Social Justice Leadership in Rural Pakistan:

A Constructivist Grounded Theory Study of Private School Leaders

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by

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SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP IN RURAL PAKISTAN:

A CONSTRUCTIVIST GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF PRIVATE SCHOOL LEADERS

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY ANALYSIS

And hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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DEDICATIONS

Dedicated to my late father, Baba.

You may be gone, but your wanderlust spirit and larger than life presence forever dwells in my heart.

Dedicated to my mother, Ami.

A strong soul who helped me believe in Allah and

the importance of taking one step at a time to accomplish my goals because that's how mountains are scaled.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PSL	Pakistani school leaders
SJL	Social justice leadership
MM	Mental Models
OOSC	Out-of-school children
GT	Grounded theory
C-GT	Constructivist grounded Theory

ABSTRACT

This qualitative constructivist-grounded theory (C-GT) study aimed to explore how Pakistani school leaders (PSL) conceptualize and enact social-justice-oriented leadership (if they do) to combat educational and sociocultural inequities to support marginalized students. This study collected data from 11 rural school leaders, over 11 primary and secondary private schools that educate marginalized students, including low-income families, girls, and minority groups in rural areas surrounding Islamabad. Utilizing social justice leadership (SJL) and mental models (MM) as a conceptual framework, I undertook an in-depth, semi-structured interview protocol with each school leader in addition to artifact collection, analytical memos, and diagrams. The emerging grounded theory is a five-step model identifying participants' MM of SJL and exploring their views and actions to address the educational inequities for marginalized students. The findings suggest that school leaders conceptualized and enacted SJL by enhancing marginalized students' access to high-quality education that was context-appropriate and encouraged critical awareness. However, most PSL had not received formal training in school leadership and shared some conflicting and problematic MM of leadership as adult-centered, hierarchical, and savior-like. This finding diverges from existing literature on SJL, which is democratic, inclusive, and empowering all stakeholders. Based on the results of this study, MM was a useful lens to explore PSLs' views of justice and equity and how they subsequently enacted social justice to address inequities prevalent in their schools and communities to support marginalized students.

Keywords: social justice leadership, mental models, rural schools, marginalized students

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Pakistan, situated in South Asia, is a country with an ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse population. In part, Pakistan's rich culture and life have resulted from a profound influence by historical conquests and invasions in the region, most recently by the Mughal (1526 - 1857) and British empires (1857 - 1947). Today, most of Pakistan's population is religiously homogenous, with more than 96 % identifying as Muslim[1] (Government of Pakistan, 2014). The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2014) reports a small population of Christians, Hindus, and other minority religions (see Table 1). Pakistan is home to six major ethnic groups (*Punjabi, Pashtun, Sindhi, Balochi*, *Saraiki,* and *Muhajir*) and multiple minority ethnicities (see Table 2). English and Urdu are the official and dominant languages spoken in Pakistan, alongside well-known regional languages and more than 300 minority languages and dialects (see Table 3). Despite Pakistan's religious, ethnic, and linguistic diversity, Muslim Sunnis are a dominant group that creates a system of discrimination for non-dominant or marginalized groups, such as religious and ethnic minorities. The ideals of the dominant group extend their reach into Pakistan's educational system by perpetuating and reproducing inequities in access for historically marginalized students.

While Pakistan's government and the private sector continue to focus on improving access to and quality of education, inequity in access to education for marginalized populations has a turbulent history and continues to be a huge concern. Pakistan has an education crisis with millions of out-of-school children. In 2013, a

[1] 85 - 90 % Sunni Muslim and 10 - 15 % Shi'a Muslim

reported 19.75 million children between five and nine years were out of school, and after factoring in adolescents, this number increased to 25 million children (Ali, 2019; SPARC, 2013). Thus, Pakistan has one of the lowest levels of youth literacy globally, ranked at 113 out of 120 countries (Rehman et al., 2015). Although this study focuses on social justice in schools, it is essential to acknowledge the connection to society's social justice and equity issues. Inequity at the school level perpetuates and exacerbates societal disparity. For instance, of the estimated 25 million out of school children in Pakistan, it is the overlap of lower socioeconomic status (SES), especially girls, students in rural areas, and students with moderate to severe disabilities, who are most at risk of not being unable to attend a school or drop out at the primary level (NEMIS-AEPAM, 2015; UNESCO, 2014).

Pakistan's National Education Policy (NEP, 2009) identifies marginalized students as people with disabilities, who are orphans or poor, living in remote rural areas, belonging to an ethnic or religious minority. The NEP (2017) states its commitment to inclusive education and aims to eliminate inequalities and disparities for marginalized students "including gender and geographical imbalances" (p. 11). Moreover, there is no official gender discrimination under the Constitution (Pakistani Const. Art. 25, § 2), Pakistan has a highly patriarchal culture with profound gender disparities (Halai, 2011b). For instance, the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC, 2013) found that in the age group 15–24 years, only 61% of girls are literate[2] compared to 79% of boys (Ali, 2019). Traditional gender roles expand their reach into the education

[2] Literate is defined by the Ministry of Education in Pakistan as the ability to read and comprehend simple text in any language and write a simple letter.

system, providing more education opportunities for boys than girls. The NEP (2017) further states the government's goal to help marginalized groups, such as "persons with disabilities, people living in remote rural and troubled areas, religious and ethnic minorities, orphans and very poor" (NEP, 2017, p. 72). Despite these goals, the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2015) found that 25% of students with moderate to severe disabilities never enroll or are at a considerably higher risk of dropping out of school than students with no disabilities. Furthermore, a reported 95% of transgender students either never enroll in school or drop out of school for fear of being marginalized. Many students also drop out of school annually because of severe corporal punishment. These dropouts are mostly the poorer students in government-run schools or low-fee private schools in rural areas (Munir & Hussain, 2019). In sum, marginalized students represent the majority of out-of-school children. This evidence demonstrates that the state is not enforcing laws and protecting the fundamental rights of minors to compulsory education (Sadruddin, 2011).

The government and the private sector are using several initiatives to bridge the inequity gap in education. For example, Article 25A of the Pakistani Constitution stipulates that "the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by law" (Pakistani Const. Art. 25A). The primary objective of Article 25A is to ensure that all children have access to education until grade 10, commonly referred to as 'matric'[3] in Pakistan. To achieve this, the government provides free public schooling. Furthermore, in 2015,

[3] In Pakistan, Matric (short for matriculate) is the final exam at the end of 10th grade after which you can enroll at a college or university

Pakistan signed the United Nations Agenda for a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), emphasizing an inclusive, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education for all girls and boys by 2030. Also, many non-profit organizations in Pakistan, such as the Institute for Social Justice (ISJ) and the Center for Social Justice (CSJ), monitor and implement international treaties on human rights and social justice for the citizens of Pakistan, especially for marginalized people, regardless of gender, caste, beliefs, ethnicity, age, etcetera. While private and government initiatives are essential in bridging the inequity gap, reports and studies reveal persistent disparities in access to and quality of education provided, especially for marginalized populations (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, 2018; Naveed & Khan, 2018; Tayyaba, 2012; UNESCO, 2014; UNESCO, 2017).

Over the rest of this chapter, I first discuss the problem and the purpose of my study. I provide an overview of the literature and identify knowledge gaps that this study aimed to address. Next, I outline of the conceptual framework, design, and methods used to frame this study. Finally, I conclude with a discussion on the significance of this study and provide key definitions of relevant terms.

Statement of the Problem

Studies and reports show that inequity of access to education is glaring and rapidly increasing in Pakistan (Ahmad & Batul, 2013; Ali, 2014; Buergi et al., 2018; Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi, 2015; NEP, 2009). The inequity in resource allocation to support student learning (e.g., for low-income students) contributes to the marginalization of students who fall behind their peers in school performance (Aslam, 2009; Halai, 2011a; Saadia, 2012). Students living in poverty, first-generation school students, and

students who identify as ethnic or religious minorities, etcetera are often marginalized and are unlikely to get the support and accommodation they need to succeed in school. Marginalization takes a toll as disparities continue to grow between them and their well-to-do peers, making it increasingly difficult for marginalized students to reach their full potential. Besides academic differences, researchers from various countries have explored the psychological and emotional effects that marginalized students experience, such as anger, anxiety, hopelessness, isolation, self-doubt, suicidal tendencies, etcetera (Matheson et al., 2019; Paradies et al., 2015; Schmitt et al., 2014).

As a moral imperative, due to their administrative roles, school leaders may be in a unique position to help reconcile differences among student groups by addressing issues of justice and equity in their schools (Davy, 2016; Theoharis, 2010a). Research shows that school leaders who address inequities and ensure inclusion have a strong influence on creating a socially just school, translating into a more positive experience for all students (Bredeson, 2004; Jean-Marie, 2008; Larson & Murtadha, 2005). Influential school leaders are also a catalyst for student achievement and well-being (Day et al., 2014; Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2008; Louis et al., 2010; Robinson et al., 2007; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Further, school leaders focusing on social justice – or working to better the educational and social conditions of marginalized students – may be a more immediate solution to protect marginalized students in schools by improving or replacing exclusionary practices than policies that may or may not be followed.

Studies in a U.S. context have illustrated different ways school leaders have enacted social justice in their schools to make them more inclusive to ensure that each

student reaches their full potential. Although the conceptualization and actions of social justice leadership were yet to be explored in a Pakistani rural school context, extant Western research[4] illustrates that there is no single description of social justice leadership. But there is Western scholarly consensus that school leaders conceptualize social justice-oriented leadership as promoting (what they view as) fundamental rights of equity and fairness in multiple social domains, including schools (Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002). Socially just leaders have a spirit of advocacy, care, and concern for individuals and work on behalf of marginalized students in their schools (Dillard, 1995). They are deeply concerned about situations that marginalize student groups in a school environment, maintain an activist stance, and challenge and address inequities (Theoharis, 2007).

This study draws on the characteristics of social justice leaders in Theoharis' study (2007) as a reference for exploring the actions of PSL and where they align and differ. Theoharis (2007) described social justice leaders as those who value and respect diversity; strengthen the core curriculum and ensure access to the core curriculum for diverse students; facilitate professional development to promote understanding of marginalization factors (e.g., in Pakistan, these would be gender, SES, ethnicity, religion, etcetera); offer marginalized and struggling students social and educational opportunities equal to those of their privileged peers; collaborate with other administrators to maintain an activist stance; among others.

Western studies also shed light on the strategies of school leaders to promote social justice by cultivating a welcoming and inclusive school environment (Causton-

[4] Western in my study encompasses advanced English-speaking countries such as the US, UK, and Canada

Theoharis & Theoharis, 2008; Jean-Marie, 2008; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Shields, 2010; Theoharis, 2008b, 2010a). For example, in some studies, by connecting with the school community in a low-income neighborhood – and explicitly reaching out to marginalized families from low-income and diverse backgrounds – social justice leaders have succeeded in instilling a culture of school belonging in marginalized students (Davy, 2016; Theoharis, 2010a). In addition, research provides evidence that marginalized students achieve better academic results and a more positive and engaging school experience when school leaders build meaningful coalitions with families and create a welcoming school climate (Davy, 2016; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Until the late 1990s, there was relatively little systematic research on the role of school leaders in Pakistan. More recently, this field of study is developing somewhat, and there is a bit more empirical research on the role of school leaders and their practices in different types of schools (Baig, 2011; Khaki, 2006; M, 2015; Nasreen & Odhiambo, 2018a; Nooruddin & Bhamani, 2019; Parveen et al., 2021; Quraishi & Aziz, 2018; Qutoshi & Khaki, 2014). These studies illustrate that Pakistan has its own set of challenges for school leaders. For example, Pakistani school leaders mostly lack formal leadership and management training (NEP, 2009). In addition to the lack of leadership training, some of the shared challenges rural PSL encounter are students' physical distance from a school that affects enrollment and dropout (Zakar et al., 2013); chronic teacher absences in some rural areas (Ghuman & Lloyd, 2010); fewer resources available to support student learning and staff professional development; a shortage of adequately trained staff (Hartijasti & Afzal, 2016); and an achievement gap between students in rural and urban schools, which is not always the case, but students in urban schools tend to

outperform students in rural schools (Tayyaba, 2012). Despite the need for training and other challenges, research demonstrate that some PSL have developed creative strategies while serving marginalized students to appropriately address school leadership challenges (Baig, 2010; Khaki, 2006).

Pertinent to my study, scholars find evidence that PSLs' personal backgrounds, life experiences, values, and assumptions affect school leadership practices (Baig, 2011; Khaki, 2006; Jehan, 2015). Their religious values guided their approach to leadership in both decision-making and actions at the school level. Accordingly, Jehan (2015) found that PSLs' practices were influenced by social values and cultural norms that influenced their decision-making within high schools. She found that cultural and societal values shaped school leadership roles and decision-making to a large extent. Khaki's (2006) study states that school leaders in diverse school settings used their experience, values, and beliefs as a lens that influenced their leadership practices (Khaki, 2006). In sum, these studies found that PSLs' values, beliefs, experiences, and assumptions played a role in their decisions and actions (Baig, 2011; Jehan, 2015; Khaki, 2006).

Similarly, Western studies find evidence that individuals' mental models (MM), or their deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, beliefs, values, and experiences influence how they understand the world and their MM, drive their actions (Senge, 2006; Weber, 1999). Extant Western research also demonstrates that individuals' religious values and beliefs (or their MM) potentially increase their awareness and motivation to promote social justice. For example, a study by Berger (2006) and Schuyt et al. (2004) find evidence that religion influences philanthropic values and behavior in individuals. Research also indicates that the influence of critical experience is formative in developing

a social justice orientation (Caldwell & Vera, 2010; Goodman, 2011; Pepin, 2015). Caldwell and Vera (2010) argue that the occurrence of several types of critical incidents serves as life-changing moments and develops individuals' orientation towards promoting social justice. Western literature also finds that religious values and beliefs increase individuals' awareness and inspiration to promote social justice. Berger (2006) and Schuyt et al. (2004) find evidence that religion influences philanthropic values and behavior in individuals.

Although there are related studies, no study specifically examines how and why PSL address inequities prevalent in their schools and communities to support marginalized students using SJL and MM as conceptual frameworks and this study aimed to explore this gap in research. Further, existing studies on SJL are not inclusive of all types of marginalized groups across different national contexts or geographic areas. For instance, these studies do not investigate rural private school leaders in Pakistan, a context which has different policies, practices, and sociocultural realities. Further research into SJL in a different context, such as private rural schools in Pakistan, may contribute to SJL theory. It could also provide school leaders in other contexts to promote social justice and equity consistent with their context. Research into SJL in a different national context, in turn, can result in more significant equity and social justice for marginalized students. In sum, there is little research on how PSL understand and promote social justice while serving historically marginalized students in primary and secondary private rural schools. This study aimed to explore just that.

My choice of private schools may seem puzzling, as private schools, for the most part, contribute to social injustice and inequity in education. Although most private

schools are for-profit and are dependent on student fees for funding, there are philanthropic initiatives in private schools by individuals, trusts, and organizations, which provide free or inexpensive private education. My study looks at these philanthropic rural private school initiatives that are either free-of-cost to students or offer generous scholarships in a 150-mile radius around Islamabad. Moreover, I specifically chose PSL who served historically marginalized students due to demographic elements such as class, gender, region, disability, religion, ethnicity, etcetera. In sum, philanthropic private rural schools around Islamabad, where this study occurred, present an observable inequity in educational opportunities.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine how rural Pakistani private school leaders (PSL) conceptualized social justice, their motivation to serve marginalized students, and their social justice leadership (SJL) practices and strategies. While the literature on educational leadership in Pakistan has shown that PSL take action to support marginalized students (Baig, 2010; Khaki, 2006), no research studies, as far as I know, utilizes SJL and MM as conceptual frameworks to understand how and why school leaders address inequities prevalent in their schools and communities to support marginalized students. This study explored how rural private PSL – who most often lack formal training in school leadership – understood and promoted social justice to address inequities prevalent in their schools and communities to support marginalized students. As such, their conceptualization and actions of SJL may be based on their MM or their experiences, beliefs, values, and assumptions of justice and equity.

Specifically, the primary purpose of this study was to generate substantive grounded theory on SJL and MM in a non-Western rural context, particularly grounded in the substantive area of PSL working in private rural schools in and around Islamabad. This study investigated a gap in research of how rural private PSL conceptualize social justice and work toward creating inclusive and equitable schools. Noting variations in PSLs' naming or conceptualization of social justice and how (or if) they addressed inequities and challenges to create more socially just, inclusive, and equitable schools.

Exploring private rural school leaders' conceptualization and practices in a different national context would present other school leadership challenges. Due to different education policies and procedures, sociocultural hierarchies, oppressive structures, and, specific to a Pakistani context, school leaders, for the most part, do not have the basic school leadership training to serve marginalized students in a rural setting. Furthermore, the inherent risks and consequences of raising awareness and "fighting against" deeply embedded oppressive social norms and structures in the Pakistani context are probably different from the risks that a like-minded school leader may face elsewhere. Thus, exploring PSLs' MM and actions of SJL can contribute to an understanding of a rural Pakistani-context-based SJL, which cannot be fully adopted from Western-based school leadership theory.

Another purpose was to address the lack of empirical research on PSLs' justice-oriented practices to create more inclusive and equitable schools for marginalized rural students. By highlighting the process of school leaders while addressing social ills, I want to add to empirical research on practices and strategies of school leaders that level the playing field for all students and give every student a fair chance at success. In other

words, this study aimed to explore PSL practices, strategies, and challenges to manifest profound and equitable change in their schools and communities. Three research questions guided this study:

1. How do rural private primary and secondary school leaders conceptualize social-justice-oriented leadership to address the educational inequities for marginalized students in Pakistan, e.g., based on gender, socioeconomic status, religion, etcetera?
2. What motivates rural private primary and secondary school leaders to transform their schools into (what they consider) socially just schools for marginalized students in Pakistan?
3. What actions and strategies are rural private primary and secondary school leaders using to promote social justice in their schools to address the educational inequities for marginalized students in Pakistan?

Conceptual Framework

Two theories guide my work: I incorporated concepts from the theory of Mental Models (MM) and Social Justice Leadership (SJL). To explore how PSL conceptualized SJL, I used the cognitive approach of MM (Senge, 2006). To explore how PSL strategized and enacted social justice in school settings, I utilized George Theoharis' (2009) characteristics of social justice leaders (e.g., leaders who address and eliminate marginalization in their schools and keep issues of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, class, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions at the center of their vision and practice). The following two subsections briefly introduce MM and SJL and how they were applied to understand the process behind PSL's actions to promote social justice for marginalized students in rural private schools near Islamabad.

Mental Models (MM)

Mental models have been studied across multiple disciplines and over many decades. The roots of MM can be traced back to Scottish psychologist and physiologist Kenneth Craik's (1943) seminal book 'The Nature of Explanation.' Craik (1943) suggested that individuals create small-scale models of reality in their minds and then use them to predict events, reason, and solve problems in their lives. Supporting Craik's (1943) claim, Johnson and Laird (1980) further developed and described MM as an individual's reasoning mechanism that enables them to interact with the world. Further, Senge's (1993; 2006) work on systems thinking describes MM as "deeply held internal images of how the world works, images that limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting" (Senge, 2006, p. 163). The theory extends into developing influential leaders by enhancing or changing their mental models. Specific to my study, Lawson (1999) finds that a school leader's role and actions are embedded in their MM that they acquire through years of deeply ingrained beliefs and traditions. These MM are partly acquired through intergenerational transfers of beliefs and values and partly through experiences and learning (Srivastava, 2006).

This study uses Senge's (2006) description of MM as representations of reality comprising deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, beliefs, values, and experiences that influence how people understand the world and act (Senge, 2006; Weber, 1999). Accordingly, school leaders' MM or how they perceive and manage their world could depend on multiple factors, such as sociocultural norms and school expectations (policy and procedures) and influence their understanding. Senge (2006) posits that MM are not good or bad; by definition, all models are simplifications. Issues

arise when MM become implicit or when they exist below our level of consciousness. Implicit MM often remain unexamined, and because they are unexamined, they potentially form problematic assumptions and generalizations (Senge, 2006). In relevance to this study, subconsciously created and unexamined MM might be detrimental to a school leader, such as unconscious internal biases and deeply held beliefs leading to outward actions. Studies show that school leaders struggle with examining their prejudice and deeply held beliefs about students with backgrounds and experiences different from theirs (Davy, 2016). In sum, this study aimed to explore school leaders' MM – their experiences, beliefs, values, assumptions, etcetera – to understand why they cared about creating more equity and inclusion for marginalized students within their schools and how (or if) their MM impacted their conceptualization and actions promoting social justice.

Social Justice Leadership (SJL)

While MM provided a framework for investigating leaders' experiences, beliefs, values, assumptions, etcetera, SJL offers a framework for exploring school leaders' behaviors. Research indicates that social justice leaders investigate issues that create and reproduce inequities for marginalized students and then address these inequities (Bogotch, 2002; Dantley & Tillman, 2006; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014b; Furman, 2012). Furthermore, SJL focuses on creating equitable educational opportunities and achievement for all students by constantly examining equity, diversity, and marginalization (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Marshall & Oliva, 2006). Not only do they challenge and examine policies and practices that perpetuate

inequities experienced by students because of marginalization factors, but they also replace them with equitable practices.

Western literature describes social-justice-oriented school leaders as open-minded and willing to explore their views, experiences, and values (Brown, 2004). They exhibit characteristics of being self-reflective, life-long learners, and risk-takers who consciously work to promote equity and justice with a strong belief that social justice is necessary to ensure a better quality of life for everyone (Marshall & Young, 2006). Furthermore, Dantley and Tillman (2006) describe social-justice-oriented school leaders as critically reflective on power issues, uncovering how their leadership practices allow and perpetuate inequities, and actively seek to transform these injustices into equity and justice for all students. Not only do social-justice-oriented school leaders notice and take action against marginalizing conditions personally, but they also enable students to become critically aware of oppressive structures and marginalizing factors that create inequities (McKenzie et al., 2008; Theoharis, 2007). Moreover, social-justice-oriented school leaders are activists with strategies to make their schools and communities more socially just and equitable (Marshall & Young, 2006). They question the assumptions behind traditionally marginalizing school practices and policies to reduce discrimination and promote social justice for all students (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005).

This study draws explicitly on Theoharis' (2009) framework to explore the actions of a social justice leader. Theoharis suggests that socially just leaders: value and respect diversity; reinforce the core curriculum and ensure diverse students' access to the core; facilitate professional development to promote understanding of marginalization factors (e.g., in Pakistan, gender, SES, ethnicity, religion, etcetera); offer marginalized

and struggling students social and academic opportunities as rich as their privileged peers; meet the needs of each child; build a community to ensure that students succeed collaboratively; be linked to the community, life, and school, etcetera.

