex-boarders as well as those who live with them. The syndrome framework is elaborated first.

Boarding School Syndrome Framework

The coming of the term boarding school syndrome is associated with Joy Schaverien, through several others in the profession have contributed to it. A lucid statement comes from Shcaverien who develops the framework under these headings, namely, abonnement, bereavement, homesickness. Captivity/ imprisonment and dissociation resulting in first split between ‘home self’ and the boarding school self (Duffell, 2000; Partridge, 2013).

Abandonment, Bereavement, Homesickness

According to Schaverien, psychoanalytic consultations, many ex-boarders remembered vividly the shock of the moment their parents left at then schools; some recalled being distracted from that moment and then the sense of shock at finding themselves alone in a strange environment. Some had no memory of that day at all. “All felt abandoned but, at the time, they would not have had the words to express it. The initial abandonment is shocking for children, most of whom until their delivery to the boarding school had continuity of intimate care and love” (Schaverien, 2021).

As a consequence of the abandonment, and the sense of exile, the children are bereaved in boarding schools. The more familiar term for this is homesickness. It is true that the children are sick because they are missing home; for therapists, homesickness is not something temporary but a rupture. The sudden loss of attachment figures (parents, siblings, pets and toys) causes the child to protect itself. For the first time in their life the child may be in a situation where there is no intimate contact; no love. There are no words to adequately express the feeling state and so a shell is formed to protect the vulnerable self from emotion that cannot be processed. According to Schaverien it is a sudden loss of home and all their primary attachment figures: The sense of place that revolves, for small children, around their familiar circumstances is all gone in one moment. Children are in grief. “The emotions can be so overwhelming for children that they have to close down psychologically in order to survive” (Schaverien, 2021).

Captivity Imprisonment

Many ex-boarders have made the observation that boarding school is like prison (S. Fry, 2004). Children who board in school are indeed captive. They are powerless to leave. Like prisoners they wear uniform, and they are expected to eat and sleep at times prescribed by the authorities. Food was to be eaten even if unpalatable, washing of bodies and clothes regulated and, in some schools,

this meant taking compulsory, daily cold showers. There were also prescribed times for exercise and for taking a bath; some describe queues forming for the permitted three-minute soak in the bath before the next person took their place. As a result of this, many ex-boarders, now adults, cannot relax and enjoy a leisurely bath. “Spaces for reverie were strictly limited, which means that many ex-boarders find it difficult, as adults, to permit themselves time to unwind” (Schaverien, 2021).

Disassociation: The Split between the Home Self and the Boarding School Self

In the view of psychotherapists, “living in captivity, even benign captivity, is still imprisonment. The psychological parallel is that the emotional self also becomes imprisoned. Young children have no words to adequately express the feeling state.” This is because children are too young and they cannot mentalize the situation in which they find themselves. This is a stage in which they need loving adults who could guide them for words to process emotional experiences (Fonagy et al., 2018). “The words offered at school, even if well meant by kindly adults, are likely to be inadequately attuned to the children’s’ emotional reality. Unable to soothe themselves, they begin to develop a false self, a form of psychological armour to protect the vulnerable self from being overwhelmed by un-processible feelings” (Schaverien, 2021). Some describe the ‘False Self’ as a “defensive function acquired to ‘hide and protect the True Self’ (Winnicott, 1960). Also known as ‘the Caretaker Self’, this can serve an adaptive function in normal development. Duffell has called this the ‘strategic survival personality’ (Duffell, 2000).

The Split

The loss of family and home causes a split, a separation between two aspects of the personality: the vulnerable, home child (self) and the boarding school child (self). Such undesirable “split is so profound in some cases that it may last into adult life, affecting intimate relationships. The ex-boarder may remain vigilant, and presenting two faces to the world. It may feel unsafe to trust a loved partner or spouse because, like the parents, they too might abandon them. The fear of commitment or inability to confide in an intimate partner, has been found to be common in ex-boarder adult. Psychotherapist regard it to be a kind of emotional insurance policy; it retains the potential to leave before the partner abandons them, as did the mother parents when handing over

the child to the boarding school staff. Along split personality as a consequence of separation from home and attachment figures (Schaverien, 2021).