Studies show that social justice and equity are viewed differently within different national contexts (Blackmore, 2009; Furman, 2012). Accordingly, I was mindful of PSLs' conceptualization of social justice and social justice-oriented leadership in the sociocultural context of Pakistan. Also, Pakistan is ripe for investigation since there's no research on how social justice is conceptualized and implemented by school leaders. Ultimately, my goal was to integrate the two frames of MM and SJL to explore how PSLs' MM influenced their understanding of educational inequities for marginalized students and how they framed it the way they did to explore their SJL actions. However, the objective of this research was not to challenge or refute Western theory on SJL but to add insights and variations using a MM framework and a different national context to explore where Western literature and Pakistani school leaders' SJL concepts and actions align and diverge.

Research Design

This qualitative study utilized Charmaz's (2006) *Constructivist Grounded Theory* (C-GT) approach (e.g., interviews, analytical memos, and diagrams) to explore PSLs' conceptualization and enactment of SJL to serve marginalized students. Constructivist-Grounded Theory is an advancement of traditional grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), where findings are still grounded and emerging from the data but embedded within the paradigm of social constructivism. The C-GT methodology utilizes interpretive and reflexive practices throughout data collection and analysis (Charmaz,

2002). With the explorative purposes of this inquiry and aligning with a C-GT approach, I explored PSLs' conceptualization of SJL while being mindful that "truth" and "reality" are context-bound. Moreover, meanings are negotiated between the researcher and participants to create an interpretive understanding of the phenomena under study (Charmaz, 2011; Merriam, 2009).

The knowledge generated from this study is grounded in the experience of 11 primary and secondary PSL in rural private schools near Islamabad. This region is ethnically diverse with a "native" Islamabad population of *Punjabi* people and a large concentration of immigrant communities, including *Pashtuns*, Afghan refugees, internally displaced people - earthquake or flood victims. The diversity distinguishes the role of school leader participants in this study from those who work in other less diverse regions of Pakistan. Moreover, I recognize my role as a native researcher due to my familiarity with the Pakistani sociocultural context and knowledge of the area combined with my experience as a Pakistani private school leader.

With travel restrictions due to COVID-19 and time limitations, I collected online data over 16-weeks from various data sources (semi-structured interviews, artifacts, and follow-ups). Collected data were analyzed using C-GT strategies (Charmaz, 2011a, 2011b). I compared the results of this study to existing Western literature related to social justice leadership. This study promoted trustworthiness by using five strategies: triangulation, member check, peer review, audit trail, and reflexivity and positionality (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A more in-depth discussion of methodology is provided in Chapter Three.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant on at least two levels. First, I will be focusing on rural private schools near Islamabad as the substantive area of inquiry, a context yet to be explored through the theories of MM and SJL. The purpose was to build understanding and substantive theory on SJL grounded in rural areas surrounding Islamabad by connecting how PSL perceived educational inequities for marginalized students (MM) and how their perceptions shaped their subsequent leadership actions. Secondly, the theory of SJL provided an overall understanding of what SJL essentially encompasses in developed English-speaking countries such as the US, UK, Australia, and Canada. The findings of this study revealed the contextual and cultural variations in how PSL conceptualized and enacted SJL. The results also show how others conceptualized social justice, the language they use to describe their justice-driven practices for marginalized students and provide a variation in the theory of SJL and the influence of MM in another national context. Variations in the approach could provoke discussion, analysis, and understanding of equity issues faced by non-Western school leaders in rural private schools. These variations, in turn, could improve understanding of how different policy contexts, school resources, student demographics, and sociocultural contexts influence SJL practice in other contexts. This study also adds knowledge to the domains of school leaders' MM to conceptualize and promote social justice and SJL in general.

This study's focus on school leadership in rural areas surrounding Islamabad is significant on at least four levels. Findings from this study could highlight and add depth of knowledge to the areas of: (1) community and context shaping school leadership, since extant literature is often unrelated to geographic realities; more studies in a Pakistani

context that focus on school leadership meeting student needs in unique settings, including rural areas (Hartijasti & Afzal, 2016); (2) specific factors that profoundly affect rural private schools in Pakistan, and impact the marginalized population school leaders are serving, and school leaders' approach to leadership; (3) common challenges PSL face, such as lack of leadership training opportunities; student enrollment and dropout due to the physical distance from school (Zakar et al., 2013); less resources available to support student learning and staff professional development; a shortage of well trained staff (Hartijasti & Afzal, 2016); among others; and (4) a vast number of students are enrolled in rural private schools in Pakistan, it is essential to explore what school leaders do while serving the rural marginalized population, the strategies they use and how they confront challenges.

This study highlights and adds depth of knowledge to PSLs' practices and strategies that were largely justice-oriented, equitable, and inclusive that can be used to inform policymakers, school leadership programs, rural school leaders, and educators. For example, some participants shared strategies for ensuring marginalized students do not drop out and combatting limited resources to ensure marginalized students' academic and well-being needs. They did this through partnering with the community and creating programs to meet the needs of marginalized students, such as fast track programs for late starters or after-school programs for supporting first-generation students. The findings from this study could inform (1) policymakers who are in charge of educational policy directives in rural areas so they can shape policies that are inclusive of marginalized populations and congruent with the nature of rural schools; (2) school leadership programs that train future school leaders on socially-just school leaders practices so they

can be better prepared to serve marginalized students in rural areas; (3) other rural school leaders and educators of contextually appropriate justice-oriented, equitable, and inclusive actions and strategies while serving marginalized students. Equipping other school leaders, policymakers, and educators with strategies and leadership practices that are more inclusive, equitable, socially just, and contextually appropriate for a marginalized rural community could serve as a type of roadmap or inspiration toward school improvement. Also, suppose school leaders are not attentive to the myriad of considerations related to marginalized students. In that case, one cannot expect them to communicate the importance of these considerations to teachers working with marginalized students.

Definition of Key Terminology

Collectivism: Collectivism refers to a society, culture, or economy that promotes groups rather than individual interests. Collectivism is often understood in contrast with individualism, which places personal interests ahead of the group.

Patriarchal society: where men are authority figures and women are considered subordinate.

Rural: Merriam Webster defines rural as "of or relating to the country, country people or life, or agriculture." However, Islamabad's "rural" area is home to almost half the population of Islamabad. Residential expansion is legal by law and is only rural for tax purposes and in the census.

Social justice: the ending of oppression often veiled in the form of inequities and marginalization of those who exhibit some form of "otherness" (Dantley and Tillman,

2006, p.19). Social justice, like education, is a deliberate intervention that requires the moral use of power (Bogotch, 2000)

Social Justice Leadership: investigates and poses solutions for issues that generate and reproduce social inequities in a school (Dantley and Tillman, 2006, p.17)

Mental Models: Thinking styles, or assumptions, beliefs, values, and experiences shaping how individuals perceive the world and take action (Senge, 2006; Weber, 1999)

School Leader: For this study, my interest was with the school leader responsible for decision-making or someone who has significant control over the policies, practices, and considerations for marginalized students. I use the term school leader to encompass the range of leaders responsible for decision-making for students. For example, the school leader might be a headteacher, principal, or someone else.

Western countries: For this study, I use the term Western countries/research/context to encompass advanced English-speaking countries such as the US, UK, Australia, and Canada.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation includes five chapters. Chapter One set up the research problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, conceptual framework, research design, significance of the study, and definition of critical terms. Chapter Two begins with relevant literature and contextual information focusing on Pakistan's historical, cultural, and social context. Next, an overview of Pakistani schools, the role and responsibilities of private school leaders in Pakistan, some challenges, etcetera. Chapter Two also reviews extant literature and the conceptual framing using the theories of SJL and MM to examine participants' conceptualizations and actions to address the issue of improving

the educational access or better resources for marginalized students. Chapter Three focuses on the qualitative research methodology and methods for the study's exploratory grounded theory design. I present the findings from this study in Chapter Four, addressing the research questions, which focus on PSLs' conceptualization of SJL, their leadership practices, and their motivation to address social-justice-oriented work in the context of rural private schools near Islamabad. Finally, Chapter Five discusses the research findings, emerging grounded theory, and implications for theory, research, and justice-oriented leadership practice in rural Islamabad.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature that informed this study that aimed to explore the conceptualization and practices of social justice leaders in rural Islamabad. While there is a limited amount of empirical literature directly exploring rural Pakistani private school leaders (PSL) serving marginalized students, there is a great deal of existing literature on related topics, which, when woven together, form an appropriate basis to explore my research questions.

The following sections in this chapter outline the historical and cultural aspects of Pakistani society that potentially influence the role and practices of school leaders. The review begins with a brief historical context: the different conquests of the region that is now Pakistan and how it has brought religious, language, and ethnic diversity to the area. Next, it describes the historical development of education in the region, which has left traces on the Pakistani educational landscape. It then provides insight into Pakistan's religious, ethnic, and linguistic diversity and the traditional collectivist culture where compliance is the norm. It highlights school leadership challenges in pursuing goals that challenge the status quo, such as equitable practices for marginalized students.

This chapter also describes the education landscape in Pakistan, emphasizing issues and inequities in education that specifically affect marginalized populations. Moreover, the chapter reviews the extant literature on school leadership in Pakistan. For example, to illustrate differences between public and private school leaders, the general lack of leadership training for PSL, and equity-focused school leaders serving marginalized students. It also reviews literature related to PSLs' experiences, prior knowledge, values, and contextual factors, etcetera, which shape their leadership role and

practices. Finally, the chapter provides the overall conceptual framework for the study, a discussion on the theories of MM and SJL, and how they are helpful for this study.

Historical Background: Diversity in the Region

This section provides a brief overview of the region's historical background to illustrate to readers the contributors to the overall diversity of present-day Pakistan. It is important to briefly examine Pakistan's history to understand better how rich ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity emerged. Conquests and invasions greatly influence today's diversity in the region, and they have left imprints on the current stratifications in Pakistan that are important to this study.

The earliest known urban settlement in the Indian subcontinent, the Indus Valley civilization (3300-1300 BCE), was located near the fertile plains of River Indus and extended from contemporary northwest India, through Pakistan, to Northeast Afghanistan. It is considered a Bronze Age society known for remarkable architecture, agriculture, art, and crafts that included seal-carving, pottery, jewelry, figurines, and thriving trade (Pal, 1988). After the Indus Valley civilization, the region was invaded and occupied by numerous other empires with diverse religions and cultures. The Indo-Aryan or Vedic period (~1500-500 BCE) brought and developed the Hindu culture and faith in the region. Society was divided into four main classes: priests (*Brahmin*), warriors (*Kshatriya*), merchants/artisans (*Vaishya*), and laborers (*Shudra*). The class structures were inherited and became rigid over time (Sharma, 2005). Subsequently, the Persian Empire (~550-330 BCE) ruled the region bringing the Persian language, culture, poetry, and the monotheistic religion of Zoroastrianism. The Persian Empire was followed by the

Greek conquests, the Hun invasion, then the Arab-Muslims, followed by the Seljuq Turks of Central Asia (10th century).

The Mughals entered Delhi in 1526 CE; they were Turks influenced by the Iranian culture. The Mughals consolidated Islam and promoted Iranian and Persian literature, music, and culture leading to the Indo-Persian culture in the region that is modern-day Pakistan (Richard, 1995). Later, in the 18th century, the Indian subcontinent (present-day India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar) came under the colonial rule of the British "*Raj*" or empire. The British took almost 100 years to colonize India from 1757 to 1857 and governed India directly from 1857 to 1947. They built many buildings, railways, and ports across the sub-continent to promote trade, and the British introduced their own culture, religion, language, and social systems.

History of Education in the Region

During the Mughal rule, education was encouraged by setting up "maktabs," or elementary schools, attached to a mosque. A "maktab" primarily imparted religious instruction and memorizing the Holy Quran, and they welcomed everyone. In addition to the "maktab," separate educational facilities were constructed to attract international scholars from Persia and Central Asia who received free education. In subsequent years of Mughal rule, a system of "nizamiyah" higher education became popular in the area (Imamuddin, 1982). The objective of the "nizamiyah" system was to facilitate students' mastery of any learning through self-study and personal effort. To attract well-known scholars from the region, higher education institutes offered scholarships and monthly government stipends (Imamuddin, 1982). The minority religions had their institutions for imparting religious education. The official language during the Mughal rule was Persian,

but schools used Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, and other vernacular languages that were spoken throughout the region as mediums of instruction. Libraries were established exclusively for women.

When the British began to invade the subcontinent in 1757, they adopted a policy of non-interference in social, cultural, religious, and educational systems to avoid conflict. Notably, the primary purpose and interest of the British East India Company lay in trade and profit. After 1813, when the British established colonies in India, they started engrafting Western science and literature, translated into native languages, on Eastern knowledge. The colonial education system had a purpose to "divide and rule" the people. They consolidated historical class divisions and further divided society into the rich that could afford British elite education and the vast majority of the poor that could not (Khalid & Khan, 2006).

By 1853, the British colonial rule was firmly established in the subcontinent, and they revised their education policy, recognizing the State's responsibility to educate all children. Structurally, the British educational system was a centralized system with 12-years of school, followed by a 3-year-diploma after an intermediate stage. Primary education was taught in vernacular languages; secondary and higher degrees were taught in an English medium. The universities provided teacher training and girls' education facilities, and the State recommended universities expand education into technical education and applied science (Anwar, 2019).

This section provided a brief overview of the historical context to situate Pakistan and illustrate the overall diversity in current-day Pakistan. The various groups of people who have come through this region have left their mark on some of the stratifications

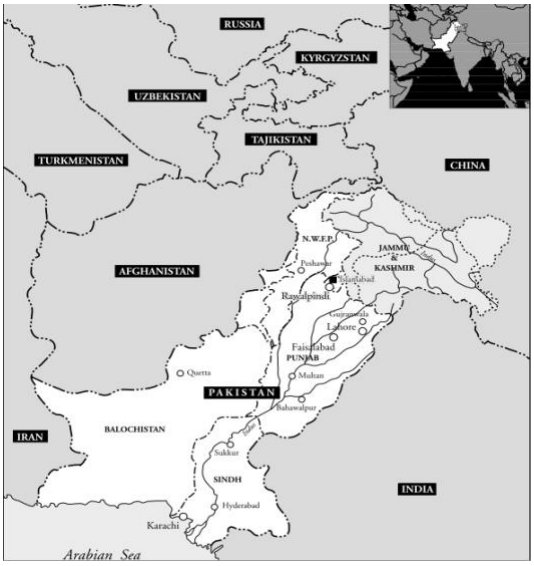
relevant to this study. For example, the education system, elite private education, and English-language education the British introduced continue in contemporary Pakistan. Moreover, the stratification of classes and the separate spaces for women continue in Pakistani schools today. The following section contextualizes modern Pakistan, the sociocultural, ethnic, and religious diversity, the collectivistic culture and patriarchal structures in the country, and the overall state of education in the country, followed by the inequities in access to education for marginalized groups.

Contemporary Pakistan

Pakistan, also known as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, borders India, Afghanistan, Iran, and China, along the Arabian Sea (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Map of Pakistan



Source: Adapted from Payne (2002)

Pakistan has four provinces: Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Baluchistan, and Sindh. Islamabad is the federal capital territory, and the major regional territory is Gilgit-

Baltistan. At approximately 340,000 square miles, Pakistan is about twice the size of California, and with a population of approximately 212 million people, it is the fifth most populated country in the world (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

Cultural Diversity

The culture in each province of Pakistan is unique when compared to its counterparts. For example, people living in Punjab are of an Indo-Aryan ethnic group, have their language, *Punjabi*-style cuisine, poetry, philosophy, art, literature, music, dance, traditions, values, and history. The traditional dress is vibrant and colorful, as is the lifestyle of the people who are also fun-loving and lively. Lahore is the capital of Punjab and *Punjabi* is the provincial language, but the national language of Urdu is commonly spoken in Punjab. Some dialects of the *Punjabi* language are *Pothowari, Hindko, Pahari, Jhangvi, Shahpuri, and Majhi.*

Likewise, the culture in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) is also unique. A majority of the people living in KPK are the *Pashtun (*or *Pakhtun*) people. They have their language, traditional dresses, music, dance, language, poetry, and history. Peshawar is the capital of KPK, and *Pashto* (or *Pakhto*) is the provincial language spoken by many people. The dialects of *Pashto* fall into two main categories, the northern and southern dialects[5]. The *Pashtun* people have a specific code of conduct known as *Pashtunwali,* the origins of which date back almost 2000 years (2 BCE). It outlines their behavior and way of life, including hospitality, loyalty, justice, and courage (Khattak, 2009).

[5] The southern dialect uses the ancient /sh/ and /zh/ sounds, and the northern uses /kh/ and /gh/ sounds instead

Furthermore, some of the provinces have a lot in common with neighboring countries. For instance, the people of Punjab are very similar in culture and tradition to neighboring Punjabi Indians and more liberal than their *Pashtun* neighbors. It is not surprising, since *Punjabis* were one people before they each gained independence from the British colonial rule in 1947, splitting Pakistan and India into two countries and divided Punjab into East and West Punjab. The effects of coloniality are visible in the continued political hostility between Pakistan and India. Likewise, Pakistani-*Pashtuns* have much in common with neighboring Afghan-*Pashtuns* in terms of culture, tradition, and language spoken. The *Pashtuns* – both Afghani and Pakistani – occupied the same land in the early 20th century until the Durand line was drawn by the British, the frontier between Pakistan and Afghanistan that divided the *Pashtuns* (Omrani, 2009). Like Pakistan and India, deep political hostility continues between Pakistan and Afghanistan – a by-product of colonialism.

Religious, Ethnic, and Linguistic Diversity in Pakistan

Islam is the official religion, and Pakistan has the 2nd largest population of people who identify as Muslims (Muslim Population by Country, 2019). The majority of Pakistanis are Sunni-Muslims, and the remaining population is comprised of multiple Islamic sectarian groups and minority religious groups. The population is religiously homogenous since more than 96 % of the population identifies as Muslims (see Table 1). A small part of the population (less than 4 %[6]) identifies as Hindus, Christians, and other minority religions (Government of Pakistan, 2014). Pakistan has six major ethnic groups

[6] 4 % is close to 8.5 million people, equal to the entire population of Switzerland (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019)

and multiple minority ethnicities. Of these ethnicities, *Punjabi* people are the majority ethnicity, comprising more than 44 % of the population in the country (see Table 2). The major ethnic groups, some of them corresponding to the names of the provinces, are *Punjabi, Pashtun, Sindhi, Balochi, Saraiki,* and *Muhajir*.

Pakistan is also a multilingual country. There are approximately seventy languages spoken in Pakistan, with many distinct dialects. There are four major provincial languages and over 300 minority languages and dialects (see Table 3). Urdu is the national language and is widely spoken as a second language by more than 80 % of the population. It is the mother tongue of approximately 8 % of the population. English is the official language. Both English and Urdu are the dominant languages in Pakistan, being the most widely spoken and understood languages in Pakistan (Rahman, 2005). English and Urdu are used as a medium of instruction in schools, private elite to urban slums, but the quality of English teaching varies considerably (Peeli, 2013; Rahman, 2005). Ethnic languages and dialects are considered the languages spoken by the less educated classes and widely used in government schools (Rahman, 2005). Many minority languages and dialects are reportedly on the verge of extinction (Khan et al., 2015).

Most people in Pakistan value their ethnicity and try to continue the traditions associated with their culture. However, people are mixed with other cultures, races, and, to a lesser extent, with various sects of Islam. For instance, many people living in the province of KPK are not *Pashtuns* but Pakistanis from other provinces or *Muhajirs* (multiethnic Muslim immigrants) from neighboring countries. The intermingling of people has occurred through marriages and migration from one province to another. In other words, communities are interwoven and not in their ethnic or linguistic silos.

Table 1

Religious Diversity in Pakistan

Religion	Percentage of Total Population
Sunni Islam	82.8
Shia Islam	11.8
Hinduism	1.8
Ahmadi	1.8
Christianity	1.4

Source: Miaschi, J. (2019) Religion in Pakistan.

Table 2

Ethnic Diversity in Pakistan

Ethnicity	Percentage of Total Population
Punjabi	44.7
Pashtun	15.4
Sindhi	14.1
Saraiki	8.4
Muhajir	7.6
Balochi	3.6
Other ethnicities	6.2

Source: Miaschi, J. (2019) Ethnic Groups in Pakistan

Table 3

Linguistic Diversity in Pakistan

Languages	Percentage of Total Population
Punjabi	44
Pashto	15
Sindhi	14
Saraiki	11
Urdu	8
Baloch	4
Other languages	5

Source: Sen, O. (2019). Languages in Pakistan.

Collectivistic Culture and Patriarchal Society

In this section, I briefly examine the collectivistic cultural norms and patriarchal structures that impact Pakistani life. First, I describe collectivistic and patriarchal societal norms in Pakistan and some of the implications for marginalized populations. Next, I examine its impact on education, specifically for girls. Finally, I explore some implications of collectivistic norms and patriarchal structures for education and school leaders to support some examples.

Pakistani culture is considered highly collectivistic in which association with a collective group is prioritized over individualistic goals (Gorodnichenko & Roland, 2011a). A valued individual trait in a collectivistic culture is to prioritize meeting group goals and needs. To that end, individuals often conform to expected behavior to promote harmony, social bonding, and unity in the group (Williams, 2011). In a collectivistic

culture, to remain loyal to the group, group harmony is valued over honesty (Gorodnichenko & Roland, 2011b). Pakistan scores very low on Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions under the category of *individualism* and *indulgence* (Hofstede, 2014). For instance, Hofstede (2011) posits that from early youth, societal cultures shape, often unconsciously, deeply rooted values that shape an individual's inclination to prefer some set of circumstances over others. Pakistan's low score on *individualism* (see Table 4) indicates a highly collectivistic culture, implying the group, clan, family goals, communal welfare, and social customs are given more importance and value than individual goals and needs (Gorodnichenko & Roland, 2011b). The low score on Hofstede's *indulgence* dimension indicates that individuals feel highly restrained in their actions by societal expectations (Hofstede, 2014). The overlap of collectivistic and restrained culture in Pakistan suggests that individuals are highly unlikely to pursue goals that contradict the larger societal group norms, and oppressive structures in society are less likely to be questioned or critiqued.

Table 4

Pakistani culture through Hofstede's 6D model

Source: Pakistan - Hofstede Insights (2014)

Furthermore, Pakistan is a patriarchal society where men are authority figures and women are considered subordinate, even though Islam, also the official religion in Pakistan, pronounced both men and women as equals fourteen centuries ago. Similarly, Pakistan's Constitution (1973) states that there shall be no discrimination based on sex. There shall be full participation of women in all spheres of national life. Yet, in practice, there are deep gender disparities. The patriarchal values, that privilege men over women, are embedded within Pakistani society, and the gender inequality in schooling reflects the broader gender gap in the region (Hadi, 2017). According to the Gender Inequality Index (2019), Pakistan is ranked 152 out of 189 countries (Klingebiel & Hildebrand, 2010). Notably, in South Asia, Pakistan has the widest gender gap and widespread gender discrimination in all walks of life, particularly in tribal areas. Patriarchy is relatively more potent in tribal and rural settings where local customs and practices establish male authority over women's lives. In her autoethnography, Naseer (2019) found that women in tribal areas are often denied fundamental rights and treated as property. In terms of women's education in tribal areas, "if a male family member disapproves [of] her education then she cannot pursue her studies…if she defies … male members can take any action to stop her. She has no choice or consent but to follow the tribal tradition that is to respect the decision taken by the elders/male of the family" (Naseer, 2019, p. 435). In short, patriarchal and collectivistic values are strictly followed in most tribal areas. It is common for women to be denied their constitutional rights, including their right to an education.

It is essential to point out that while patriarchal values have a strong foothold in Pakistan, it does not naturally follow that the attitudes toward the role of women are fixed

across the country. These attitudes vary by the socioeconomic, ethnic, cultural, and perceived status of women (Zakar et al., 2013). While the overall culture seems unfair for women living in Pakistan, multiple exceptions challenge patriarchy. For instance, Pakistan has had many powerful women in positions of leadership. Some examples are Benazir Bhutto, the twice-prime minister and first woman leader of a Muslim nation in modern history; Muniba Mazari, the United Nations goodwill ambassador to Pakistan, also known as the Iron Lady of Pakistan; and Malala Yousafzai, the youngest Nobel Laureate, UN Messenger of Peace, and girls' education advocate. These women had to show incredible courage, and their path was fraught with obstacles before they became role models and leaders for social change.

Collectivism and Patriarchy: The Impact on Pakistani Girls' Education

A society with collectivistic and patriarchal culture compounds the struggle for girls wanting to pursue an education. While the number of out-of-school children is high for males in Pakistan, it is even higher for females: ~20% illiterate males and ~40% illiterate females (*SPARC Annual Report*, 2018). In some cases, families may risk being shamed if their daughters continue with their education beyond a certain point since that means going against the group norm. If a girl does not have a good reputation in the community, the consequence is the possibility of losing out on a good '*rishta*' (marriage proposal) (Shaw, 2001). A "good" girl in these areas is domesticated and conforms to social norms for the sake of her family honor (Jehan, 2015). When a girl shows signs of pursuing individual goals that contradict her in-group's combined values and traditions, a solution is often an early marriage. In most cases, to conform to group norms, individuals prefer to remain silent than to be explicit about intentions or actions that would create

conflict within a group they identify with. In some extreme cases, there are issues of honor killings where girls are murdered by their brother because they were violating religious or social norms in society (Chesler, 2010; Heather, 2016).

Ultimately, there are exceptions and different practices that are found across all regions in Pakistan. The distinction is most visible in large parts of northern Punjab, where the culture is more inclusive, and girls' education is encouraged (Andrabi et al., 2007). Northern Punjab has a high enrollment rate for girls due to the progressive attitude of the Punjabi people. In addition, Punjab is better resourced and has more schools; it has the largest number of private and public schools that are physically present and at a walking distance or accessible by low-cost public and private transportation as compared to areas in rural Sindh or Baluchistan (Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi, 2018)

For a school leader, working in a collectivist and patriarchal culture involves establishing programs that are consistent with the local context and norms of the social group. This includes ensuring family consent before initiating controversial programs to ensure that girls can pursue their education. As a point in case, a girl was pulled out of middle school by her brother, the family's bread earner, for being “too vocal” about her rights. The brother was apprehensive about the continued exposure of the girl to the “permissive” climate of school that conflicted with the traditional set of values on which the girls in their community were raised. To ensure the girl was re-enrolled, the rural school leader had to reassure the brother that, in the future, his sister will conform to the expected behavior and customs of their community and family.

Moreover, the school leader reshaped some programs to suit the community context better and help girls navigate their rights congruent with the expectations of the

home and community (A. Palla, 2020, personal communication, February 25, 2020). Perhaps, in another more progressive context, it could be argued that the brother was being a bully while the sister was standing up for her rights. Still, the solid patriarchal and collectivistic structures in some areas are oppressive and shape how PSL navigate their practices.

Summary and Implications for School Leaders

The collectivistic culture and patriarchal norms in Pakistan sometimes work towards creating inequitable oppressive social and educational structures. At times the systems create inequities that impede access to quality schooling for marginalized groups (Qutoshi & Khaki, 2015). For instance, a collectivistic society emphasizes the embeddedness of individuals in a larger group that encourages conformity and discourages individuals from dissenting and standing out (Williams, 2011). Thus, there is a resistance toward individuals pursuing individual goals or actions that promote change.

Theoharis (2008c) finds that, in the U.S. context, school leaders with an equity-oriented agenda challenging the status quo meet with resistance at multiple levels in their pursuit of equity and justice. Some of the opposition is due to the momentum of the status quo, obstructive attitudes and beliefs of school staff, a lack of resources, harmful rules and regulations, and principal preparation (Theoharis, 2008a). In the context of Pakistan, Palla's (2020) experience as a school leader in a rural, low-income community exemplifies how resistance was due to the obstructive collectivistic and patriarchal structures embedded in the community. Palla had to shape the school curriculum and activities to make them culturally appropriate and acceptable to ensure students continue schooling (A. Palla, personal communication, February 20, 2020). For PSL to combat

hegemonic structures would then likely require contextual knowledge of the community to meet the resistance and strategize ways of continuing their pursuit of social justice and equity.

Educational Terrain in Pakistan

The education system is a topic of considerable importance in Pakistan since many school-aged children are not receiving an education. According to a 2012 annual report by the Society for the Protection and Rights of the Child (SPARC, 2013), 19.75 million children in Pakistan between the ages of 5-9 were out of school. After factoring in adolescents, this number rose to 25 million. Overall, Pakistan has one of the lowest youth literacy rates globally, ranked 113 out of 120 countries (Rehman et al., 2015b). Moreover, a majority of schools provide an inferior quality of education. Some of the identified challenges with the education system, besides many out-of-school children (OOSC), are the vast disparities between region and gender, the poor physical infrastructure of schools, lack of a qualified teaching force, and low funding (Halai, 2011a; Memon, 2007). Pakistan relies heavily on foreign aid due to limited domestic resources.

The Structure of Schools

Pakistan has a highly centralized education system with a vertical bureaucratic structure. The federal minister of education is responsible for planning, and implementation is monitored at the provincial and district level of government (see Figure 2) (Rizvi, 2008). There are three types of schools in Pakistan: government (or

public), private, and religious schools[7]. Both government and private schools have a similar formal education structure but differ in other ways. The government and private schools have five main levels of education (see Table 5): Pre-Primary (popularly known as "kacchi" in government schools); 5 years in Primary or Elementary School (Class 1-5); 3 years in Middle School (Class 6-8); 2 years in Secondary School – Matriculation or O-Levels (Class 9-10); followed by two years in the Higher Secondary or A-Levels. Both types of schools use English and Urdu as official languages of instruction.

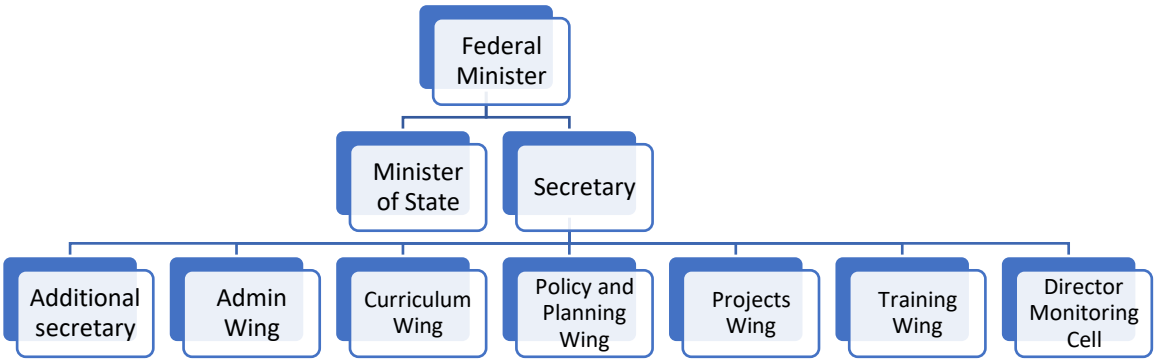
Government Intervention

In 2001, the military government took steps to decentralize the education system (Komatsu, 2009). As presented in Table 6, decentralization shifted substantial powers to the local level to better respond to local needs and provide more effective public education than central authorities (Komatsu, 2009; Shabbir et al., 2017). Despite the decentralization, studies have shown that local government contributed to the educational underachievement in Pakistan (Khan, 2013; Komatsu, 2009; Shabbir et al., 2017). Shabbir et al. (2017) report that decentralization was unsuccessful due to a few reasons, some of which were: the local representatives and school leaders, at times, were politically appointed, lacking the training or qualification for the appointed position, and lacked a basic interest in the development of education. In some cases, the school leader and the community relationship were neither established nor developed (Shabbir et al., 2017). In other cases, the community did not value education and was less interested in educating their children (Muhammad et al., 2013).

[7] discussion of religious schools is beyond the scope of this study.

Figure 2

Ministry of Education Organogram



Source: (MoE, 2008)
Note: For a more detailed organogram from the federal level down to the district level, see Appendix E

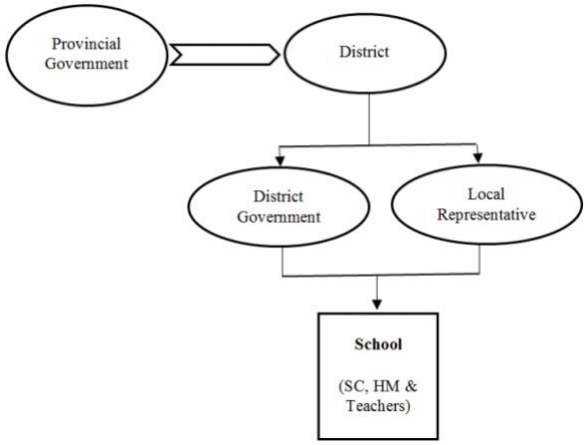
Table 5

School levels in Pakistan

	Level	Grade	Age
Elementary Education	Pre-Primary	K	3-4
	Primary or Elementary	1-5	5 – 11
Secondary Education	Middle School	6-8	10-13
	Lower Secondary Board exam called Matriculation or O-Levels (British System)	9-10	13-14
	Higher Secondary FA, FSc, or A-Levels (British system)	11-12	15-16

Table 6

Diagram of the decentralized education system in Pakistan



Source: Shabbir et al., 2017
Note: SC: School community; HM: School Leader

In contrast, some studies conducted in a Pakistani context have found that empowering school leaders introduced effective school reforms (Qutoshi & Khaki, 2014; Salfi, 2011). Qutoshi and Khaki (2014) found that a school leader in a low-resourced and low-income neighborhood in Karachi successfully improved the overall school infrastructure, teaching, learning, and student academic success (Qutoshi & Khaki, 2014). Studies provide evidence that dedicated local school leaders are more familiar with the local context and more effective in combatting issues in a poor neighborhood and overcoming restraining factors such as teacher turnover, teaching and learning, student academic success, and limited resources (Qutoshi & Khaki, 2014; Salfi, 2011).

According to the Pakistan National Education Policy (NEP, 2009), a significant barrier to improving the quality of education is the overall political instability in Pakistan. Pakistan's government and political leadership have been criticized for being ineffective

and unstable since independence from British rule in 1947(Memon et al., 2011). Elected parliaments have rarely completed their full terms, and governance has often been undertaken through technocratic interim governments with the support of the military. Above all, policymakers were slow to recognize that Pakistan's education system was ill-equipped to deal with one of the largest and fastest-growing young populations in the world (Hafeez & Fasih, 2018). Consequently, Pakistan faces an unprecedented education crisis and is struggling to achieve universal access to quality education.

Recognizing the significant role of education, the government of Pakistan has framed policies that enhance access to school for all children. The education terrain changed positively after 2011, with the 18th amendment to the Pakistani constitution under which Article 25A was incorporated. The article states, "the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by law" (Pakistani Const. Art. 25A). The primary goal of Article 25A is to provide access to education for all children, and, to that end, the government provides free public schooling. Despite interventions, many obstacles prevent universal educational access from being a reality – which, even in itself, does not guarantee quality even if it sounds like progress.

Government Schools and Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)

Government schools (or public schools) rely heavily on the state treasury for funding (Aslam, 2009). The Government-run schools are tuition-free, mainly follow the national curriculum, are rarely co-educational, and generally serve student populations who cannot afford to be enrolled in private schools. Admission to government-run schools is not dependent on parents' income status, religion, ethnicity, or social class.

Since the early 1990s, the government has engaged the private sector to complement efforts in providing free and compulsory education through initiatives to increase access, such as Public-Private Partnerships (PPP). To fulfill the purpose, privately-run non-government organizations adopt non-functional or poor-rated government schools with a low enrollment rate, unqualified teachers, and inadequate school facilities. The NEP (2009) states:

> For promoting Public-Private-Partnership in the education sector, particularly in the case of disadvantaged children, a percentage of the education budget as a grant in aid (to be decided by each Province) shall be allocated to philanthropic, non-profit educational institutions. (p. 20)

An example of the PPP is the Cooperation for Advancement Rehabilitation and Education (CARE) Foundation Pakistan. This large philanthropic, non-profit educational organization aims to provide quality education to children from low-income families (Seema, 2012). CARE initiated a partnership with the Lahore District Government (local level) to adopt failing government schools and, in some cases, build schools on donated land. Starting with one school in 1988, CARE has expanded to 888 schools, of which 700 are adopted government-run schools and made some schools in areas where children could not get admission, or there were not physically accessible government schools. They offer day and evening school at more than a hundred schools to accommodate many students, a reported 285,000 students in total. CARE pays for urgent expenses at the adopted government schools to implement high academic standards, set up science labs and libraries, hire school leaders, provide teacher training, and manage schools (Hafeez et al., 2016; Seema, 2012). Their efforts to improve schooling for marginalized students from a lower SES have seen a ~400 % increase in enrollment, a 10 % decrease in dropout, and increased students' academic achievement.

In short, the government's overall goal, whether through government-run schools or PPP, is to provide access and a higher quality of education to all students. Consequently, the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2018) shows that 89 % of students were enrolled in school by 2017, and Pakistan is making impressive progress towards achieving universal education. Nevertheless, barriers remain, and the literacy rates remain low in Pakistan.

Identified Challenges in Government Schools

In addition to the lack of universal access and low enrollment of students, several other barriers to education have been identified in Pakistan, including low school funding to educate the fast-growing population. According to a report by UNESCO (2014), there are several factors besides low budget responsible for the slow progress in education, such as "(i) shortage of schools, especially for girls, and mostly in remote and far-flung areas; (ii) shortage/absenteeism of teachers; (iii) lack of qualified and trained teachers; (iv) missing facilities such as water, toilets, and boundary walls; (v) weak supervision" (p. 23). Moreover, many external factors, such as conservative and tribal culture, lawlessness, and poverty, drive many students to work rather than attend school (UNESCO, 2014). The following few subsections discuss some of the issues UNESCO (2014) identified, such as low school funding, teacher environment, and school infrastructure.

School Funding

Predictably, the low level of public expenditure on education has been identified as one of the primary reasons for the poor quality of government-run schools (Memon, 2007; UNESCO, 2014). The argument has been that a low education budget from the

government is a primary contributor to poor quality of education; however, Naviwala (2015) insists that the budget is no longer the issue because it has substantially increased from $3.5 billion in 2010 to $8.6 billion in 2016. She finds that it is budget allocation that is hampering the development process (Naviwala, 2015). The government allocates 2 % of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) budget for education, lower than the international standard reported at 4-6 % of a country's GDP. According to Naviwalla (2015), what complicates matters is that 87 % of the entire education budget goes into teachers' salaries. This is a standard practice considering a large chunk of the education budget goes towards salary and benefits in most countries. However, there is a noticeable difference between what is left after 87 % of an allocated 2 % GDP and, what could be considerably more at, 4-6 % of the GDP. Arguably, the remainder of the budget is not sufficient to achieve the desired improvements to the school.

Teaching Profession

The poor quality of Pakistani education in public schools has also been attributed to the shortage of good quality teachers (UNICEF, 2014). The shortage is due to insufficient training or career development opportunities (see Table 7) (Ali, 2019). Furthermore, the lack of government oversight of schools has resulted in chronic teacher absences (Ghuman & Lloyd, 2010). Where teachers are there to teach, the classroom is often crowded. The ASER (2015) report indicates that more than 30 villages in Pakistan have a 100:1 student-teacher ratio, and 14 % of rural schools operate out of a single classroom (see Table 9). The teaching style is very traditional, with teachers as authority figures and knowledge-bearers disseminating information to students and students as

passive recipients of that knowledge. The teaching methodology is often rote learning for exams geared towards testing the student's memory (Rehmani, 2003).

Infrastructure

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2015) reports that 40 % of government school buildings are dilapidated and lack basic facilities, including electricity, drinking water, boundary walls, toilets, and school buildings (Hameed et al., 2018). A reported 54 % of surveyed rural government primary schools were without toilets, which decreased from 73 % in 2014, and 33 % were without drinking water, compared to 39 % in 2014. In 2015, 25 % of the surveyed government primary schools were without complete boundary walls compared to 29 % in 2014 (ASER, 2014; UNESCO, 2014). The lack of essential facilities, such as drinking water, toilets, and boundary walls (see Tables 8 & 9), were factors that led to children skipping school or dropping out (NEMIS-AEPAM, 2015; UNESCO, 2014, 2017).

Private Schools

During the 1990s, the number of private schools increased due to a public demand from parents who prefer to send their children to private schools. In 1980, Pakistan had 3000 private schools and now has a reported 45,000 private schools (World Bank, 2018). These schools multiplied across the divide, urban slums to more affluent neighborhoods, but especially in middle-class, lower-middle-class neighborhoods, and were affordable for low-income families (Rahman, 2005). Private schools are perceived to be generally more promising in terms of academic achievement and reportedly less cruel in their treatment of children (Andrabi et al., 2002a; Aslam, 2009; Siddiqui & Gorard, 2017). Other evidence indicates that private schools help bridge the gender gap in rural areas to

an extent, as some parents are willing to send their daughters to co-educational private settings (Andrabi et al., 2002a). Notably, private schools educate 40 % of all students in Pakistan (Nguyen & Raju, 2014).

The government actively promotes private sector participation in the education sector to close the access gap, but the existence of private schools perpetuates inequity. The NEP (2009) document explicitly acknowledged the unfairness in educational access,

> The educational system in Pakistan is accused of strengthening the existing inequitable social structure as very few people from the public sector educational institutions could move up the ladder of social mobility" (p. 12)

While analyzing the NEP, Ali (2015) observed that the government, on the one hand, promotes private education and, on the other, recognizes that private schools are inimical to social justice and increase social stratification. Children from wealthier families would transfer to private schools, and children from more impoverished families would attend the free and low-resourced government schools. This results in even greater inequity and disparity in access to education. Indeed, Ali's (2015) view reflects the broader opinion of multiple scholars (Ali, 2015; Andrabi et al., 2002b; Siddiqui & Gorard, 2017). Siddiqui and Gorard's (2017) study make a convincing case for free public education for all Pakistani children to reduce inequities in achievement.

Nevertheless, some may rightly challenge a view of public schools serving everyone in Pakistan due to multiple reasons: the government's inability to educate the entire population and the low quality of government schooling, among other reasons. The following sub-sections briefly address private school funding and the teaching profession and conclude with a comparison of government and private schools.

Table 7

Professional qualification of teachers at national level

Professional Qualification	Percentage of all Teachers
B.Ed/BS.Ed	33
P.T.C	30
M.Ed	18
C.T	8
Other trained	7
Not reported	3
Untrained	1

Source: (Alif Ailaan, 2014)

Table 8

Schools without basic facilities

Facility	Percentage
Electricity	44%
Drinking water	34%
Boundary wall	30%
Toilet	28%
Building	9%
Unsatisfactory condition of the building	38%

Source: Alif Ailaan 2014

Table 9

School infrastructure

	Schools without building	Single classroom schools
Sindh	17%	32%
Punjab	1%	6%
KP	0%	12%
ICT	0%	0%
GB	1%	11%
Balochistan	14%	30%
Pakistan	9%	18%

Source: Alif Ailaan 2014

School Funding and Fee Structures

Private schools are privately funded and are not dependent on the State (Khan, 2012). They are still required to meet the centralized national curriculum standards, education policies, and quality guidelines (A. Khan, 2012). Most private schools are owned by individual entrepreneurs, trusts, or non-government organizations. A large majority are for-profit, autonomous, with no direct government support, and rely on student fees for funding which can vary greatly. On average, the annual fee structures range from ~ US$24 to ~US$250, but privately-run international schools can charge up to US$25,000 annually (ISOI, 2020). Students at these private schools are often from very wealthy families. Elite private schools promote conceptual learning and offer internationally recognized exams - O'Levels & A'Levels (Sikandar, 2017). Locally, after meeting a few subject requirements, these exams are considered equivalent to a

secondary school certificate (SSC) and higher secondary school certificate (HSSC), respectively.

Moreover, some private-sector philanthropic initiatives (such as The Citizens Foundation TCF) are privately funded and offer free or low-cost private schooling. These philanthropic initiatives serve marginalized students because of the region, SES, gender, religion, ethnicity, etcetera. Funding comes from donations and fundraisers, and the goal is to drive positive social change by providing quality education without class barriers. To elaborate on the work of the aforementioned philanthropic organization, TCF is a non-profit philanthropic organization in operation since 1995. They deliberately build schools in urban slums and rural communities for students from low-income families in underserved areas and provide in-depth teacher training and customize textbooks to empower students.