Basis of Psychotherapists' Work

The work of psychotherapist is based on the ideas of such theorists as Jung (Kamal, 2024), Fordham (Urban, 2015) and Fogany. Fordham developed Jung's concept of the self through infant observation, theorising that baby was already a person, in womb, distinct from his mother. It had self in himself, integrated self. It could de-integrate, i.e. open up, complain if uncomfortable, and evoke a response from maternal environment. On achieving sufficient stimulation, it withdraws, returns to rest, integrates into the self. If mother unavailable, baby will adapt, making fewer demands. The infant gradually develops into the baby and, later child, is an active participant in its emotional growth. If the latency child (6 years old to puberty) is sent along to boarding school before he or she is ready to leave home, psychological development is likely to be distorted. The Child in the boarding school is bereft because his primary attachments can no longer be formed, and boarding environment is felt to be unsafe. To cope with this the child develops persona (Urban, 2015). Developing Fordham's ideas, Fogany believes that disruption of attachment at early age can lead to severe personality disturbances. He develops the notions that: (1) "secure attachment is the basis of the acquisition of metacognitive or mentalizing capacity; (2) the caregiver's capacity to mentalize may foster the child's bonding with the parent; (3) maltreatment may undermine the acquisition of a mentalizing capacity; (4) symptoms of borderline personality disorder may arise as a consequence of inhibited mentalizing; (5) violent crime and anti-social personality disorder may be possible because the capacity to reflect upon the mental states of the victim is compromised, and (6) psychotherapeutic work may facilitate the reactivation of this inhibited capacity" (Derksen et al., 1999).

Psychotherapists' Findings with Respect to Abuse and Bullying

There may be other undesirable experiences within the schools. They may also to distort the children's sexual development, impacting on their adult sexuality and life partnerships. Psychotherapist in their practice and research come to have data from stories of clients and reports by respondents of cruelty perpetrated on them. It has been found through such data that many

suffer from sexual abuse. However, they are unable to tell their parents. According to Schaverien, it is difficult for children to talk about sexual issues. They may be coerced by abusers and threatened with humiliation if they were to tell. Schaverien's analysis is that "children do not have words to explain such events" (Schaverien, 2021). A lasting impact of having been sexual abuse in the dormitory is traumatic, leaving lasting impact as the victims are found to suffer insomnia and night terrors. Until psychotherapy intervenes, many cannot understand why this happens. This is because the disassociation means that the victims do not consciously remember the abusive events; come to be successfully repressed and the person genuinely does not know they were abused at school. When this does break through to consciousness, the shock and terror may be very present in the psychotherapist's room.

At induction into the boarding school, the child suffers such maltreat, including bullying and sexual abuse. It was impossible for the children to tell the parent. The child is ashamed, feeling culpable for humiliating experiences to which they were subjected. The child is unable to articulate the abuse even many years later. "Boarding School Syndrome is thus established; the true self comes to be hidden and the child is unknown to the parent and, so is, in effect, lost" (Schaverien, 2011).

During the Boarding School period the traumatic nature of the early experience frequently remains unconscious. After boarding life as well, early boarding is a traumatic event in the life of many young children and its psychological impact affects the core of the personality.

The ex-boarders might present himself with a generalized sense of depression – a history of broken relationships, marital or workplace related problems. They may only gradually become aware that aspects of their distress originate in the losses and broken attachments of their early childhood.

Challenge to the Syndrome Concept

There are researches afoot that tend to negate the suggestion of direct cause and effect between attending boarding school and the psychological issues termed boarding school syndrome (Cavenagh, 2023). The new research highlights experiences of ex-boarders with boarding schools that taught them to have strong sense of independence as well as learning such life lesson as the art of diplomacy how to fit in, communicate and manage differences. The newer thinking

minimizes the role of boarding schools in creating the boarding school syndrome. On the other hand, it also highlights the role of pre-boarding environment in the children's homes. It suggests parenting styles, how a family functions, and its capacity for "emotional expression" may have a significant impact on the psychological development of boarders too. That is, boarding schools cannot be held totally accountable for some of the psychological problems encountered by ex-boarders. In the view of the new research, boarding school syndrome should be reframed as 'boarding family syndrome' to better reflect the role parents have on how their children experience boarding schools and the long-term psychological impact on them (Cavenagh, 2023). Two findings of the new research are particularly important (Cavenagh et al., 2023):

- (1) "Whilst addressing issues such as eating disorder, loneliness and relationships amongst boarders, the new research highlights that the younger the child is when they go to boarding school, the more traumatic the experience is for them."
- (2) "Some boarders who enjoyed boarding school, liked it because it was better than a dysfunctional home environment."