Teaching Profession

Memon (2007) distinguishes the quality of education at low-fee private schools and higher-fee private schools. The training and professional development opportunities that elite private schools offer to teachers must not confuse the low and mid-range private schools serving middle to low-income student populations (Andrabi et al., 2002a; Hartijasti & Afzal, 2016). The higher-fee private school hire teachers who have a basic level of education (12-years of school or college level), offer regular teacher training, and a support structure for the teaching and administrative staff. In contrast, low-fee private schools set their fee low enough to attract students from low-income families, but to keep costs in check, they may hire teachers who are paid less and may not have the necessary qualifications to facilitate learning (Memon, 2007; Mughal, 2018). In sum, the quality of

teaching varies when comparing private schools in rural communities and urban slums with private schools serving an affluent population (Andrabi et al., 2002a; Rahman, 2005). Memon (2007) and Mughal (2018) find it unfortunate because parents from a lower socio-economic class struggle to move their children to private schools hoping that these schools are more promising academically. Still, many low-fee private schools are found to be of equally poor quality as government schools.

Comparing Government and Private Schools

In this paper, I have referred to the low quality of education multiple times. It is important to clarify that there is a spectrum on the perceived quality of education that schools provide in Pakistan. One end of the spectrum is government schools that are considered to be of substandard quality. The other extreme is elite private schools that are regarded as the best quality. In the U.S., for example, schools serving a marginalized population in a low-income neighborhood are sometimes perceived as low-quality because of the lack of resources (Darling et al., 2016; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014a). This holds in a Pakistani context, Andrabi et al. (2002) observe that the fee structure usually corresponds to the facilities and quality of teaching expected from a school. Awan and Zia (2015) found that the Pakistani high-fee private school students perform better academically and professionally than the low fee private schools and free government schools.

Research shows that low-fee private schools in urban slums and rural areas are mostly of poor quality, often operating out of a hut, with limited resources, and teachers with inadequate teaching skills (Rahman, 2005). Unfortunately, the teaching style in both government schools and low-fee private schools is focused on rote learning and teaching-

to-the-test preparing students to take board exams rather than the development of critical and analytical skills (ADB, 2019; Aziz et al., 2014; Hartijasti & Afzal, 2016; Mughal, 2018; NEP, 2009). In contrast, elite private schools promote conceptual learning, are better resourced, and considered high-quality with well-trained teachers, large buildings and grounds, ample facilities, and sports like cricket, horse riding, and polo (Rahman, 2005). While private schools have demonstrated advantages compared to government-run schools, evidence shows that large numbers of low-fee private schools provide a low quality of student learning (Andrabi et al., 2002a). However, Siddiqui and Gorard (2017) argue that a school's fee structure does not directly correlate to students' academic performance or overall school success. In addition to the social income group that screens students before they are admitted, Siddiqui and Gorard (Siddiqui & Gorard, 2017) found that private schools' selection criteria increase school success in student academic achievement.

Educational Inequity in Access to Quality Education

Within the last decade (2010 - 2020), the overall school enrollment has significantly improved. Both the Pakistani constitution (1973) and the religion of Islam identify individuals as equal and worthy of equal treatment. However, there are various manifestations of discrimination and inequity in society, including the marginalizing of student groups and the resulting inequitable access to quality education. Memon (2007) found that the low quality of education for the masses through public schooling in Pakistan is because of gender, socio-economic class, regional disparities, low quality of teacher training, and inadequate facilities in schools. In short, most students enrolled in government-run schools in Pakistan generally live in poverty and receive a substandard

quality of education (Memon, 2007). The NEP (2009) also notes the "large differences in access across gender, ethnic minorities, provinces, regions and rural-urban divides [….] inequity has been the result of poor implementation and social customs" (p. 65). Ultimately, the policy document identifies inequities because of poor implementation of policy and existing social customs. The following subsections discuss the social customs that exacerbate inequity in access to quality education for marginalized students, such as gender, SES, region, religion, and students with special needs.

Social Customs Contributing to Educational Inequity for Marginalized Students

Multiple barriers compound the inequity for certain marginalized student groups in getting a quality education, specifically for girls living in rural areas (Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi, 2018). A report by the Human Rights Watch (2018) found that education is not a top priority for parents of students from low-income families in rural settings, especially for girls. The report found that parents prioritized their daughters financially contributing to the household income (for example, as domestic servants for the affluent), or then, stay at home to look after the younger siblings or the elderly while parents earn wages (HRW, 2018). Other families viewed their daughter's education as an investment in another's family after marriage, whereas educating sons was seen as an investment in their future (Hussain, 2012). Extremely conservative communities oppose girl's education based on the belief that it is "sinful" for a girl to study (Hussain, 2012).

New data provides some encouragement, but these disparities exist. The NEP (2009) recognizes that a combination of gender, socioeconomic status, and regional differences work toward creating inequities in access to quality education. The NEP (2009) states that "females and pupils in rural areas face systematic disadvantage at all

levels of education" (p. 66). While both boys and girls contribute to many students out of school, statistics show that girls are more affected. A report by UNICEF (2018) found that in the provinces of Sindh and Baluchistan, girls living in rural communities are at the highest risk of dropping out or never enrolling in school at 75.9 % and 63.5 %, respectively (see Tables 10 & 11) when compared to the rest of the country. While girls in conservative rural areas are not the population I am looking at specifically, or PSLs serving just this population, the literature seemed focused on this particularly marginalized population.

Class Divisions

Another critical issue concerning access to education in Pakistan is class divisions. Class division is a reality in Pakistan, with wealth accumulated in the hands of a privileged few who have access to better resources, a relatively small middle class, and a large population that is desperately poor. Stressing the impact of class structures perpetuating injustices, Abdullah and Chaudhry (2018) note that the Pakistani educational system reproduces the existing social class divide due to the separate and unequal opportunities for students based on their socio-economic class. They contend that access to free public schools of poor quality is for students of a lower SES, and the better-quality private schools are serving students from the middle class and wealthy families (Abdullah & Chaudhry, 2018a).

While wealth has been shown to play an important role in class divisions and the kind of private school a student can enroll in, it does not necessarily follow that people having a lower SES have an ultra-conservative mindset and, therefore, are less educated. Notably, it is not just the class division but an overlap of the region's resources, culture,

traditions, values, and mindset that ultimately impacts access to education and the perceived value of education. Community values, such as collectivism and patriarchy, have exacerbated inequitable access to education for marginalized populations, such as girls in conservative rural areas (Hadi, 2017). There is no doubt that wealth affects the available resources, such as enrollment in low- and high-cost private schools. However, people's state of mind can play a fundamental role in many children's first step to access education.

Table 10

Out of school children ratio by gender in various regions

Region	Boys	Girls	Both
Balochistan	35	62	46
KP	17	41	28
Punjab	23	30	26
Sindh	32	46	39
Pakistan	25	37	31

Source: PSLMS 2012-13

Table 11

Out of school children ratio in different regions

	Urban			Rural			Overall		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
GB	24.6	30.9	27.9	36.6	42.0	39.1	34.8	40.1	37.3
Islamabad	13.5	17.6	15.6	18.0	21.2	19.6	15.4	19.0	17.2
Baluchistan	30.8	38.4	34.4	49.7	63.5	56.2	46.0	58.4	51.8
Punjab	22.6	22.0	22.3	30.6	35.4	32.8	28.2	31.2	29.6
Sindh	28.2	29.7	28.9	56.6	75.9	65.6	44.5	54.9	49.5
Pakistan	24.7	26.2	25.4	36.8	47.3	41.7	33.2	40.6	36.7

Source: PDHS 2012-2013

Rural-Urban Educational Inequity

For students in rural areas, physical distance from schools is also a significant obstacle. A recent report by Asian Development Bank (ADB, 2019) found that disparities in enrollment are attributed to the disadvantage of physical distance from the schools. As the neighborhood to school distance increases, it negatively impacts school enrollment, specifically girls' enrollment (Andrabi et al., 2007). Distance from the school is a serious concern, especially for students living in remote rural areas where the closest school can be miles away (Zakar et al., 2013). As noted earlier, the common Pakistani rural school challenges are: the physical distance from a neighborhood to the school lowers enrollment and increases dropout (Zakar et al., 2013); chronic teacher absences (Ghuman & Lloyd, 2010); some schools operating out of a single classroom; typically much higher student to teacher ratios than other regions; a shortage of well-trained staff (Hartijasti & Afzal, 2016); and, a discrepancy in student achievement in rural and urban schools (Tayyaba, 2012).

In contrast, in urban and suburban locations, schools are generally closer, and public transportation is available to take groups of children to school, which has a positive impact on enrollment rates (Zakar et al., 2013). Moreover, people living in urban and semi-urban areas generally have the advantage of better educational opportunities partially due to the extensive educational media campaigns by the government to raise awareness about the importance of education. Some parents are more determined owing to hopes of purported upward social mobility for their children in the future (Rahman, 2005). Parents, sometimes poor and uneducated, may work multiple jobs to ensure their

children, male or female, get the best quality education they can afford to provide them (HRW, 2018).

Overall, in Pakistan, school enrollment varies across regions, and studies note the disparity between urban and rural access and the higher number of OOSC in rural areas as compared to their urban counterparts (see Tables 8 & 9) (Abdullah & Chaudhry, 2018a; Siddiqui & Gorard, 2017). Lower enrollment and dropout trends are more visible in rural areas across the country (Alif Ailaan, 2014) and the enrollment rate is lowest in tribal areas at 58% (ASER, 2018) compared to the national level at 76 % (World Bank Data, 2017). In contrast, the enrollment rate in some urban areas has substantially improved to 90 %[8] (ASER, 2018). As an illustration, the federal capital city (not the rural areas) of Islamabad has the lowest number of OOSC at 15 %, which means close to 85 % of school-aged students are enrolled in school (see Table 9).

Students with Special Needs

Issues of access are present for students with special needs. The most recent national-level education policy also addressed inclusive education. The NEP (2017) defined disabilities and then advocated for educating children with disabilities to be productive citizens. The NEP (2017) outlines the reasons why children with disabilities are not enrolled in schools, such as:

> unfriendly primary schools … insufficient numbers of special education institutions in the country, the limited intake capacity of existing institutions, transportation problems, poverty as well as ignorance of parents … special education institutes are being run by the NGOs, philanthropists, and private sector. Most of these special education institutions are located in urban

[8] These reports and studies vary widely in terms of statistics and findings. These discrepancies may be based on their purpose and source of funding, but that is beyond the scope of this paper. For this paper, I drew upon shared general findings and summarized implications.

> centers…[a] majority of the disabled children [children with special needs] living in rural and far-flung areas are unable to access these institutions. (p. 115)

The policy points to multiple reasons, including access, availability, transportation, poverty, and lack of parental knowledge as hurdles for access to education for students with special needs. The document later notes the lack of awareness amongst policymakers about the benefits of educating children with special needs and parents who are reluctant to disclose the disability of their children because it is considered a social stigma, particularly for girls with special needs (NEP, 2017).

School Curriculum Perpetuating the Inequities for Marginalized Students

A curriculum wing (CW) at the Ministry of Education[9] (MoE) is responsible for the development of the curricula (see Figure 2). These guidelines are provided to the provinces according to which textbooks and teaching guides are produced. The rationale is to maintain a uniform standard of curricula across the country, create social harmony and a singular national cultural identity. But these guidelines favor the dominant majority group (e.g., Sunni Muslims) while minorities are marginalized (Ali, 2008). In the following subsections, the curriculum inequities in textbooks and language policy are discussed in greater detail.

Textbooks

The textbooks have been accused of being blind to the overall diversity in Pakistan (Grit, 2017). The public and private school curriculum overtly privileges the Sunni-Muslim interpretation of Islam and is biased against minority ethnicities and religions (Ali, 2008). Indeed, many studies have reported that textbooks are visibly

[9] See Appendix E for a detailed Ministry of Education organogram.

discriminatory against religious and ethnic minorities in Pakistan (Durrani & Dunne, 2010; Lall, 2008). A report by a Pakistani catholic church organization, the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP) in Pakistan, highlighted that textbooks were referring to Hindus as "gangsters" and Christians were referred to as "Crusaders" (NCJP, 2013). The textbooks also referred to non-Muslims as "*kaafirs*" (infidels) and included statements about how only Muslims will go to paradise, and other religions are false (NCJP, 2013). A study by Ali (2014) noted that promoting a single national culture, religion, and identity through curriculum strengthened the existing hegemonic social structures and educational inequities. This kind of content also increased divisions among students in schools that serve an ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse population.

Islamic studies are a compulsory subject for Muslims in primary through secondary school, with 'Ethics' being the substitute subject for Islamic studies for non-Muslims. Two problems have been found with the alternative option: it gives the Islamic perspective on ethics, and there is a shortage of books and teachers to teach Ethics (NCJP, 2013). Consequently, some non-Muslim students have no choice but to study Islamic studies and memorize parts of the Holy Quran to get good grades (NCJP, 2013). This practice shows a failure of the state to implement article 22 (1) of the constitution that states, "no person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction, or take part in any religious ceremony, or attend religious worship, if such instruction, ceremony or worship relates to a religion other than his own" (Pakistani Const. Art. 22, § 1).

In their report, the "Curriculum of Hate," the Center of Research and Security Studies (CRSS, 2008) in Pakistan noted that the primary and secondary school

environments deliberately promote a culture of extremism that breeds intolerance and terrorism. They note that textbooks promote discrimination and bigotry towards the non-Sunni Muslim population, and they also say very little about critical thinking, inclusion, equality, and respect for religious diversity. There have been multiple sectarian, religious, and ethnic clashes in Pakistan. These include incidents of minorities' places of worship being desecrated and set on fire, killing and mass murders, burning property and houses belonging to minorities, bombing a site where religious holidays were being celebrated, resulting in many lives. As a countermeasure, in September 2019, the Supreme Court of Pakistan set up a special bench to uphold the constitutional right of minorities to promote a culture of religious and social tolerance. There are continued debates and mass outrage over the prejudiced materials in the textbook and curriculum, and it is considered one of the primary causes for the growing number of incidents where the rights of minorities have been violated in Pakistan (Afzal, 2015; CRSS, 2008; Grit, 2017; NCJP, 2013; Rahman, 2012).

Language Policy

Pakistan is a multilingual country with approximately seventy languages spoken with many distinct dialects (Khan et al., 2015). As mentioned earlier, Urdu is the national language, and English is the official language. English and Urdu are also the dominant languages being the most widely spoken and understood languages in Pakistan. Both the languages are prioritized, and the National Education Policy (NEP, 2009) states the purpose behind prioritizing English and Urdu while retaining the ethnic languages:

> English is an international language and important for competition in a globalized world order. Urdu is our national language that connects people all across Pakistan and is a symbol of national cohesion and integration. In addition, there are mother tongues / local vernaculars in the country that are markers of ethnic

> and cultural richness and diversity. The challenge is that a child is able to carry forward the cultural assets and be, at the same time able to compete nationally and internationally. (p. 11)

In other words, English and Urdu are consciously cultivated in schools and required in office spaces; as a result, these two languages have penetrated households. The elite and educated prefer and are more likely, to speak in English and Urdu (Rahman, 2005). Existing research purports that proficiency in the English language improves chances of upward social mobility, helping individuals get lucrative jobs in Pakistan. The NEP (2009) notes that English is an international language required for global competition, stating that "a major bias of the job market for white-collar jobs appears in the form of the candidate's proficiency in the English language. It is not easy to obtain a white-collar job in either the public or private sectors without a minimum level proficiency in the English language" (p. 27). Indeed, English is a source of social and economic stratification in Pakistan, and English language proficiency is required for white-collar jobs (Sikandar, 2017).

In a review of the NEP (2009), Qasim and Qasim (2014) posit that the current-day role of English continues the colonialist "divide and rule" role of English during the British Raj. Even today, lack of English-speaking skills limits the chances of upward social mobility for students from government schools and low-fee private schools where teachers lack English language skills necessary for teaching and students are not learning (Rahman, 2005). The massive public concern over the class divisions associated with the language spoken has sparked the introduction of multiple language policies; some were intended to replace English nationwide with Urdu (Mustafa, 2021; Rahman, 2005). Article 251 of the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973 states:

> The National language of Pakistan is Urdu, and arrangements shall be made for its being used for official and other purposes within fifteen years from the commencing day… the English language may be used for official purposes until arrangements are made for its replacement by Urdu.… a Provincial Assembly may by law prescribe measures for the teaching, promotion, and use of a provincial language in addition to the national language.

The 1973 Constitution is still in effect in Pakistan, but the efforts to use Urdu as a language for teaching were contradictory to the public demand and their perceived need for English in schools. Article 251 served to replace English with Urdu at government schools, but the private schools continued to teach in English. Hence, the social divide persisted, resulting in, as discussed earlier, the public demand for private schools and institutes that taught English.

In the last decade, the government introduced policies to make English the primary language of instruction in all schools – public and private – after grade one. The switch to the English language as an official language of instruction has met with multiple implementation challenges and negatively affected student learning. A report by the British Council (Peeli, 2013) estimates that 94 % of teachers lack the English language skills necessary for teaching; hence they cannot teach it well, and students are not learning. In a nutshell, the medium of instruction in schools has been an ongoing debate since the inception of Pakistan and doesn't seem to have an easy solution.

Summary: Inequities in Education

In sum, overall, it has been found that many students have access to very low-quality schools (Aslam et al., 2019; Bajoria, 2009). Despite governmental policies and practical efforts to provide quality access to education for all children, many studies have revealed that the lack of access to quality schooling and other inequities marginalize student groups (Abdullah & Chaudhry, 2018b; Ali, 2014; Buergi et al., 2018; NEP,

2009). Ultimately, marginalized students from a lower socioeconomic status (SES), especially girls, students in rural areas, and students with disabilities, are at the highest risk of being unable to gain access to schooling or dropping out at the primary level (ADB, 2019; NEMIS-AEPAM, 2015). Reports have shown that 40 % of government school buildings lack basic sanitation and boundary walls, and funding is even more scarce in rural areas with less government monitoring (Hameed et al., 2018). Moreover, inequities in access for students who don't identify as boys and girls and students with special needs were highlighted (Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi, 2015; NEP, 2009; UNESCO, 2014). Students may never enroll in school or drop out because of inadequate facilities, low resources, or they are not interested in what is being taught or how it is being taught, or schools are inaccessible at large walking distances. These school-aged children often work to earn money or prefer to stay at home (Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi, 2015).

The next few sections are a review of the extant literature on school leadership in Pakistan. First, I talk about school leaders' roles and responsibilities and then turn to the leadership training (or lack thereof) for Pakistani school leaders. Next, I will describe some of the broader factors that shape the role of school leaders in Pakistan. Finally, I highlight studies from Pakistan of individual private school leaders who serve a marginalized population.

School Leadership in Pakistan

A school leader, also known as the principal, headteacher, headmaster/mistress, or director in Pakistan, is the highest-ranking administrator in a school. They have the overall responsibility to ensure smooth operations within their schools. School leaders have multiple roles, including manager, authoritarian, visionary, instructional leader,

community builder, and others. Studies in a Western context have found that the school leader has the most influential role in developing a structure and culture within a school for learning and improvement (Mulford & Silins, 2003; Tingle et al., 2019). These structures and cultures are shaped by the school leader that determines the overall success of a school.

According to multiple studies, in Pakistani private schools with limited resources, the collaboration of school leaders with teachers and stakeholders was a key factor determining successful leadership practices (Nawab, 2011; Qutoshi & Khaki, 2014; Salfi, 2011b). Specifically, some of these successful practices included school leaders collaborating with teachers and key stakeholders to build a shared school vision and a culture of trust, emphasizing professional development (Salfi, 2011; Qutoshi & Khaki, 2014). With a culture of collaboration and trust, PSL overcame school challenges, such as limited resources and teacher turnover in low-income neighborhoods that cater to marginalized students (Qutoshi & Khaki, 2014; Salfi, 2011b).

Role and Responsibilities of School Leaders

Government schools operate within a complex hierarchical, bureaucratic structure, and rules and expectations restrain the school leaders. In government schools, research has demonstrated school leaders have felt restricted in implementing change due to their accountability to external management (Nasreen & Odhiambo, 2018b). Nasreen and Odhiambo (2018b) find that government school leaders often operate as managers, feel like custodians of school property, and are limited by strict implementation of government policy, rules, and system regulations. In contrast, Niqab et al. (2014) find evidence that private school leaders assumed greater authority in decision making at the

individual school-level private and had more control over planning the curriculum, hiring teachers, and managing school-parent relationships.

A seminal study by Simkins et al. (1998a), based in Pakistan, demonstrates that various elements shape the role and responsibilities of a school leader. The study site was Karachi, and the primary source of data collection was through in-depth interviews with six government and private secondary PSL. The study had three significant findings. First, both school systems operated under different pressures, such as community or commercial expectations, that shaped the role of the school leader (Simkins, 1998a). These included school leaders following the job requirements, staff employment and financial accountability, formal rules and regulations, and ultimately reporting progress to their line manager in the larger school system. Second, they found that there were varying leadership requirements and disciplinary issues at the individual school level. The student body and locations shaped these leadership requirements, e.g., schools serving only boys or girls, and others were coeducational. Some schools had students from elite and affluent backgrounds, and others were serving a poor, marginalized, and diverse student population (Simkins, 1998a). Some schools were in locations of active violence and political turmoil, and others were in safer areas. Finally, in the larger context, the norms and expectations of Pakistani society impacted all aspects of life and the role of school leaders. They found that larger contextual realities and pressures, school systems, and individual school characteristics changed PSLs' behavior and strategies (Simkins et al., 1998).[10]

[10] This study is old, and I tried to look for new, additional research but there'e little more on this topic.

Leadership Certification and Training

Lack of certification and in-service training for both private and government school leaders has been identified as a significant problem in the education sector in Pakistan (Memon, 2000; Niqab et al., 2014). As mentioned earlier, Pakistan lacks the resources necessary to provide training and professional development for educators, including school leaders and teachers. As a result, both teachers and school leaders rarely participate in professional development programs or leadership training[11] (Khan, 2017a). Private school leaders are hired based on a minimum level of education, 12-years of schooling, and preferably a Bachelor's (Bed.) or Master's in Education (Med.) or are promoted based on years of teaching experience. However, holding background knowledge in education is not a pre-requisite for private school leaders (Khan, 2017b). Notably, studies find that most school leaders are promoted from teacher to school leader based on seniority from among senior teachers, who may be excellent teachers, but not good school leaders and lack relevant leadership training (Mansoor & Akhtar, 2015; Memon, 2003; Simkins et al., 2003). Therefore, most school leaders, both private and government, are trained teachers but not trained school leaders since the teacher training programs are focused on building teaching skills and not leadership, management, and planning skills (Khan, 2004).

Supporting these studies, the NEP (2017) recognizes the lack of training for PSLs and states:

> most persons at management positions in Pakistan's education sector have no training in the function. Headteachers … are mostly appointed from amongst the teacher cadre (college or school), without much management experience. (p. 28)

[11] Training, in general, can be defined as an organized activity aimed to facilitate learning to improve the learner's skill/performance and reach a required level of knowledge or skill

The NEP (2017) acknowledges that "headteachers" or school leaders have no management training and are promoted from teachers to school leaders without the necessary development, management training, experience, and education. Teachers have more options to receive training and degrees relevant to their professions, such as a Certificate of Teaching (CT), Primary Teaching Certificate (PTC), and Bachelor of Education degree that are the primary qualifications to become a teacher (Khan, 2017). The NEP (2017) states the minimum requirement for teacher training and notes that "qualified and competent school leadership shall be ensured" (p. 49) but is unclear on the formal training or qualification required for a school leader.

Rural School Leadership

A review of extant literature in Pakistan shows a limited number of studies focus on school leaders meeting student needs in unique settings, including rural areas (Hartijasti & Afzal, 2016). Studies in the U.S., Australian, and Canadian context show that rural school leadership is different from urban school leadership on a few levels (Hardwick-Franco, 2019; Morrow, 2015; Preston et al., 2018; Renihan & Noonan, 2018). First, school leadership is shaped by the context, and each context has different needs. Second, a significant concern is to get trained and qualified school leaders or teachers in rural areas. Finally, some factors deeply affect rural schools as compared to urban schools (e.g., resource availability, student population mainly from lower SES, less trained teaching staff, fewer professional development networks, changes in curriculum to meet community needs, etcetera), and therefore impact the school leaders' approach to leadership in unique ways (Preston et al., 2018). The benefits for rural school leaders are that the community is usually small, the school leader is in an ideal position to know each

student and each parent. The ability of rural school leaders to learn about students' backgrounds facilitates a learning environment that is responsive to the unique needs of students (Morrow, 2015; Renihan & Noonan, 2018).

Related literature indicates that these issues seem to hold in the Pakistani rural school context. For instance, there are chronic teacher absences in some rural areas (Ghuman & Lloyd, 2010), schools operate out of a single classroom, and often lack a well-trained staff (Hartijasti & Afzal, 2016). These contextual rural realities can play a role in determining the rural school leader's role. The positive side also seems to hold that the rural school leader is in a unique position to ensure better communication with the community, family, and individual student needs because of the limited size of the school and community. As mentioned earlier, Palla (2020) reshaped some programs to suit the unique needs of the rural community, and in doing so, helped girls navigate their rights congruent with the expectations of the home/community (A. Palla, 2020, personal communication, February 20, 2020).

Collectivistic Culture and Pressures on School Leaders and Educators

The collectivistic culture affects all dimensions of life for Pakistani people, including the education system. Studies have found that collectivistic cultures often have more authoritative school leaders and classrooms that are generally teacher-centered - where the teacher is transmissive and transfers knowledge to students (Hofstede, 2001; Kaur & Noman, 2015). However, in more recent decades, globalization has impacted the education system and the role of educators in Pakistan. Schools are going through many reforms, such as allowing more student autonomy: educators are less dictatorial, and classrooms are less teacher-centered and more student-centered (Kaur & Noman, 2015).

However, an important point to note is that educators adapt the techniques and practices through training that are consistent and congruent with their personal beliefs and cultural contexts and don't implement practices that conflict with their personal views (Hofstede, 2001; Kaur & Noman, 2015; Jehan, 2015). To put it another way, if educators' practices through training are congruent with their beliefs, then educators implement those changes in their actions.

From a collectivistic society perspective, or any society, the role of schools in maintaining the status quo derails efforts toward social change. In conforming with expected norms, the educational institution sometimes strengthens society's hegemonic and inequitable structures. As a case in point, Jehan (2015) shared a vignette of a female college student whom the principal expelled from the dormitory for staying an extra night out after the weekend. The principal assumed and accused that the girl must have stayed out with a boy – in Pakistan that is a religious and social taboo – and proceeded to expel the student immediately. The principal was the authority who had the social and cultural responsibility to ensure girls were conforming to the larger societal expected values of "chastity" and "modesty." The principal decided without involving parents or the student, who did not get a chance to defend her position, and the parents withdrew their daughter from the college (Jehan, 2015).

The sociocultural expectations and pressures on a school leader to maintain harmony within the educational institutions, in this case, worked towards strengthening the hegemonic and inequitable structure in society. Jehan (2015) finds that the school leaders' histories, beliefs, and values shaped their decision-making and, ultimately, how they exercised their leadership roles. These factors provided a framework to which the

leaders referred when explaining why they do certain things. When viewed from the lens of a collectivist society, the school leader exercised her authority by expelling the student because she threatened in-group harmony, in this case, the college dormitory rules. There was no due process where the student could have had a chance to state her reasons because her actions violated the norms of expected religious and ethical obligations within the group, which shaped the school leader's decision to expel the student (Jehan, 2015).

Private School Leaders Serving a Marginalized Population

While hegemonic and inequitable structures exist, there are PSL who have a positive role in challenging the status quo and doing good work in their schools and communities (Zindagi Trust, 2012; Aziz, 2012). Taking a case in point, a school leader started a charity school providing free education to marginalized children in a poor neighborhood in rural Islamabad. The children were previously cleaning cars or selling flowers to visitors outside a famous shrine, often working under the supervision of a local criminal gang or mafia and not receiving an education or attention. While this school leader received a lot of positive feedback in the form of volunteers, private donations, and support from the mothers of students, the local gangs were unhappy with the development in their neighborhood and wanted to shut down the school. The resistance peaked when there was a shooting incident to threaten the school leader. Despite the threats and hurdles, the school leader continued the school and her passion for serving marginalized students. The school was established ten years ago with two children and has grown to two school locations with more than 1,000 students.

Specific to my study, the actions of equity and justice-oriented school leaders and educators in a collectivistic, patriarchal, and restrained society may encounter challenges if their actions are unprecedented and provoke the status quo of traditionally acceptable social norms within their school and community. There are ramifications of challenging the status quo which require moral courage and persistence to overcome. While the larger collectivistic culture and social norms work toward creating challenges for educators and advocates of equal rights for marginalized populations, some individuals are passion-driven to create more equity in society by educating the marginalized people in Pakistan.

Key Drivers of Individual Equity-driven School Leaders

It is evident from existing research that most school leaders in Pakistan are not highly trained and educated. Therefore, I addressed this issue, which was relevant to my study, namely that PSL often lack the necessary training but are passionate about promoting equity and inclusion for marginalized students. There is also evidence that it was not just school leaders' professional learning but also life experiences that shaped their practices. As noted earlier, some studies from a Pakistani context found that school leaders' backgrounds, life experiences, values, and perceptions affect school leadership practices (Baig, 2011; Jehan, 2015; Khaki, 2006). Specifically, Baig's (2011) empirical, qualitative research was grounded in the experience of two private, community-based high school leaders in Karachi. The study's objective was to explore the beliefs and values of PSL and how they affect their leadership practices. The study found that religious beliefs and communal values largely drove both school leaders' practices. These were guiding their approach to leadership in terms of decision-making and actions at the school level (Baig, 2011). In other words, PSL were employing their values, which were

rooted in their ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds, to interpret the situations and guide their decision-making processes (Baig, 2011). One of the school leaders was brought up in an orphanage within a religious community, and he perceived his school leadership as a devoted service to the community and God. The school leader was heading a small private community school serving students from a low SES. The school leader's goal was to uplift the SES of the entire community. He employed strategies to detach the students from their community's defeatist attitude and change their mindset towards a more positive outlook for their future. The other school leader came from a middle-class household and had a strong sense of pride and belonging associated with his community. His leadership reflected the communal values of the religious community, and his leadership exhibited a devotion to serving the community. In terms of actions, the school day started with an inspirational prayer. Both teachers and students wore a traditional communal dress and strictly observed the rules of their community within the school. The school culture reflected the home and community culture.

In a similar empirical study in an urban center of Sindh, Khaki (2006) used a qualitative grounded theory approach to explore the role, belief, and behavior of school leaders. The school settings were diverse; one was a secondary government-run school, another was a value-based community school, and the third was an English-medium private school. All three school principals had vastly different childhood experiences but shared a similar motivation: the school leaders were driven by a strong sense of religious and communal values that shaped their leadership role (Khaki, 2006). The key findings show that all three school leaders shared a passion for developing students as moral

beings, worked towards building collaborative school culture, made an effort to balance religious and secular education, and supported students to achieve academic excellence. All three school leaders had a different approach to their leadership practices and strategies to impact the school culture, but this was primarily influenced by their values, experiences, and school settings (Khaki, 2006). Khaki (2006) found that the school leaders' histories, beliefs, and values influenced how they exercised their leadership roles. They refer to these when explaining their actions and decisions as school leaders.

Jehan's (2015) study looked at the ethical decision-making process of high school leaders in Pakistan and found that PSLs' practices were shaped by social values and cultural norms that influenced their decision-making within high schools. She found that cultural and societal values shaped school leadership roles and decision-making to a large extent in doing what is in the "best interest" of the student (Jehan, 2015, p. 3). The student's best interest is "defined by the society and implemented by the guardians of the social norms and values." (Jehan, 2015, p. 37). Jehan (2015) found that the decisions and practices of school leaders were defined by a framework of expectation defined by the social norms and cultural traditions of society, and they had a significant impact on the behavior of school leaders.

Exploring a Pakistani Context-based Definition of Social Justice

The Center of Social Justice (CSJ) in Pakistan is an organization that advocates for democratic development, human rights, and social justice for the citizens of Pakistan, and, in particular, for marginalized people. CSJ defines social justice as "an approach that deals with creating and enhancing [the] equality of rights amongst citizens …[and] eliminating institutional and social discriminations, denial of postulated fundamental

human rights ...” (CSJ, 2015, Introductory section). Using a social justice approach, the mission of CSJ is to create more equality among Pakistanis. Moreover, the Institute of Social Justice (ISJ), a non-profit organization in Pakistan, monitors and implements international and national human rights treaties and laws. It works to strengthen the rights of individuals, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, belief, caste, origin, and age, to eliminate social injustice. The ISJ identifies women, children, minorities, immigrants, laborers, etcetera as a marginalized population and focuses on working with them. The main goal of CSJ and ISJ is to promote greater equity for marginalized people. The marginalized subgroups most affected by education inequities in Pakistan, as mentioned earlier, occur primarily due to gender, region, SES, language, and religion (NEP, 2009).

Conceptual Framing

Two theories guide this study. First, this study applies the cognitive theory of Mental Models (MM) (Senge, 2006) as a frame to understand how PSL conceptualize social justice leadership (SJL). However, PSL may not use labels and terms such as social justice and equity. Second, I will utilize the SJL characteristics Theoharis (2007) offers to explore how PSL enact social justice in private schools (see Figure 3). The purpose was to generate substantive theory by connecting the way PSL think about educational inequities for marginalized students, how they come to frame it the way they do (MM), and how that shapes their understanding of SJL (SJL framework) while promoting equity and inclusivity for marginalized students grounded in rural Islamabad. By highlighting PSLs’ process while addressing social ills, I also want to add to empirical research grounded in rural Islamabad. The next two subsections explore the theory of MM and social justice leadership that frame my study.

Mental Model Theory

Mental models have been studied across multiple disciplines and over many decades. Often looked at as an interplay with cognition, MM does not have one universally recognized definition or application. This study draws on Senge's (1990) theoretical assumptions that describe MM as deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or images that influence how we understand the world and act(Senge, 1990). In his later work, Senge (2006) suggests that through our experiences with the world, we mentally construct a series of assumptions and generalizations which impact how we think and behave.

While Senge (1990) is most frequently cited for MM, many others have contributed to understanding MM (Johnson, 2008; Johnson-Laird, 2010; Kara & Ertürk, 2015; Ruff & Shoho, 2005). Ruff and Shoho (2005) compare MM to knowledge structures that individuals construct to represent a situation through generic knowledge. Kim (1993) finds that MM are explicit and implicit understandings and represent a person's view of the world. Johnson (2008) describes MM as our "naturally occurring cognitive representations of reality, or ways in which reality is codified in our understanding of it" (Johnson, 2008, p. 86). With new experiences, we construct a mental model that contains a simplified representation of that experience. This model provides a foundation for our perception, analysis, understanding, and behavior toward the experience. We think and act through our MM (Johnson, 2008).

I utilized concepts from MM to explore PSLs' experiences, values, and beliefs and how these mental structures shaped their conceptualization of social justice leadership. As most study participants had no formal school leadership training, MM was

especially significant to my study in several ways. Such as identifying or bringing to the surface whom they perceived as marginalized students, how they conceptualized equity and social justice in education, their implicit MM of leadership, and what motivated them to create more inclusive schools, etcetera.

Subconsciously Created Mental Models

Johnson (2008) posits that effective or ineffective school leadership is based on the differences in individual's "mental models or meaning structures, the way they view and deal with the world" (Johnson, 2008, p. 85). A manager's MM of leadership determines their perception and notion of leadership – these models can serve as a mental compass for understanding leadership attitudes (Kara & Ertürk, 2015). As mentioned earlier, Senge (2006) explained, "the problems with mental models lie not in whether they are right or wrong; by definition, all models are simplifications. The problems arise when mental models become implicit or when they exist below the level of our awareness" (p. 166). When we are unaware of our MM, the MM remain unexamined, and because they are unexamined, the models remain unchanged (Senge, 1993).

In relevance to my study, subconsciously created MM might be detrimental to a school leader, such as internal biases and deeply held beliefs leading to outward actions. Studies show that school leaders struggle with examining their prejudice and deeply held beliefs about students with backgrounds and experiences different from theirs (Davy, 2016). For example, in the case of Pakistan, the collectivistic and patriarchal structures might impact school leaders' bias and deeply held beliefs that shaped their understanding of justice and equity and populations they view as marginalized. School leaders' experiences, culture, history, or social expectations may influence their MM or

assumptions, generalizations, and images of social justice and their actions based on that understanding. The tacit assumptions can limit or expand school leaders' organizational capacity and affect their efforts for student achievement (Argyris, 1993; Sarason, 2002; Tye, 2000). As Senge (2006) notes, MM must first be identified or brought to the surface because there is no way of knowing the shortcomings and faults of a mental model unless it has been described (Kara & Ertürk, 2015).

Critical Reflection and Feedback

Mezirow (1991) discussed “disorienting events” or challenging experiences shift the mental model that an individual would typically use because the existing model, with its assumptions and generalization, is not adequate for the situation. McCall and colleagues (1998) found in a study that hardships and challenging experiences were most significant in the learning experience of successful leaders. Examples of hardship included being fired, not receiving a promotion, etcetera. Difficult experiences included building and operationalizing a new program, an increase in responsibility, etcetera. This can occur through feedback, critical reflection on one’s earlier assumptions and subsequent actions, and then replacing those assumptions with (ideally) more effective MM that help comprehend the situation and following actions (Johnson, 2008).

Feedback and critical reflection are especially significant to my study, as I was focusing on school leaders promoting equity and inclusivity for marginalized students with either little or no informational and knowledge-based training. As mentioned earlier, most PSL are promoted from teacher to school leadership positions without the necessary management and leadership training since Pakistan lacks the resources to train every school leader. Despite the lack of training and knowledge expertise, drawing from the

MM theory (Senge, 2006), PSLs' experiences with the community and school may shape their assumptions and generalizations, impacting how they think and behave. This study explored how Pakistani school leaders' MM are conceiving and articulating SJL while promoting equity and inclusivity for marginalized students.

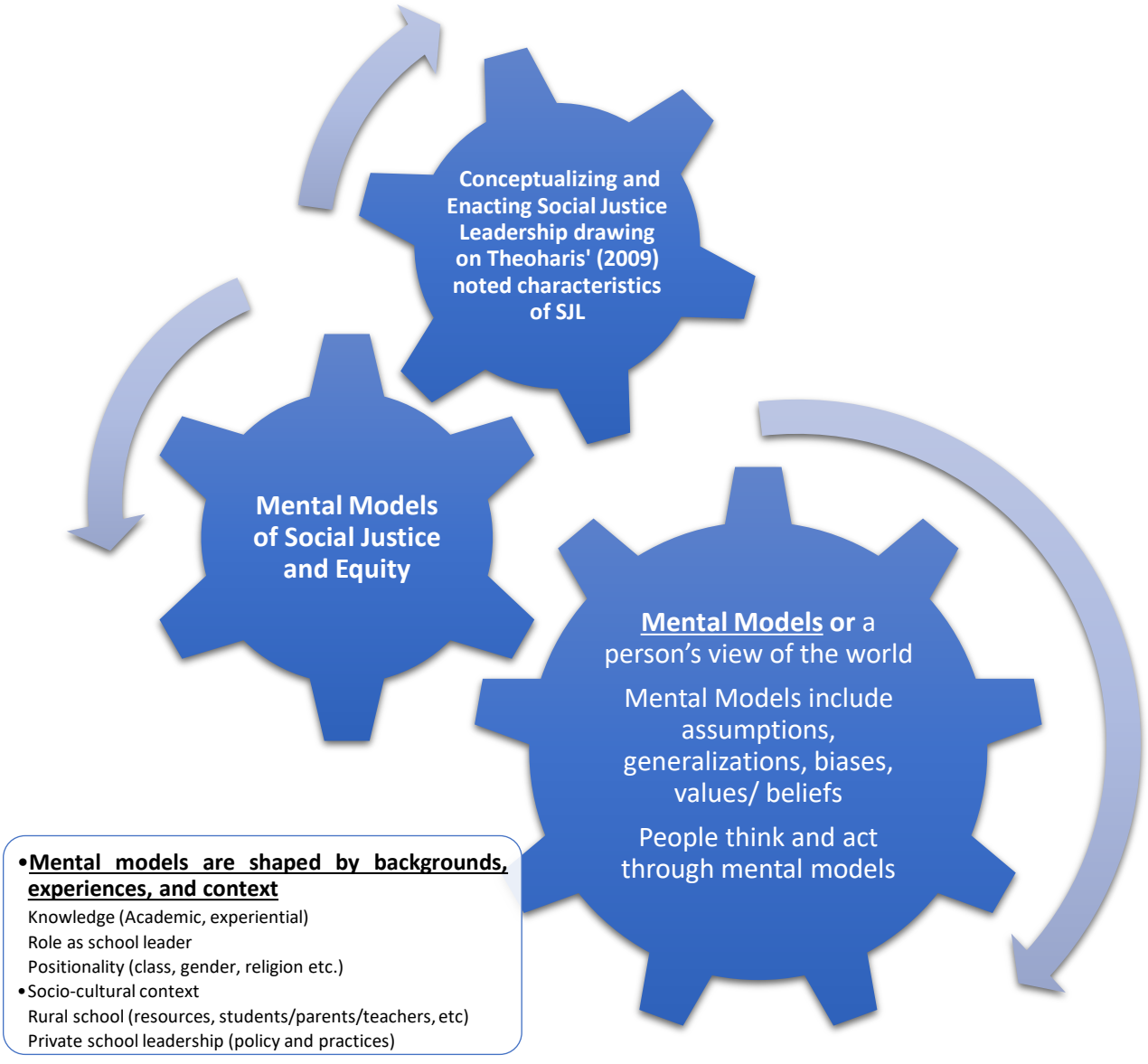
Leadership for Social Justice

This study utilizes concepts from SJL as a framework (Theoharis, 2007) to explore how PSL conceptualized and enacted equity-driven practices promoting inclusion and belongingness for marginalized students in their schools. The literature is rife with definitions of SJL. While there is no single definition, there is scholarly consensus that school leaders with a social justice orientation recognize the inequity towards marginalized student groups followed by actions that eliminate these inequities (Bogotch, 2002; Dantley & Tillman, 2006, 2010; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014a; Furman, 2012; Gerwitz, 1998). Social Justice Leadership focuses on creating equitable educational opportunities and attainment for all students by constantly examining issues of equity, diversity, and marginalization and take action in fighting against oppressive educational practices (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Ruff & Shoho, 2005). Recognizing inequality and taking action to eliminate marginalizing practices are key characteristics of socially just leaders (Bogotch, 2002; Dantley & Tillman, 2006, 2010; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014a; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Furman, 2012; Gerwitz, 1998; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Ruff & Shoho, 2005). Dantley and Tillman (2006) asserted that a social justice leader "interrogates the policies and procedures that shape schools and at the same time perpetuate social inequalities and marginalization due to race, class, gender, and other

markers of otherness" (p. 19). In other words, leaders with a social justice orientation are not just observing oppressive and marginalizing practices within their schools but are action-oriented (DeMatthews et al., 2015; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014b; Furman, 2012).

Figure 3

Conceptual framework: Connecting how PSL conceptualize social justice (MM) with their SJL actions



According to Theoharis (2008), social-justice-oriented school leaders "advocate, lead, and keep at the center of their practice and vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions" (p. 5). Theoharis (2007) centers SJL on addressing social justice issues with the utmost concern for situations that marginalize student groups within a typical school environment. Social justice leadership is socially constructed by the school leaders and grounded in the school context (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014). Therefore, how social justice is understood and enacted by a school leader depends on the school leader and the specific context of their school. Theoharis (2007) offers a framework to examine traits of SJL. These include school leaders who:

- value and respect diversity
- end programs that prohibit the academic and emotional success of marginalized children
- strengthen core teaching and curriculum and ensure access of diverse students have access to that core
- facilitate professional development within a collaborative structure to promote understanding of class, gender, race, and disability
- are fully aware that a school is excellent only when it provides the disadvantaged/struggling students with equally rich social and academic opportunities as their privileged peers
- collaboratively address the need of every child and demands that every child must achieve success
- collaborate with other administrators to maintain an activist stance

- examine data (incidents/practices) through an equity lens
- know the importance of building community to ensure students achieve success collaboratively
- are intertwined with the life, community, and soul of the school

This study drew on Theoharis' SJL framework (2007) to explore PSLs' practices as a starting point. For instance, if PSL respected and valued student diversity, if they ended or reshaped programs for incorporating marginalized students' needs, or they tried to build community and if their lives were intertwined with the community, life, and school. Utilizing the SJL framework, I was mindful that PSLs' conceptualization of social justice and equity is in the sociocultural context of Pakistan, where values, processes, structures, and philosophies are contextually different in the education system than the Western world. I also drew from the theory of MM that provides a lens to understand how school leaders conceptualized and enact equity-driven practices. I wanted to explore what motivates them to advocate for social justice and what shapes their leadership practices in their schools. I hoped that there would be insights while I conduct research, as Pakistan is ripe for investigation. I used rural areas surrounding Islamabad, Pakistan, as a substantive area or population for exploration.