Boarding School Education: The Situation in Pakistan

Pakistan inherited boarding school education during British colonial rule in India. Three wellknown institutions Lawrance College (Ghora Gali) Sadiq Egertan School (Bhawalpur) and Aitchison College (Lahore) were some of the earliest ones to be founded. A lot more have been established since independence in 1947. Quite a number of boarding schools work under the name Cadet College. Precise statistics regarding number of boarding school and number of students therein is not available but it is considerable so that the subject of boarding schools has attracted many researchers and we now have considerable literature on the subject.

A major feature of this literature is that its findings seem to be more aligned with the newer research in Britain than with the 'Boarding School Syndrome' literature. The latter one has pointed out some of the dismal psychological effects of boarding school education. A British writer, an ex-boarder himself has judiciously summed up the institution as follows:

"A society that promotes early boarding as a desirable and superior form of pedagogy seems on the evidence we now have, and in the light of attachment research and the neuroscience of healthy

brain development, to be behaving irrationally and immorally, because it submitted to such a regime at grave psychological and emotional risk” (Partridge, 2013).

Partridge goes on to make a recommendation that connects some features of British ‘Boarding school Syndrome’ and new research literature on the one hand, and the literature in Pakistan on the subject, on the other. He writes:

“The evidence seems beyond reasonable doubt, and it follows that the institution of early boarding should be phased out forthwith for those aged thirteen or less – a recommendation shared by the organization Boarding Concern. Indeed, this is the norm in most of the continental Europe” (Partridge, 2013). According to Schaverien teenagers can better take advantage of the educational opportunities, provided by committee of teachers in academic studies, music or sport. In her view, “a child at 13 is mature, psychologically and physically, than the prep-school child. At 14, some make an informed choice to complete their education away from home” (Schaverien, 2011)

The ‘syndrome’ literature does recognize the age factor, i.e. the younger children being more vulnerable to syndrome situation than the older ones, say around 13 years aged (Schaverien, 2011). The new research in Britain has expressly pointed out that “the younger the child is when they go to boarding school, the more traumatic is the experience for them.”

The literature from Pakistan on the subject indicates that major problems for boarders are academic pressure and bullying dynamics, along with what the new research in Britain has emphasized the ‘dysfunctional home environment’ (Cavenagh et al., 2023).

Review of Literature in Pakistan

Literature on the subject of boarding school education in Pakistan predominantly relates to two major problems, namely, academic anxiety and bullying. Academic stress and anxiety is contained in the very title of a study (Khan & Shah, 2019). In this study, sources of academic anxiety are said to be educational demands and parental and societal demands. Educational demands involve academic workload, examinations, competition and performance expectations within boarding schools. Added to them are the influence of financial aspirations, societal norms on students’ perception of success and failure. The anxiety’s symptoms include worry, fear of failure,

perfectionism, and physiological responses (e.g, insomnia, fatigue, etc). Anxiety affects academic performance, social interactions, and overall psychological wellbeing.

Similarly, another study is titled “Academic pressure and bullying in Karachi boarding schools.” Sources of academic pressure, again, include examination stress from examining bodies, expectations of teachers and aspirations of parents and other family members (Khan & Ahmed, 2017). The new thing in this case is that bullying impact victim’s mental health manifesting in anxiety and low academic performance.

By and large, literature in Pakistan relating to the subject of boarding school education is more in lane with the new research in Britain that takes a qualified view of the literature produced in the framework of ‘syndrome’. A further example is an article with title: “Psychological Challenges among Pakistani Boarding School student: A Qualitative Analysis” (Khan & Ahmed, 2017). This study adopted semi-structured interview with a diverse sample of Pakistani boarding school students, teachers and mental health professionals. Thematic analysis was employed to identify and interpret recurring themes related to psychological challenges. According to the study, there prominent challenges were revealed: (1) academic pressures and expectations as sources of stress; (2) interpersonal relations within the boarding school environment including peer dynamics and relationship with authority figures, and (3) the experience of homesickness and separation anxiety. The study is essentially similar to the two studies discussed above i.e. its first two findings relate to the problem of academic pressure and bullying (now worded peer dynamics). The third challenge – homesickness and anxiety does not seem to be pivotal: the study does not elaborate on tis impact on boarders’ well-being. On the other hand, it notes that “cultural and societal expectations played a role in shaping students’ identity formation and psychological resilience” (Khan & Ahmed, 2017).