To note, the purpose of this research was not to refute a Western theory in the context of Pakistan. While I am aware and mindful that that may be an outcome, my purpose was to extend the theory of SJL and the influence of MM in a different context, how social justice is conceptualized and practiced differently by school leaders in a different national context. In the next chapter, I discuss the methodological design, data collection methods, and analysis strategies for this study.

Chapter 3: METHODS

As stated in previous chapters, utilizing a Mental Models (MM) and Social Justice Leadership (SJL) framework, this qualitative study aimed to explore how Pakistan's primary and secondary school leaders understood and implemented social justice leadership. As detailed in Chapter Two, this study also examined PSLs' leadership strategies and their motivation to address social-justice-oriented work in the context of private schools in rural Islamabad. This chapter discusses the research design chosen and the methods used to undertake this study. It begins by restating the research questions, followed by the research design and rationale for its choosing. Next, the chapter discusses the selection of site and participants, followed by data collection procedures. Following the discussion on data collection, I address data analysis methods. This chapter concludes with a discussion of trustworthiness, ethical considerations, positionality, and limitations of this study.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study:

1. How do rural private primary and secondary school leaders conceptualize social-justice-oriented leadership to address the educational inequities for marginalized students in Pakistan, e.g., based on gender, socioeconomic status, religion, etcetera?
2. What motivates rural private primary and secondary school leaders to transform their schools into (what they consider) socially just schools for marginalized students in Pakistan?

3. What actions and strategies are rural private primary and secondary school leaders using to promote social justice in their schools to address the educational inequities for marginalized students in Pakistan?

Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative methodology, as a scientific inquiry approach, seemed well suited to this study because it focuses on the lived experiences of participants' lives and is "fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives" (Schwandt, 1996, p. 10). A quantitative approach could determine how many people undertake certain behaviors. In contrast, a qualitative approach allows exploring how and why such behaviors occur, and the meaning people ascribe to their experiences (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Qualitative researchers use a systematic yet flexible approach to "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Iphofen & Tolich, 2019, p. 3). Therefore, I drew from a qualitative methodology because it aligns with my perception of the world and because it seems well-suited to reach the goals of this research study.

The flexibility of a qualitative approach allowed exploration into the social processes, meaning, and conceptualization PSL ascribe to SJL from their perspective. In this study, flexibility was built into the research design by employing semi-structured interviews, which allowed for probing into participants' answers and adjusting subsequent data collection based on the initial round of data collection (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967a). Moreover, a qualitative methodology allowed for exploring the broader "how" question to understand participants' perspective, to learn *how*, if at all, did PSL

conceptualize SJL in their school setting. Lastly, a qualitative approach made it possible to consider the importance of the context, complex descriptions of the participants' experiences, exploring the meaning participants ascribed to their experiences, and a detailed understanding of the phenomenon under study. In other words, a qualitative research design allowed for an in-depth exploration of PSLs' conceptualization and practices of social justice-oriented leadership grounded in their lived experiences within the context of Pakistan.

My Constructivist Paradigm

I addressed my research questions through a constructivist paradigm and utilized a critical lens in my analysis. A paradigm (worldview) is defined as beliefs and assumptions that guide action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). A constructivist paradigm has a relativist ontology (multiple realities) and a subjectivist epistemology (understanding that knowledge is co-created by researcher and participants) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Researchers who align with a constructivist worldview rely on how people make sense of their world based on individual experiences (Merriam, 2009a). Moreover, meanings are usually constructed through discussion with participants, traditionally facilitated through broad, general questions between the researcher and participant, and interpreted by the researcher as an "instrument" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Researchers' interpretation of the data is at the heart of the finding. In lines with my constructivist ontological and epistemological assumptions, the three fundamental tenets of a constructivist worldview that are incorporated in this study are that:

1. Individuals develop the meaning of their experiences through social interactions;

2. Meanings are multiple and layered;
3. Reality is co-created by the researcher and participant, and researchers are part of the world they study and the data they collect (Ford, 2010).

For researchers who align with the epistemological underpinnings of constructivist inquiry accept that knowledge is subjective, realities and meanings are socially situated and context-bound, and that these are co-constructed by the researcher and participants to create an interpretive understanding of the phenomena under study (Charmaz, 2011; Merriam, 2009b). In line with the constructivist worldview, my ontology is that people socially construct the subjective meaning of their experiences, becoming their "reality." Following the constructivist approach, individuals' worldviews can be influenced by interpreting experiences, histories, and sociocultural factors.

I also drew from a critical lens in my C-GT approach consistent with Charmaz (2017). The underlying assumption in this approach is that people subconsciously accept things the way they are, and in doing so, reinforce the status quo of power and hegemonic social structures leading to the marginalization of those who have no power (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Hence, a critical approach to my inquiry allowed for an exploration of PSLs' concept of social justice and equity and their SJL practices, such as exposing, opposing, advocating, and redressing forms of oppression, injustice, and inequality specifically the strong patriarchal structures and collectivistic norms.

Constructivist Grounded Theory (C-GT)

The C-GT approach to data collection and analysis is an advancement of traditional grounded theory (GT) developed initially by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 'The Discovery of Grounded Theory' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Grounded Theory is rooted in symbolic interactionism and pragmatist philosophy that aligns closely with a positivist (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) or a post-positivist approach to research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Glaser and Strauss (1967) defined GT as "the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research" (p. 2). Grounded theory represents both a method of inquiry and a product of that inquiry (Bryant & Charmaz, 2012). The traditional GT methodological approach is emergent, inductive, and purely grounded in data; it's built on an external reality where the researcher is a neutral observer using unbiased methods (Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967b). The GT perspective considers the researcher discovers the participant's reality, and that theory emerges from the data, which is separate from the researcher (Charmaz, 2006; Long et al., 1993). Accordingly, traditional GT emphasized that the researcher enters a study without preconceived notions, values, or ideas.

However, scholars like Charmaz (2014), Mitchell (2014), and Clarke (2016) contend that it is not entirely possible to conduct research that is purely inductive, neutral, and unbiased because of the researcher's involvement in the data collection and analysis (Clarke, 2016; Mitchell, 2014). In other words, these scholars challenge a researcher’s unbiased, neutral and objective approach in a GT study (Charmaz, 2014; Clarke, 2016; Mitchell, 2014). For example, Charmaz (2006) offers a constructivist approach to GT that is co-constructed through the participants' and researcher's "past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices" (p. 10). And what the researcher brings to the data influences what they see within it (see Table 12). Clarke (2016) offers a post-modern approach to GT using situational analysis. Both Charmaz (2014) and Clarke (2016) contend that C-GT retains the rigor and tools of the

traditional GT method: coding, memo-writing, sampling, grounding data collection and analysis in experiences of participants, and the concepts and theories that emerge are also grounded in participants' words and experiences.

Table 12

Comparison of Pragmatist and Constructivist approach to Grounded Theory

Pragmatism	Constructivist Grounded Theory
Acknowledges multiple perspectives	Seeks multiple perspectives
Provides the roots of a theory of action	Provides methods for theorizing action
Unites the viewer with the viewed	Bonds the researcher with the researched
Advocates social reform	Provides a method for critical inquiry

Source: Adapted from Kathy Charmaz (2008).

My Strategy for Inquiry: Constructivist Grounded Theory (C-GT)

The variation of GT utilized in this study was a constructivist approach to grounded theory. My view aligns with Charmaz (2006; 2014) and Mitchell (2014), which builds on the premise that meaning is constructed between the researcher and participants based on their worldviews and rooted in their context, interactions, experiences, and all these factors affect data interpretations. Constructivist-grounded theory is still grounded and emerges from the data but is embedded within social constructivism and with more interpretive, iterative, and reflexive practices throughout the process of data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2014; Mitchell, 2014). Accordingly, I aimed to explore PSLs' conceptualizations and experiences while being mindful that "truth" and "reality" are context-bound and negotiated between the researcher and participants to create an

interpretive understanding of the phenomena under study (Charmaz, 2011; Merriam, 2009). Constructivist-grounded theory allowed a flexible, open, and reflexive approach to understanding participants' meanings, actions, and realities. It takes into consideration the co-construction of emerging theory between researcher and participant.

In this study, as is consistent with C-GT (Charmaz, 2006), it was considered that knowledge would be co-constructed by research participants and myself as a researcher. As a researcher, I am a part of the world that I study, and the data that I collect, and my interpretation of the data are central to the findings. Accordingly, this study was an interpretive understanding of PSLs' reality rather than an objective report. The C-GT approach was considered useful to this study because it allowed for systematic exploration of participants' conceptualization and practices of social justice-driven leadership grounded in their lived experiences.

Towards Generating Theory in the Substantive Area

Charmaz (2006) suggests that most grounded theories are substantive theories since they 'address delimited[12] problems in specific substantive[13] areas ...' (p. 8). A substantive theory comprises a researcher exploring an actual situation with empirical data that focuses on social interactions in the area of interest. The GT methodology focuses on the voices and experiences of participants, and all concepts and theories that emerge are grounded in participants' words and experiences. A key defining approach in GT methods is the use of "constant comparison" that requires all segments of data to be systematically compared with each other. Concurrently, theoretical models are created

[12] Delimited is defined as having fixed boundaries or limits.
[13] Substantive is defined as having a firm basis in reality, and therefore important and meaningful

and constantly revised as new data are collected and analyzed. The study's objective is to produce or construct an explanatory theory that explores processes in a substantive area (Chun Tie et al., 2019). Data analysis identifies gaps and highlights relationships in the data that could reveal insight into what is not yet discovered. For instance, in my study, I drew from concepts of SJL and MM in Western literature and compared these with themes emerging from my study participants' conceptualization and enactment of SJL in the context of private rural primary and secondary schools in and around Islamabad.

The theoretical frameworks that I drew from, SJL and MM, are explored mainly in a Western context. There may be differences in how equity, inclusion, and justice issues are conceptualized and enacted by PSL since the sociocultural factors, hegemonic structures contributing to inequality (for example, collectivistic norms and patriarchy), school practices, and educational policies are different than in other countries. These factors could play a significant role in shaping school leaders' understanding and actions to promote social justice. Specifically, this approach was considered appropriate for this study because the goal was to explore and "generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behavior which is relevant and problematic for those involved" (Glaser, 1978, p. 93) and seeking a broad understanding of a phenomenon within its context. This study explored PSLs' conceptualization and practices of social justice-oriented leadership grounded in the sociocultural context of rural Islamabad. My goal was to identify my study participants' conceptualization and practices of social justice-oriented leadership (noting the variations in how they named or conceptualized it if they did) embedded in the sociocultural context of rural Islamabad. Drawing from the theory of MM and SJL, I

aimed to potentially add to existing theory and concepts to develop a substantive theory on SJL using rural Islamabad as context.

Study Site

This present study took place in and around rural Islamabad as a region of research for two reasons. First, Islamabad is the federal capital of Pakistan, and the implementation of current government policies addressing social justice and equity is likely to be most visible there before spreading out in the rest of the country. Second, my initial interest was to explore rural school leadership in the northern regions of Pakistan because of the higher dropout and lower enrollment rates than in the federal capital (Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi, 2015). However, due to political instability and general insecurity in the northern region, I decided to focus on safer and more accessible areas within a 150-mile radius around Islamabad, including rural Islamabad and regions in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

It is also important to note what rural Islamabad encompasses because there is some dissonance using rural with a major city. Islamabad has five zones, two zones are within the urban development zone, and three zones are designated as rural areas. Merriam Webster defines rural as "of or relating to the country, country people or life, or agriculture." However, Islamabad's "rural" areas are home to almost half the population of Islamabad, residents legally construct homes in rural zones, and they are considered "rural" for building purposes, tax, and the census. They don't rely on agriculture as their primary source of livelihood. Five of the eleven rural schools in my study are within these three rural zones of Islamabad, for example, in the Bari Imam and Barakoh areas that the map of Islamabad shows as rural but are better described as under-resourced

semi-urban residential communities. The remaining six schools are in remote rural areas beyond a 20-mile radius that rely on agriculture as a primary source of income.

Furthermore, my study site is a 150-mile radius around Islamabad, including rural Islamabad and large parts of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This region had many private philanthropic rural school initiatives to bridge the educational inequity gap by serving marginalized rural populations. Since my study purposefully sought rural private PSL working with philanthropic school initiatives, this region served as an ideal substantive area to research PSL serving marginalized students because of higher dropout rates, less resource availability, student population mainly from lower SES, less trained teaching staff, fewer professional development networks. To maintain uniformity in terminology, I refer to all school sites, within the boundaries of Islamabad and a 150-mile radius around Islamabad, as private rural schools surrounding Islamabad. Finally, the school leaders that fit my study criteria and agreed to participate in my study determined the specific school sites where I collected data.

Research Participants

In grounded theory studies, the early stages of sampling include identifying criteria for participants to be included in the study before starting the investigation to direct data collection. School leaders were selected based on the following criteria:

1. They have a minimum of three years of school leadership experience[14];
2. They were primary or secondary school leaders serving in no-fee or low-fee rural schools surrounding Islamabad[15].

[14] so they have a fair amount of experience as a school leader
[15] low-fee and no-fee rural private school leaders are my target because they generally serve marginalized students living in poverty

3. They are school leaders in rural areas surrounding Islamabad who have been identified or self-identify as promoting educational justice, equity, inclusivity, and well-being of marginalized students.

Accordingly, I sought Pakistani private school leaders who seemed to embody a commitment to social justice and served a marginalized student population in rural schools surrounding Islamabad. Through personal connections, I was recommended school leaders who potentially fit the study criteria of my study. This snowballed into a sample of 24-school leaders, 13 met the study's selection criteria, and 11 agreed to participate in my study. The information in Table 13 was collected from the 11 participants' interviews and the artifacts they provided, such as CVs, websites, brochures, and newsletters, etcetera.

As shown in Table 13, all study participants served as school leaders in rural private schools within a 150-mile radius around Islamabad during data collection. Only one school was specifically for girls. The other 10 were co-educational, serving both boys and girls. Eight schools were free of charge to the students, and three had a low-fee structure. The average age of study participants is about 53-years and ranges from 30 to 70-years old. Nine participants identified as female and two as male. Seven school leaders were heading one school at the time of the interview, two others were heading two schools, and two were leading multiple schools (eight or more). All participants had a college degree, five of them had an education-related degree, and four participants had previous school-related experience. Participants' average school-related experience was 14-years and ranged from 3 to 35 years (including their experience as school leaders in their current schools).

Table 13

Participants' Information and Demographics

Category	# of participants	% or Range
Age		
30-50	6	55%
50-70	5	45%
Gender		
Female	9	82%
Male	2	18%
Religion		
Muslim	All 11	100%
Education		
Bachelors	5	45%
Masters	5	45%
Ph.D.	1	9%
Experience		
Years as a school leader		3 – 35
Experience as a teacher	3	27%
School leader of one school	7	64%
School leader of 2 schools	2	18%
School leader of 6+ schools	2	18%
School Level		
Primary K-5	5	45%
Secondary 6-10	1	9%
Primary through Secondary	5	45%
School Environment		
Girls only	1	9%
Co-Educational	10	91%
Rural Private School	11	100%

Only one participant, School Leader C, had a doctoral degree, formal school leadership training, and prior work experience as a school leader serving students from low-income and diverse backgrounds. Four other participants, i.e., School Leader A, J, E, and F, had a related degree/certification in education and experience as school teachers, but no formal school leadership training or leadership experience serving marginalized students before their current positions as school leaders. For instance, School Leader A had a year-long hybrid teaching fellowship and two years of teaching experience at a government school in an underserved area. School leaders J and F were both Montessori certified teachers – School Leader J had a master's degree in education. School Leader F had a master's degree in Special Education and work experience working with refugees in Pakistan. School Leader E had taken an online course on leadership, management, and social enterprise and had 35-years of work experience as a consultant for gender equality, women and children's rights, and focusing on how to lift people out of poverty but had no direct experience or formal training as a school leader.

Data Collection

This section describes the ways in which I collected data. There were three stages of data collection. First, I reviewed the policy documents and school websites to be well-informed of the influence and work in my substantive area (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At this stage, based on the theories, I devised a set of concepts as a starting point of exploration, specifically from SJL (Theoharis, 2007) and MM (Senge, 2006). Next, I recruited a purposeful sample of PSL in rural areas surrounding Islamabad, Pakistan. This stage included semi-structured online interviews with participants via Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, collecting relevant artifacts, and follow-ups over sixteen weeks (see

Appendix D). This time allowed me to collect, record, and transcribe data for the initial analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The final data collection stage included electronic follow-up questions (via email/phone) when I needed clarifications from participants. All participants agreed, and differing numbers of follow-ups were conducted. In the following few subsections, I will explain each one of my data collection methods.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviewing was the primary method of data collection in my study. I conducted online semi-structured interviews (Charmaz, 2006) with each of my participants. These interviews helped facilitate an open-ended and in-depth exploration of the experience of PSLs' conceptualization and experiences of social justice-oriented leadership. For this study, the interview questions were in English, or a combination of English and Urdu, whatever was most comfortable for participants. The interviews lasted between 65 to 80-minutes, guided by a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix C). Initially, the interview sites were supposed to be identified by the participant, preferably their schools or anywhere private, convenient, and comfortable for them. But due to COVID-19 and to follow the safety protocols in place, we were limited to online interviewing via Zoom, Skype, or WhatsApp (see Appendix D for the timeline) from our respective homes.

To develop a set of questions for the interview protocol, I utilized Charmaz's sample interview guide to construct open-ended and adjustable interview questions. Charmaz (2014) suggests planning questions to allow for smoother and less confrontational questions; much as the interviewer wants to get straight to the topic, it allows for a creative and structured way to approach topics related to my research study. The first part of the protocol aimed to elicit contextual information that helped

understand the participant, their background, leadership role, and activities; the next part pertained to understanding PSLs' conceptualization and practices of social justice-oriented leadership relating to key theoretical concepts of SJL and MM. The interview protocol of this study included questions such as “Describe for me your first experience when/if you noticed some students getting less access/resources than others,” “Tell me more about the most important ways to deal with improving the educational access or better resources for certain students in school or society,” “Describe for me how you think rural private school leaders should serve those who have less access to resources or opportunities in school or society,” “Describe for me how you address the issue of improving the educational access or better resources for certain students? Give me examples of what you would do,” or “Describe for me if you train staff/teachers or provide them with knowledge/practical resources for improving the educational access or better resources for certain students to ensure students succeed academically.” The first few questions allowed PSL to examine and share their experiences, assumptions, and values underlying their conceptualization of social justice, inequities related to educational access for marginalized students. The interview questions also explored how PSL address these educational inequities or what they think would be a better way to improve educational access for marginalized students in their schools and communities.

Before the first interview, I tested the interview protocol by conducting a pilot interview with a PSL (not one of the 11 study participants) to troubleshoot and adjust my interview. The pilot interview identified poorly worded questions and helped remove questions that seemed redundant or not of the initially considered importance and replaced with necessary follow-up questions. It was also useful in determining whether

the 60 to 90-minute timeline was realistic. The actual duration of interviews ranged from 65 to 80-minutes.

Artifacts

For this research, I gathered artifacts, such as school handbooks, websites, school-home communications, or visual displays, for analytic purposes. The selection of artifacts was based on their connection to my research questions and necessary to interrogate. Drawing from Theoharis's (2007) framework, the collected artifact could be a newsletter on professional development to promote understanding of class, gender, disability, or the school's vision and how they were promoting equity and inclusivity for marginalized students. If a school did not have a handbook or website or were outdated, I searched for other relevant artifacts to contextualize the school or community. In terms of identifying a relevant artifact, I looked for images or statements that revealed a mission or vision of the school about promoting equity and inclusion for marginalized students.

Follow-up

The iterative process of grounded theory allowed me to identify gaps in theoretical concepts and tentative categories that sometimes need clarification to revise and develop core categories till the point of data saturation (Charmaz, 2014). In my study, every participant had a follow-up for further data collection to tease out components of the theoretical concepts. Three participants had additional interviews and eight had follow up emails with questions relevant to the emerging core categories for building my theoretical model, clarifying concepts, and reaching the point of data saturation. Follow-ups also served as an opportunity to thank participants for their time and participation in my study.

Data Analysis

This section describes the ways in which I interpreted the collected data for meaning. Constructivist-grounded theory (C-GT) informed my research methods, and therefore data analysis relied heavily on coding, analytical memos, theoretical sampling, and constant comparisons (Charmaz, 2006; 2014). Following the qualitative C-GT design of this study, the data collection and analysis process in my study were concurrent and cyclical, not linear (Charmaz, 2006; 2014). The analysis included taking data apart, developing concepts in terms of their properties and variations, and integrating them around core categories. To best manage my data, I drew from Marshall and Rossman's (2006; 2016) suggestion of following seven phases of managing, analyzing, and interpreting the data: 1) organizing data; 2) immersion in the data; 3) generating themes and categories; 4) coding the data; 5) offering interpretations through analytical memos; 6) alternative understandings of emerging themes; 7) writing the report.

The collected data went through three stages of analysis, coordinating with the three coding stages. Stage One (initial or open coding) explored all possible categories and concepts utilizing analytical memos, diagrams, constant comparisons, and theoretical sampling. Stage Two (focused coding) developed concepts and relationships between concepts since the goal was to construct grounded theory. Stage Three (theoretical coding) integrated concepts to construct a core theoretical category that was the emerging grounded theory from my study.

Stage 1: Initial coding

I organized my data first through an Excel spreadsheet and then utilized an online data management system, NVivo. I charted all my participants' answers together under

questions and then open codes. The process of open or initial coding is the first step of grounded theory analysis. It helps create conceptual categories that help identify links between and within categories and codes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The open coding process started with the raw data right after the first interview. Open codes in this study were words that PSL repeatedly mentioned about their leadership experiences or observations that addressed my research question or the theory of SJL or MM. For instance, open codes under conceptualizing SJL: quality education, empowering students, enabling students, critical thinking and questioning, etcetera. In addition to the analytical memos, this process of open coding helped identify missing pieces of information and gaps that stimulated subsequent interviews and observations.

Analytical Memos

I immersed myself in the data immediately after each interview, where I wrote analytical memos in a single journal throughout my study. These memos helped me keep track of my reflections, thoughts, and ideas. They also marked the beginning of data immersion and analysis as well as indicators for additional data needed. During my study, I continued to immerse myself in the data by listening to the interviews several times each, reading and rereading the individual interview transcripts, and comparing participant answers collectively. Furthermore, I coded my data twice, once through excel and a second time through Nvivo. This allowed for grouping together multiple initial codes from Stage One to Stage Two to find broader focused codes. It also allowed ample opportunity to become more immersed than if just utilizing one system.