In Britain, the criticism of Boarding school education in terms of a syndrome has been challenged on two counts, namely the child’s age at induction to boarding school and home circumstances. The new research in Britain thus takes out some sting out of the ‘syndrome’ venom... Literature on the subject in Pakistan indicates that it largely relates to academic pressure and bullying, both

of which do create problems related to students' wellbeing at boarding schools. They are, however, not as acute as depicted in the British 'syndrome' phenomenon.

'Dysfunctional Home'

In Pakistan, the 'dysfunctional home' phenomenon does have impact in cases in which it exists. This paper, therefore includes two case studies that illustrate the problem. One study relates to a 9th grade boy who was good in studies but his performance drastically dropped in the last term of his academic session. When the result was compiled his mathematics teacher became curious about the reason of such drastic fall in academic performance. He had a session with the boy and came to know that the student was mentally disturbed for the last 2 months as his mother was diagnosed tumor patient. His housemaster and house staff did not know about this problem. When the results were presented in the Academic council, he was failing in three subjects and, according to laid down policy he was to be retained. All members in the council nodded for his retention less his mathematics teacher who drew the attention of the house about the student's consistent and satisfactory performance in the first two terms and then told the reason for his downfall. Mathematics teacher recommended that he be given another chance to appear in the failing subjects with a gap of two weeks and his performance be assessed again. The council realized the problem, and agreed to the recommendation of mathematics teacher. The boy was counselled and motivated to overcome his grief and he cleared his failing subjects. This case study illustrates the psychological challenges faced by boarding school students, particularly when personal issues are not identified and addressed by the staff. It emphasizes the need for boarding schools to foster an environment of trust and communication where students feel comfortable sharing their problems. This case also highlights the critical role teachers can play in advocating for students' needs and providing the necessary support to help them succeed. Zulfiqar's journey demonstrates that with the right support and guidance, students can overcome personal family adversities and achieve significant accomplishments in their lives.

Case Study: Psychological Problems of Boarding Life – Aptitude and Attitude

One Saad joined a boarding school as a grade 8th cadet. From the beginning, he exhibited academic struggles, consistently performing poorly in various exams. Despite the college administration and

faculty's effort to help him improve, his performance did not improve significantly. His father was frequently contacted by the school regarding Saad's poor academic results.

After a year, it became apparent that Saad's difficulties were not solely due to academic challenges. His personality and attitude toward the rigid routine of boarding school played a significant role in his failings. The boarding school's structured environment did not align with his nature, which craved freedom and comfort, factors typically found in a home setting.

The faculty suggested to Saad's father that he might benefit from transferring to a day school, where he could enjoy more freedom and home comforts. Given Saad's continued poor performance and the apparent mismatch between his temperament and the boarding environment, the father was convinced to withdraw his son from the college and involve him in a family business. This aligned with Saad's interests and strengths. He now runs a successful showroom of luxury vehicles and heavy bikes in a well-known commercial town. His journey highlights the importance of aligning educational and career paths with a student's natural inclinations and interests. Saad's story demonstrates how a change in environment, from a rigid boarding school to a more flexible and supportive home and business setting, can significantly impact a student's success and well-being.

Conclusion

Boarding school education has had a time-honoured tradition. However, for the past two decades the same has been on 'trail'. The two crucial points in the controversy regarding British boarding school education relate to inequity in society and psychological issues among ex-boarders as brought to light by psychotherapists. This study has been concerned more with the psychological aspects and has taken into account the challenge to the concept of boarding school syndrome catapulted by psychotherapists.

Psychotherapist lay blame both, firstly on parents' initiative that creates conditions of abandonment, bereavement, homesickness, and on the school which go to exacerbate initial miseries to captivity/ imprisonment and eventually split into 'home self' and 'boarding house self'. This split self becomes the child's technique to survive in the strange and competitive environment of the boarding. The newer research in Britain lays more emphasis on a boarder's pre-school home

environment which, if dysfunctional, does not prepare the child to healthily adjust to the boarding environment. In the context of Pakistan two concepts are quite useful. One is the concept of individuation, i.e. the baby is already a self in possession of human dignity. This concept is pivotal to the psychotherapists' view. The other is the concept of dysfunctional home. This study has utilized the latter concept in analysing situation in Pakistan. The other concept that baby is already self finds important place in the Quranic teaching and needs to be further expanded in terms of human dignity and thereby making it a basis for training of boarding school faculty and other staff.

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