Diagrams

I used diagrams in my study that served as conceptual visualization of the data and depicted relationships between analytic concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2005). Similar to memos, diagrams allowed for a certain degree of analysis. Diagrams also served as a way to organize and chart data in a visual form, keep a record of concepts and relationships between concepts, and integrate ideas by reducing data to its essence (Corbin & Strauss, 2005). I used a single sketchbook throughout my study, and the early diagrams, like early memos, were simple and hinted at relationships. However, diagrams became more complex and integrative with time, showing multiple relationships that helped with theory building (Corbin & Strauss, 2005). For example, I started with a core category, PSL actions or strategies promoting SJL, and then listed possible relationships of concepts from the initial codes under this core category. Diagrams allowed to reduce the data clutter to its essence and integrate the findings to generate theory and build a coherent narrative.

Constant Comparative Analysis

Constant comparison is the analytic process of comparing different pieces of data against each other for similarities and differences to determine if the two data are conceptually similar or different and coding them into categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2005). It is an iterative process central to generating grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and commenced in my study after the first data was collected and continued throughout the research process. The constant comparative method involved breaking down the data into discrete 'incidents' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) or 'units' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and coding them into categories. In my study, I compared

codes generated through initial coding using the multiple data sources to help identify emerging properties and variations with SJL and MM conceptual categories and at the same time was open to new categories, or properties within categories, emerging from the data. A variation in the SJL theory was PSLs' adult-centered and hierarchical approach to leadership based on cultural norms. I compared the data within a case, across cases, within the same data type, and with key theoretical concepts of SJL and MM (see Figure 2) and new emerging concepts and variations to shape my next round of interview questions.

Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical sampling, like constant comparison and analytical memos, is central to GT as it aids the process of generating theory and ensures that the development of theory is grounded in the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Corbin and Strauss (2005) describe theoretical sampling as "data gathering based on evolving concepts. The idea is to look for situations that would bring out the varying properties and dimensions of a concept" (p. 117). It enables researchers to discover concepts relevant to the problem for the population, and the process begins after the first data is collected to provide leads for further data collection (Corbin & Strauss, 2005). Corbin and Strauss define theoretical sampling as:

> a method of data collection based on concepts derived from data. The purpose of theoretical sampling is to collect data from places, people, and events that will maximize opportunities to develop concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions, uncover variations, and identify relationships between concepts. (p. 134)

In other words, theoretical sampling is sampling based on properties of concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2005). My study allowed me to follow leads from data based on concepts that

best serve the development of theory, further develop those concepts, their properties, dimensions, and add variation (Charmaz, 2014).

In my study, there were two moments of theoretical turning points or realizations where I stopped to reflect. The first theoretical realization occurred four interviews in. I stopped to rethink theoretically how the data that I had gathered influenced what I asked next. I followed Corbin and Strauss's (2005) recommendation of following new and interesting leads or clues during data analysis. In terms of interviewing, I pursued conceptual leads without considering whether the same questions were asked of previous participants or observed in previous settings (Corbin & Strauss 2005).

The second theoretical turning point occurred when I had collected all my data and I did follow ups to trace more of the core categories that I saw developing. For example, I followed up on leads related to the theoretical concepts on PSLs' conceptualization of social justice-oriented leadership. These pauses of reflection allowed me the space to revisit the existing theory of SJL and shape subsequent data collection. These pauses were essential to the process of process of generating theory and ensuring that the development of theory is grounded in the data.

In my study, as is consistent with C-GT, the process of theoretical sampling, analytical memos, and constant comparisons was undertaken in conjunction with all three stages of coding to guide the next stages of data collection till I reached a point of theoretical saturation. In the following two subsections, I will discuss Stage Two and Stage Three of my data analysis, the process of focused and theoretical coding.

Stage 2: Focused Coding

The process of focused (or axial) coding entails creating categories of broader themes and explaining them in more variation and detail to help to show relationships between and within each code or category (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Focused coding helps identify themes and locate relationships between concepts and themes across data and grouping them under broad categories (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In my study, Stage Two of focused coding entailed grouping together multiple initial codes from Stage One to find a broader focused code. For instance, grouping together relevant initial codes under the more general code of PSLs' actions that exemplify improving educational access for marginalized students in their schools and communities. I focused on the broader code and went back to the raw data to see how the focused code compared to other PSLs' actions across interviews and artifacts.

Stage 3: Theoretical Coding

The final stage of coding analysis was theoretical coding. I chose a few core categories and concepts from the focused codes that facilitated the integration of the final grounded theory (Thomas, 2015). The integration included clarifying the logic of the theory, taking out non-relevant properties, and determining the limits of a core theoretical category that was the central finding of my research (Strauss, 2015). This final stage occurred only after reaching theoretical saturation that Corbin and Strauss (2005) describe as the point when "no new concepts are emerging…It also denotes the development of concepts in terms of their properties and includes showing their dimensional variations" (p. 134). In my study, the core categories were presented as a five-step theoretical model and integrated narrative illustrating the influence of MM on

PSL's conceptualization of social justice and their actions of SJL in rural areas surrounding Islamabad.

Trustworthiness and Validity

Merriam (2011) stresses the importance of promoting trustworthiness in qualitative research. It is very important to understand that all research should be conducted in an ethical manner concerned with producing reliable results. Maxwell (1996) defines validity as "the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sorts of account" (p. 87). In qualitative research, the validity of a study is not determined by establishing an absolute "Truth" but is more concerned with the credibility of the findings (Maxwell, 2005; 2013). As such, there are multiple accepted strategies to promote the validity and credibility of a qualitative study. The trustworthiness of my study was supported by using five specific techniques: triangulation of data sources (i.e., interviews, artifacts, analytical memos, follow-ups); member checking; peer review; audit trail; and identifying my positionality and bias. I discuss each strategy that promoted trustworthiness in the following few subsections.

Triangulation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest four triangulation techniques: using multiple theories, data collection methods, investigators, and data sources. My study relied on two of these strategies for triangulation: multiple data sources and multiple collection methods (Fox & Denzin, 1979; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009b). For triangulation across data sources, I used interviews, artifacts, and follow-ups that allowed for comparison through multiple data points across perspectives, time, and place and also promotes trustworthiness in findings. The multiple collection methods also

allowed me to cross-check what is being understood from the interviews through what is observed through artifacts, memos, and diagrams.

Member Check. To ensure trustworthiness in the analysis, member checks are recommended in qualitative research (Johnson & Stake, 1996; Maxwell, 2012). Member checks, also known as checking interpretations, allows checking if data is being misinterpreted. During member-checking, while interviewing, or after transcribing the interviews, a researcher seeks out the assurance of data interpretations from the participant providing the data. For example, when I was unclear about what a PSL stated, I followed up with questions like "Please elaborate what you meant by…?" The interviews were followed by informal follow-ups with the PSL to member check my observations.

Peer Review. Peer review is a widely utilized and accepted method to ensure credibility in research. It involves asking others with knowledge of the subject and techniques to comment on your work. While peer review is built into the dissertation process, I also used peer review with two other graduate students and the University of Missouri's writing center tutors to get an overview of the way my data was interpreted. For example, when I felt overwhelmed with repeated changes required in my writing, a peer review of my dissertation helped get me constructive feedback and more productivity in fewer attempts.

Audit Trail. The audit trail details the researcher's journey through the process of data collection, analysis, and decision-making. The trail was utilized in my study through analytical memos, diagrams, and using a research journal to jot down my thoughts, observations, questions, and decisions. For example, for theoretical sampling during the

initial coding stage, jotting/mapping out what concepts and categories seem to be emerging from the data, and the ones I decided to probe and why. The purpose of the audit trail in my study was to authenticate the results of my study, and I did this by illustrating that my findings were grounded in the field of research, based on participants experiences, and by describing how I collected and analyzed data and made decisions about what categories to select and how to saturate those categories.

*Positionality and Assumptions***.** Explicitly identifying the researcher's positionality and role in the research process is a way of being mindful and reflexive in research (Merriam, 2009). Since I used a constructivist approach with a critical lens, it is important to consider my identity, experiences, history, privilege, and position and how these could influence my research journey. As a qualitative researcher, by interrogating my identity, I aim to promote trustworthiness. I acknowledge that a qualitative researcher is also a research instrument and should be mindful of personal bias as that can influence a study by selecting data that fits with the researcher's preconceptions (Maxwell, 2005). To avoid this, Charmaz (2014) recommends identifying and stating researchers' assumptions, positionality, and biases to the audience as a strategy to combat this influence. It makes the researcher's position explicit and allows readers to understand how the researcher interpreted the data.

Situated Local Knowledge

I started this research study with the underlying assumption that my experience of school leadership and teaching in Pakistan would facilitate my developing a rapport with research participants and access more substantive information about their experiences. Instead of viewing personal and professional knowledge and experience as a source of

bias and limitation, Moss and Dyck (2003) call it "situated knowledge" and consider it an asset to facilitating access to study participants. In line with my constructivist paradigm, a key component of situated knowledge is the notion that there is no one "Truth" waiting to be discovered. The partiality of knowledge is grounded in the context in which it is situated or created.

Following this idea, my "situated knowledge" exists because I am native to the culture of Pakistan; I lived in rural Islamabad for about five years, and I understand the patriarchal power structures and collectivistic norms there. Moreover, I have firsthand experience as a school leader and teacher at primary and secondary private schools in Pakistan. Grounded theory research specifically values the researcher's ability to enter the lives of study participants through their own life experiences (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2015). Such as knowing that Theoharis (2007) study found that a social justice leader "ended segregated and pull-out programs that block both emotional and academic success for marginalized children" (p.160). This social justice characteristic did not apply to my study because the participants' schools were intended solely for marginalized students in rural and low-income communities. Also, I am aware that programs of this nature rarely exist in Pakistan, where different social classes are studying in the same environment. Therefore, I take my prior experiences as an asset in this research that helped facilitate an adequate description of well-explored findings in the context (Thomas, 2016). In sum, I was informed by the Western theoretical frameworks and had firsthand experience and a close understanding of structures that create inequity and social justice issues in a Pakistani context, and my overall "situated knowledge" supported me in my research journey by developing relationships and building rapport with research participants.

As an upper-middle-class Sunni-Muslim Pakistani woman, I am privileged to have had the opportunity to study in Pakistan at a private school (K through A' Levels) and subsequently at a government-run college for four years while pursuing a bachelor's degree. Furthermore, I bring to my study-related work experience; one year as a private school leader and three years as a private school teacher. These experiences have shaped my interest in education and potentially how I approach this study. More recently, I have been traveling and living in Western countries (U.S. and U.K.) for the last seven years, giving me some distance to see the participants' perspectives with new eyes. Currently, I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis department at the University of Missouri in the United States. My background as a Doctoral student of Educational Leadership in a department that focuses heavily on social justice, inclusivity, and equity may shape some of my understanding of social justice and social justice-oriented leadership.

In Western society, social justice is a commonly used term, so I can find leaders who identify as such. For my study, the term social justice or SJL was not utilized by most participants, and none of them identified as SJL. The terminology was different, and they conveyed certain beliefs and practices that fell within the broader umbrella of social justice and SJL in a Western context. Also, I assumed that some actions of PSL towards marginalized students would overlap with Theoharis' (2009) characteristics of SJL. Yet, PSL offered contextual variations to the SJL framework, primarily due to the sociocultural context, collectivistic norms, etcetera, that had an effect on PSLs' MM, or how they conceptualized and articulated notions of social justice, or how they promoted equity, inclusivity, and belongingness for marginalized students.

In addition, I was aware that my identity as a doctoral candidate in educational leadership might influence participants' responses to align with what I am expecting to hear. However, I utilized open-ended questions, probing questions for understanding meaning, and multiple sources of data collection to mitigate bias and promote trustworthiness. Studying in a department that focuses heavily on social justice, inclusivity, and equity fuels my need to dig deeper into equity and social justice issues in Pakistani school settings. I felt motivated to explore PSL's practices that are (or aren't) socially just and how school leaders potentially address these issues. As my experiences made me more aware of equity and social justice, I assumed that PSL would have experiences that motivated them to be equity and justice oriented. It was also important to not impose expectations of social justice initiatives in a Western context to PSLs' context. A school leaders' action that would appear to be minor in a Western context might be huge within PSLs' social context. However, knowing this, I was careful with my analysis of PSLs' responses, and I combat my assumptions and support my analysis with analytical memos and peer review.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical procedures and practices are followed in this study. Before collecting any data, I got approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Since my research is with adults with minimum risk predicted, the IRB process was an expedited one. After getting the IRB approval, I reached out to potential research participants and got their verbal consent to participate in my study. Before each interview, I explained the purpose of my research to the participants, sought their approval, emailed participants research details

and a consent form, and retained an electronic copy of their consent to comply with the University of Missouri's IRB procedures of conducting research (see Appendix A & B).

Participation in this research study posed minimal risk (physical, psychological, social, or economic) even if participant information was disclosed to the community. Even then, I took measures to protect the participants' identities. For example, I gave the PSLs pseudonyms to protect their privacy and changed the names of the schools to ensure that participants are not identified through their affiliation with the school. Only I know the assignment of pseudonyms. A list of pseudonyms and actual names are stored in digital files that are password protected. Moreover, to protect participants' identities, I avoided video recording during online interviews and saved a recording of their voices on my password-protected hard drive. Finally, in terms of data protection, all collected data was saved in digital files. Following university policy, digital copies of data will be stored on a hard disk and password protected for seven years after completing this study, and then they will be destroyed.

Limitations

This study was limited in some ways. First, this study was limited by specifically focusing on the experiences of 11 private school leaders in the context of rural areas surrounding Islamabad, Pakistan. While providing an in-depth understanding of these specific school leaders, the results cannot be understood as applicable to all school leaders. Second, the focus of this study was limited to school leaders – not teachers, students, or student community – as research participants, their conceptualization of social justice and equity, and whether or not they are enacting social-justice-oriented practices. However, they offered a perspective to identify and understand the factors

influencing their leadership roles, that is not available in the current literature and may inform other studies. Finally, the online Zoom/Skype approach was limiting in general. I only include school leader voices in my findings and was unable to make school observations or hear from students, teachers, or parents directly. Accordingly, I had to depend on the truthfulness of participant school leaders' without being able to triangulate and confirm with teachers, parents, or students to back up their school leaders' statements.

Summary

In this chapter, I gave an overview of the methods used in my study and the rationale for their choices to achieve my research goals. Additionally, an in-depth review of my participants and the site was discussed. Next, I discussed how data was collected (interviews, artifacts, and follow-ups) and analyzed (analytic memos, diagrams, constant comparisons, theoretical sampling, and coding techniques). I concluded with the steps I took to ensure trustworthiness and ethics, my positionality, assumptions, and study limitations. Following this, in chapters 4 and 5, I present the findings of my study, followed by further discussion and recommendations.

Chapter 4: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from this constructivist-grounded theory (C-GT) study, which aimed to explore how Pakistani school leaders conceptualize and enact social-justice-oriented leadership while serving marginalized students in their schools. This study presents insights into 11 primary and secondary private school leaders in rural Islamabad, over 11 school buildings, utilizing semi-structured interviews, artifacts, and follow-ups, which elicited participants' views of social justice and social-justice-oriented school leadership practices. Accordingly, based on the analysis of collected data, this chapter answers the following research questions:

1. How do rural private primary and secondary school leaders conceptualize social-justice-oriented leadership to address the educational inequities for marginalized students in Pakistan, e.g., based on gender, socioeconomic status, religion, etcetera?
2. What motivates rural private primary and secondary school leaders to transform their schools into (what they consider) socially just schools for marginalized students in Pakistan?
3. What actions and strategies are rural private primary and secondary school leaders using to promote social justice in their schools to address the educational inequities for marginalized students in Pakistan?

The rest of this chapter addresses each research question and the findings. There is a summary of findings at the end of each research question.

Research Question 1: School Leaders' Conceptualization of Social Justice

This section answers the first research question: *How do rural primary and secondary private school leaders conceptualize social-justice-oriented leadership to address the educational inequities for marginalized students in Pakistan?* The findings revealed that all 11 participants' conceptualization of social-justice-oriented leadership was linked with three main themes: (1) *Enhanced Access to High-Quality Education*; (2) *Supporting Student Well-Being and Keeping Them Safe from Harm;* and (3) *Conflicting Mental Models and Conceptualization of Social Justice Leadership: An Adult-Centered, Hierarchical, and Savior Approach*. The third theme diverges from the Western theory of promoting social justice through inclusion and participation of all key stakeholders, including children. All participants had some consensus and overlap in their understanding of social justice in education but also seemed conflicted in their MM in some ways. For example, participants conceptualized justice as equality and equal opportunity in education but utilized an adult-centered and hierarchical approach to leadership that diminished student voice and agency. When viewed through a MM (Senge, 2006) lens, findings suggest that participants' values, beliefs, experiences (with the community, school, personal, etcetera), and assumptions shaped how they conceptualized educational inequities for marginalized students. The next few subsections examine participants' conceptualization of social justice, and social-justice-oriented school leadership in more detail.

Enhanced Access to High-Quality Education

Participants' conceptualization of social justice in education as enhancing marginalized students' access to high-quality education emerged when participants were

asked how they improved the educational access or resources for certain students. Participants thought about justice as equality and equal opportunity in society for all children. They believed social justice in education was possible if marginalized students were provided with high-quality education. This included an education that was contextually relevant to the students and their future goals and enabled students to critically examine and challenge oppressive structures and narratives, such as breaking barriers to school based on gender or class. They stressed that equity and fairness in educational access and the opportunity should be provided to students with more needs (e.g., in admissions). Specifically, participants described high-quality education as (1) *Leveling the Playing Field: A View towards Equity and Equality* and (2) *Enabling Students and Fostering their Critical Thinking Skills*.

Leveling the Playing Field: A View Towards Equity and Equality

Across the interviews and artifacts, it seemed participants conceptualized social justice as a view towards equity and equal opportunity or "leveling the playing field." In other words, they were thinking of the learning, and socio-economic mobility students needed. They believed education was high-quality if marginalized students could be at par with their privileged peers, both in education and in society, fully contribute to society, compete on the job market, and have a chance at socio-economic mobility despite marginalizing factors. They emphasized the importance of closing opportunity gaps. They worked to undo opportunity gaps via the curriculum so that students could compete on the job market and have a chance at socio-economic mobility. For example, School Leader F stated, "give them opportunities …[and] privileges that everyone (who is affluent) has, that is when social justice steps in." In her view towards equality, School

Leader F emphasized the importance of providing marginalized students with an opportunity similar to their privileged peers to promote social justice.

All 11 participants conceptualized social justice as an equal educational opportunity but prioritized access and opportunity for students with more needs; for example, through their school admissions policy. They shared that the right to quality education is a constitutional right of every child in Pakistan but relying on a policy on "paper" that there should be an equal educational opportunity is not enough. They understood social justice as closing the gaps between rich and poor, boys and girls, etcetera because they were aware of deep disparities in access. For example, School Leader B explained,

> [It's] the State's responsibility that every child must have an education. The government should provide them with free education. And that kid does not have to be a privileged child. It's every child's right ... If the government isn't doing it then … we do this work with the intention in mind that…this is our future generation [and] to become an educated country and change things around, we need to educate our children.

She believed the government was responsible but not effective in meeting the educational right of every child. By educating marginalized students, she was trying to meet an unfulfilled need of the community. She conceptualized social justice as educating "every child," regardless of a student's identity, with skills and knowledge to make their mark in the world, participate fully in society, and eventually contribute to a brighter future for Pakistan.

Across artifacts and interviews, findings suggested that participants conceptualized social justice as enhancing access to quality education for marginalized students – who may otherwise lack access– including those from remote rural areas, girls, etcetera. Their MM of social justice was achieving a level of equity in access to schools

based on knowing there are big discrepancies that negatively impact students' future life prospects. This conceptualization to achieve more equity and justice was evident through School A's school mission:

> …[providing] free education of a high standard to some of the poorest and most vulnerable children …[and] a good school education will allow underprivileged children (boys and girls) … to compete for places in the best universities of the country, eventually leading to employment prospects that their previous generation could never have imagined. Each child given an opportunity for such an education can become an agent for change for an entire family in the future. (School A, website)

Likewise, School Leader B's school mission was to meet the perceived needs of marginalized students, and unlike participants, the school mission referred to students as "marginalized." For example, the school website revealed the mission of the school was

> To provide education and livelihood opportunities to marginalized children in Pakistan…to become productive members of society (School B, website)

Echoing the mission of the schools, School Leader H, who was a private school leader for 16-years at a primary and secondary school in a far-flung rural area, stated, "let's try … and give the best education to people in rural areas, because children in cities have access to quality education, but children in rural areas don't have that opportunity." Sharing a similar thought as School Leader H, School Leader D, who was a private school leader for 13-years in a far-flung rural community, expressed,

> We have decided to take the poorest of poor…girls especially, half the seats we had reserved for girls, they would not get filled up, but we had dug our heels in the ground, that if those girls' seats are going to remain empty then let them remain empty, but half our seats are for girls…it took us three to four years to get them (girls) to come.

School Leader D was purposeful and hopeful that the reserved seats would eventually fill up with girls – a marginalized population. His MM of equality and justice was displayed through his stubborn persistence to achieve equity in his school. He knew of the deep

divides, especially the gender, geographic, and socio-economic divides in the community and the country in general. For that reason, he promoted equal opportunity for children in his school. School Leader D also focused on quality education and defined it as: "[quality is] what you would want for yourself and your children, and that is what…we want to give these children." He believed that all children should receive a quality education, whether from a privileged background, such as his children, or underprivileged background, such as students in his school.

Nine of the 11 participants conceptualized social justice in education as closing the opportunity gap between the rich and poor by providing equal learning opportunities. Thus, marginalized students' social circumstances would not adversely affect their lives and prospects, such as competing in the job market. They saw the gap in the curriculum as an issue that would affect students' long-term prospects, such as economic and occupational mobility. For example, School Leader F, a rural primary school leader, spoke about bridging the gap or aligning existing materials or activities to match students' lives and career goals. She felt

> education should also be relevant to what they have to do in the future. I believe that… there should be a bridge…our education system and our lives…there is a big gap in it, we need to bridge the gap…we have a free computer lab, and all the girls learn how to use a computer … do animations…write reports, so they learn technology.

By "bridging the gap," School Leader F meant incorporating practical job-market knowledge and skills into the curriculum – such as computing skills or report writing – to teach students practical skills for the job market that could eventually pull students out of poverty. In other words, her MM of social justice in education included a long-term

vision of promoting students' economic mobility. Part of that involved adjusting, adapting, aligning, and specifying the curriculum.

Much like School Leader F, School Leader A emphasized the importance of a contextualized curriculum for students. She stated, "we have to see what our child needs and give them that." School Leader E also explained her MM of social justice as bridging gaps and pulling the rural community out of poverty:

> the types of things that you want to bridge … income…and then giving them the means, the skills to climb out of that poverty...I see these parents and the dreams that they have for their children…they are all studying in our schools, so it will take a couple of generations, but it will happen.

The theme of bridging gaps was fairly consistent with responses from other participants. In sum, school leaders A, E, and F, conceptualized social justice as leveling the playing field for economic mobility. Hence, ensuring the curriculum content was relevant to student's current and future lives and promoting inter-generational upward socio-economic mobility.

Enabling Students and Fostering their Critical Thinking Skills

Data revealed that several participants (i.e., School Leaders A, B, C, E, F, G, H, and K) conceptualized educational equity as enabling students to challenge oppressive structures in society and fight for their rights. They highlighted the importance of building students' critical thinking so students could identify and challenge marginalizing and oppressive structures. For example, when asked about what it meant to be a leader who was committed to working towards rectifying educational inequalities, School Leader C, who was a rural primary and secondary school leader for more than 25-years, responded, "you are a leader for someone. You have to ensure that they (students) get their rights, you need to get them enabling education." School Leader C conceptualized

her leadership as a position of power which she used to serve those she was leading (i.e., marginalized students), and justice meant ensuring students recognized oppressive structures and fought for their educational rights as well as their basic human rights.

Like School Leader C, School Leader A, who was a rural secondary all-girls school leader, when asked about her thoughts on how rural private school leaders should serve those who have less access to resources or opportunities in school or society, stated:

> We have to enable children with every conversation… [to] critically reflect [on], 'I want to make my life better, what will help me do that?' It's very important … [because] we want our child to be able to critically think and analyze… we don't want to be lost in the semantics, that is something they will learn along the way. But … (providing opportunities) where the child is thinking… debating… that there is not just one right answer.

As such, School Leader A conceptualized a quality education as more than just improving students' literacy skills. She described a quality education as one that enabled and empowered her female students to critically think, question, and combat the oppressive sociocultural norms of a patriarchal and conservative rural community where girls are expected to accept the hierarchy and oppressive structures without questioning them.

Much like School Leader A and C, four other participants, i.e., School Leaders B, E, F, and K, who were all rural primary school leaders, shared a similar conceptualization of social justice: enabling students to identify and combat oppressive structures that worked towards marginalizing them. For example, School Leader F stated,

> so creative thinking is the only way you can get social justice… teach them art … giving them arguments … [so students can] stand up for …[their] rights that 'I am important, I am a human being, this is important for me, I should also get an education, I should also get a fair chance' that is when social justice steps in.

In sum, six participants emphasized the importance of fostering students' creative thinking skills so they could identify and challenge the marginalizing and oppressive structures in society and fight for their rights.

However, there were other challenges of leading a school in conservative communities. For example, School Leader A acknowledged:

> that school is different because it is in a rural area within a certain locality, it's a very, very community driven, or to be more precise, it is a community school. We had this market activity in which the girls went out, [they] took parental consent … and told the shop keepers to not use plastic bags but cloth bags. When our school reopened [after the holidays] we noticed some dropout, and when we looked into it, we found out that a lot of dropout had occurred after that (market activity) and … parents and other people … were questioning our teaching methodology, 'what are they teaching our kids, what is their mission?' In these community setups, everyone knows everyone, and … some folks are more influential if they withdraw their daughter from school (it would influence others). Right. So, then there are certain people if I withdraw my daughter then they will definitely follow suit.

This situation presented her with the limitation of taking girls on educational excursions in the conservative rural community because that could mean students dropping out of school. Therefore, School leader A relied more on conversations and coursework to promote students' critical thinking skills and less on education-related excursions that would interfere with the culture of the conservative community.

Supporting Student Well-Being and Keeping Them Safe from Harm

Looking towards the theme of participants' conceptualization of social justice as supporting students' well-being and keeping students safe and out of harm's way, eight participants, i.e., School Leaders B, C, E, F, G, I, J, and K, perceived schools as a safe haven for children and believed in treating students with love, care, and dignity. Student safety was a grave concern because participants were serving children vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse, substance abuse, bullying, and various other forms of

violence, both within and outside the school. Participants were also concerned with other factors of student well-being, such as poverty, health, gender inequality, ethnic and religious divides. Therefore, overall, participants believed social justice was possible only if marginalized students' well-being needs were met and they were safe from harm because it increased their chances to make the best use of the educational opportunity that school leaders were striving to provide.

To more fully understand the rural community context and causes for concern, School Leader E stated,

> children go back to see a lot of abuse in their homes…mental, emotional, every kind of abuse…there's one little hut housing a family of eight or 10, grandparents are there, parents are there, any married children are there, and even the little kids are there. Everything is happening in that one little hut... everything is happening.

Four other participants also highlighted the abuse that marginalized students had suffered in their community and students' need for protection. For example, for School Leader F, social justice involved ensuring the school was a safe and secure space. She stated, "[school is] a kind of a safe haven for them because there is no fear." She emphasized the importance of a safe school environment where students weren't afraid and felt loved and cared for. School Leader F explained:

> in this area you have to care for them (students), your door should always be open for them… students come to me and tell me that 'Madam, don't tell them but that teacher hit me with a stick today,' I mean I don't tell the teachers that I know, but … in a meeting, I'm like 'I will not put up with this.'

She believed that corporal punishment, a common and accepted way to "discipline" children in Pakistani schools[16], was counterproductive and had harmful consequences

[16] Corporal punishment was banned in Pakistan by the ICT Prohibition of Corporal Punishment Bill in February 2021, cancelling Section 89 of the Pakistan Penal Code (Act XLV of 1860) that previously allowed teachers and guardians to administer physical punishment.

(such as aggression, disruptive behavior, etcetera) than good results (such as stopping undesired behavior). She prohibited her teachers from corporal punishment and encouraged them to have a caring and tender attitude towards children, so they felt safe. All 11 school leaders believed a loving and caring approach towards students created a safe school environment. Their concept of justice and equity in education encompassed not just improving grades and believing in equality but adapting the approach of treating students gently and lovingly – going out of their way to ensure students were cared for and loved. School Leader B posited,

> these are not children who are going to elite schools, they come from different backgrounds, and they need to be handled in a different way. It isn't just about completing the syllabus for the academic year. My strict rule was that you (teachers) could not be harsh with the children…you need to love them and care for them…when you are loving in your approach, children are more responsive and understand what you're saying.

Relatedly, School Leader F expressed encountering students' mindset of low self-esteem and self-worth. She believed that a loving and caring approach towards students was critical to achieve social justice and would build their self-esteem and self-worth. She believed that a loving and caring approach towards students was critical to achieving social justice and building their self-esteem and self-worth. In her experience in the rural community, marginalized groups were often dehumanized and oppressed and made to feel inferior and less worthy of deserving basic rights, such as an education or a fair chance at life. She felt it was essential to "give them dignity … love…You have to care for them." Her beliefs reflected other participants' MM; for example, School Leader B also conceptualized social justice as boosting students' confidence with love and care. She stated,

> [students] were scared and cautious…after giving them a lot of love, one could see the change in their personality. You give them attention; you give them resources [and] support … take care of their food and slowly … and gradually they gain confidence.

School Leader E had a similar conceptualization and MM of social justice as building children's confidence, remarking,

> it is about … giving them the confidence, the self-worth…so they don't feel less than anyone else. It's not just about educating the children; it is also about teaching them other life skills. The ways of the world but with love.

In sum, participants conceptualized social justice as supporting students' well-being, building students' self-esteem, self-worth, and confidence. They perceived schools as a safe space where students were respected, loved, and cared for so children could be carefree and really be kids.

Conflicting Mental Models and Conceptualization of Social Justice Leadership: An Adult-Centered, Hierarchical, and Savior Approach

Findings indicated evidence of eight participants conflicting MM and conceptualization of SJL as adult-centered and hierarchical that deviates from a Western concept of social justice. This theme emerged when participants shared mixed views about inclusion and participation in their justice-focused work; they also appeared to be working from a position of power. Their conflicting MM of adult-centered and hierarchical leadership – believing that an adult perspective is intrinsically better than a child's perspective and values working with adults – seemed counter-productive to create an inclusive and socially just school.

Participants' conflicting MM of SJL could be due to deficit perspective or problematic assumptions and generalizations that marginalized students lack existing knowledge of importance or their inability to achieve due to their background. For

example, eight participants made statements similar to the following by School Leader J: "[students are like] blank slates…an empty canvas that is sent to you to paint as you like." Like six other participants, School Leader J conceptualized children as a *tabula rasa* or having no existing knowledge of value or aspirations to better their social or educational conditions. School Leader I shared similar thoughts, "in the beginning when children join this school, they know nothing of real value. It's up to us to teach them something of value so they can achieve something in their future lives." This reflected a traditional adult-centered, authoritarian, and hierarchical MM of thinking and leadership with a lack of regard for children's existing knowledge or aspiration.

Saving versus Serving Marginalized Children from a Position of Power

Participants in this research study had inconsistent views of social justice. They sent out mixed messages: they believed and worked towards empowering students by fostering their critical awareness to challenge oppressive structures. At the same time, their adult-centered, hierarchical, and savior-like MM of leadership created power structures that worked towards reducing student voice and agency. Nine of the 11 participants envisioned themselves as being in a position of power to change things for students by providing them with opportunities and education to benefit them. These participants expressed MM of saving, not serving, children by giving them an educational opportunity. For example, School Leader D, a rural primary and secondary school leader, stated,

> a kid who is uneducated in the village and roams around has no expectations anyway… If we have … exposed them to the world outside, and then if we fail to get them over the finish line, the disappointment that builds up is worse than never getting this opportunity.

School Leader D's response reflected his belief that marginalized children have no hopes or aspirations for their future, and he, as a school leader, had the power and ability to fix students' problems. His biases fed into his MM of social justice as "saving" children from their life of "no-expectations" and "improving" their educational and social conditions. When viewed from the Western social justice lens, such exclusionary practices disempower a key stakeholder: the child. Also, in this exclusionary process, the marginalized and economically disadvantaged child is denied affirmation and respect for their existing aspirations and knowledge. Much the same as School Leader D, School Leader E stated,

> you take someone out of a … certain context, you show them the good life…[is] it fair of us to give them so much [and] expect them to go back … from a life they had got so used to.

In other words, School Leader E believed that there's little chance that these students are satisfied or like their lives. Participants assumed that some students, despite marginalizing factors like poverty, cannot be happy or have aspirations. School Leaders D and E's responses illustrated their MM of saving children by fixing their problems versus serving them by respecting and affirming their existing knowledge and then proceeding to co-construct further planning, learning, and aspirations by including students in the process.

Furthermore, when looking specifically toward the collectivist and traditional approach of "respecting" hierarchy in Pakistani schools, six participants believed that students should be trained to "respect" hierarchy, which created conflicting conceptualizations. Their MM conflict was evident when they expressed their desire to promote equality and justice for marginalized children. Still, they perceived children at

the bottom of the hierarchy (or unequal) in relation to adults. School Leader D, whose formal education was in a highly ranked private school established by the British in the 1800s, said, "We have a hierarchy here …[students] have to behave a certain way in front of me; whether they agree or disagree with that, there is a certain [expected] level of respect." Understanding School Leader D's background and educational experience in a strict British school are vital to see how he imbibed MM of "respecting" authority. By respecting authority, he meant not to challenge him due to his position of power as school leader – and this seemed to influence his MM of expected behavior from students in his school.

Similarly, School Leader H, whose formal education was also in a highly ranked private school and college established by the British, strongly advocated in favor of the vertical hierarchy present in the social system and reproduced it in his school. He related a conversation with his brother:

> We were discussing whether places like School C and College D (pseudonyms for schools established by the British) are good or not good. And I said …no one from there has failed in life because of the training we had …we became self-confident people …which we never thought when you were there, we thought 'What is this rubbish since morning till evening they treat us like machines… like subordinates.'

Both school leaders D and H's MM were influenced by personal experience and training to "respect" hierarchy in their schooling and believed students benefit from this in later life. Both school leaders D and H did not have any formal training in school leadership, and they worked within the cultural norms to consider student opinions. Indeed, School Leader H recalled being oppressed as a child and treated as a "subordinate" and disliked the oppressive approach. Yet, now that he is in a position of power, he advocates for and

reproduces the same oppressive structure for his students that he disapproved of as a child.

As counterexamples, evidence indicated that four participants were critically reflective on their positions of power. For example, when asked, “What led you to the field of education?” School Leader A reflected on changing lives and serving people rather than “saving” them. She stated:

> what does it mean to change people's lives? Mmm, I think when we talk about changing people's lives, we are doing something for other people…somewhere, there is a savior complex…and I've always been very mindful of it… I'm trying to enable people, and…I am serving and not saving them.

School Leader A grappled with her deeply rooted biases because she found them problematic, such as MM of leading from a position of power. She tried to shift her MM, influencing her leadership behavior and reasoning to serve and enable students, not “save” them. School Leader K, who supported her school community financially and with food rations, also indicated critical self-reflection by acknowledging her power and leverage over the school community. She commented, “They (the community) are not there to obey us, [and] we're [not] passing around orders.” School Leader K was mindful of not taking advantage of her power, influence, and leverage. Instead, she chose to create partnerships with the community based on the view that they are equal stakeholders. While critical reflection was not the case across all participants, School Leaders A and K and two other participants were critically reflective not to lead from a position of power and creating partnerships with the community.

Summary of Research Question 1

To summarize, participants were committed to rectifying educational inequalities by enhancing access of marginalized students to high-quality education. They

conceptualized social justice as a view towards equality and equity: by providing marginalized students with enhanced educational opportunities and enabling them to contribute more fully to society. While there were some differences in approach, all participants conceptualized social justice as a commitment to provide students with an equal and equitable education that piqued their curiosity, equipped them with skills to participate fully in society, and promoted socioeconomic mobility. Participants also conceptualized social justice as protecting children from harm in the community and school as a safe space. They conceptualized social justice through a loving, caring, and tender approach towards students that promoted student well-being and built their self-worth, self-esteem, and self-confidence. A few participants shared some conflicting MM of social justice utilizing an adult-centered approach. This conceptualization diverges from the Western process of social-justice-oriented leadership that relies on the inclusion and participation of all key stakeholders, including students. Participants' conceptualization of social justice and equity in education was put into practice through the actions and strategies they employed to address the educational inequities and inequalities for marginalized students (as discussed in Research Question 3).

Research Question 2: School Leaders' Sources of Motivation

The data analyzed in this section addresses the second question of my study: *What motivates rural primary and secondary private school leaders to transform their schools into (what they view as) inclusive and socially just learning environments for all students?* Since most participants were not trained as school leaders, understanding the influences of experiences and backgrounds is vital to see their sources of motivation. As mentioned earlier, a mental model's framework is used to explain participants' thought

process about how things work or "deeply held internal images of how the world works, images that limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting" (Senge, 2006, p. 163). As such, their conceptualization of (what they view as) social justice in education and motivation to serve marginalized students may have influenced their actions.

In thinking of the lack of formal leadership training, one might consider these principals less knowledgeable in serving marginalized students. Yet, all 11 participants seemed to be aware of factors that marginalize students through their background experiences and exposure to social injustices and inequities in education. Their overwhelming experiences of witnessing disparities between their privilege and what others could access developed their MM of philanthropy, empathy, a belief in "giving back" to society, and a sense of possibility and responsibility towards marginalized communities. Their motivation to promote social justice was also influenced partly by their religious responsibility towards the poor, protecting children from harm and abuse, and a strong utopic vision for a fair society. Specifically, there were three themes related to what motivated school leaders and influenced their MM with a social justice orientation: (1) *The Influence of Family and Upbringing*, (2) *Witnessing Inequity and Discrimination,* and (3) *Critical Life Experiences*. These themes played a significant role in motivating participants to transform their schools into what they viewed as inclusive and socially just learning environments for all students.

The Influence of Family and Upbringing on their Mental Models of Social Justice

A common thread among four participants was having a role model who, by example, shaped their values (or MM) of empathy, give-back, philanthropy, and altruism into their upbringing. Four participants, i.e., School Leaders C, E, I, and K, noted their

upbringing around family role models as pivotal to their strong sense of contributing to their community and actively promoting social justice in their schools. Participants' family members were actively engaged in promoting social justice for vulnerable populations. For example, School Leader E, a primary school leader for 25 years who served internally displaced people in economically disadvantaged communities, revealed:

> I think it goes back to my own childhood, the values that you imbibe from within your immediate circle… my parents were always great social workers …and I used to see both my parents very active within the community … We imbibed from our parents this very strong spirit of giving back; just everything was about giving back … our sense of community was very strong.

School Leader E's observation of her parents, who were social workers and actively engaged in serving their community, shaped her MM of giving back and a strong sense of community. Although her parents were not involved in education, her values of giving back and her sense of community prompted her to choose this "service" profession and start a school for children from low-income groups. This was her effort to reduce educational inequities in opportunity in her community by providing access for marginalized students to quality education.

Much like School Leader E, School Leader I, who was also a primary school leader for 20 years, shared,

> My father was a philanthropist. I think it came from him in the genes… I wanted to open up a school for those children who can't afford it. So, it started there, and … I started teaching the children living in my servant quarters.

School Leader I absorbed the values of philanthropy from her father. Her father strived to promote the well-being of vulnerable populations with the hope of making a positive and sustainable contribution to society over time. She developed MM of empathy by observing the deep disparities between her privilege and what others had available to

them, such as the children of her domestic staff who, most likely, didn't have the resources to attend a school. These observations of income inequality eventually led School Leader I to start a school for children from low-income groups to reduce some inequities in opportunity, such as providing access to a quality education so they would have a chance at future social and economic mobility.

Like School Leader I, School Leader C, who has been a rural primary and secondary school leader for historically marginalized students for more than 25-years, shared:

> my father was a communist trade union member (of a minority peasants and laborers' political party), so before we could learn to walk, we were protesting … doing something that was right for the laborers. When your character is shaped this way, you can think …beyond yourself …[and] that was very much a part of one's upbringing, very large-hearted parents who always thought beyond themselves…that's how we were brought up, which became very influential in the way … that issues of social justice were uppermost; issues of equality, non-discriminatory practices, do's and don'ts…

School Leader C observed her father's social activism and protesting for the rights of vulnerable people, such as laborers, which, in turn, developed in her strong values (or MM) of social activism and advocacy to protect the rights of vulnerable populations. To illustrate the influence of her father's activism and early exposure to social injustices on her character, School Leader C shared an anecdote from her school days protesting for the rights of her economically disadvantaged peers:

> We studied in …a missionary school … so we had children from those 11 or 13 rich and famous families of Pakistan, and we …had children who were completely living on fees …paid by somebody else. So we really had a spectrum of students, and … the best example of this (economic disparity) used to be our tuck shops … these very fancy elitist kids would … swing out that Rs. 100 note (Pakistani currency denomination) we would look at them and really give them a 'Boo!' to say, 'shame on you for bringing this, why don't you bring your Rs. 10 or Rs. 5 note? Are you trying to show off? You are terrible people; what about … all those other people [who don't have the money]? …So, I mean, we could just tell

> off people because we felt that …the most disadvantaged could be valued, and not in a charity way but because we felt that their emotions needed to be considered.

This anecdote illustrates School Leader C standing up for vulnerable populations - the economically disadvantaged - in her school. Even as a teenager, she couldn't bear the indifference her privileged peers displayed regarding their emotions. According to School Leader C, her activist inclination mirrored her father's protests defending the rights of vulnerable people that instilled in her empathy and a sense of responsibility to protect vulnerable people.

Much the same as School Leaders E, I, and C, School Leader K, who was a rural primary school leader for three years, connected her motivation and commitment to serving the underprivileged to her father. School Leader K recalled her father, within his limited resources, felt obligated to support his economically disadvantaged extended family members:

> my father was a role model in the sense that if within your resources you can take care of others, we have to do it…I have cousins who were sitting at home after completing their metric (grade 10) because they couldn't continue their education, my father and mother …[sent] them to cities to get further education, one is a doctor, another is a professor of chemistry… my father gave them basic education, and I feel proud to see them get somewhere.

Unlike School Leader E, I, and C, whose family role models seemed to be wealthy and influential, School Leader K's father had limited resources but still supported his extended family. Her father's commitment and sense of obligation to support others instilled the values of philanthropy and supporting others in School Leader K. She acknowledged, "we have inherited this (values of philanthropy) from our parents. We weren't brought up thinking of only our self-improvement but of how to improve things for others." In sum, and despite differences in financial resources, School Leaders C, E, I,

and K early exposure to philanthropically-inclined role models who thought beyond themselves – served their family and community – shaped their values of philanthropy, empathy, and a strong sense of "give back." These assumptions from socialization, values, beliefs, education, and experiences developed participants' MM that the educational system had the potential to be fair and equitable for all children if proactive steps were taken and some opportunity gaps could be closed over time. These MM motivated participants to promote social justice and serve marginalized communities.

Witnessing Inequity and Discrimination

Participants' witnessing educational discrimination in opportunity and access coupled with their sense of religious responsibility to serve the poor and a strong utopic vision for a more just society also motivated them to address social injustices and inequities for vulnerable people. All 11 school leaders developed a passion for serving marginalized communities due, in part, to witnessing the deep disparities in opportunities between their privilege and what others could access, and consequently felt motivated to close some of the opportunity gaps. For example, School Leader C, who developed a strong sense of social justice growing up with an activist father, shared an anecdote of witnessing educational inequity and discrimination at her "highly respected" college established by British colonizers:

> this was very graphic…the hierarchy was so obvious, the front row in classes was reserved for Senior Cambridge and A' Level students[17], English-medium school[18] [students] behind them, then the English-medium Matric[19] students, behind them were kids who came from Urdu-medium schools, behind that were Christian children who are studying for free. We had tiered seats; it was terrible. All of this was very hyperinflated in my head because I grew up in an atmosphere where the

[17] Senior Cambridge/ O'Level and A' Level is offered at elite private schools
[18] English-medium schools are generally perceived as superior quality in comparison to Urdu-medium schools
[19] Matric or Matriculation, the 10th grade board examination in Pakistan

> most disadvantaged could be valued and not in a charity way, but because we felt that their emotions needed to be considered.

School Leader C observed the spectrum of educational inequity and unfairness reproduced in her college: students from elite schools had the advantage of sitting in the front, and others, including economically disadvantaged or other marginalized students, were assigned seats in the back of the classroom. Witnessing the discriminatory, exclusionary, and normalized socio-economic and religious divides in her college went against her MM or values, which included fairness, equity, and respecting everyone. Recognizing such injustices and discriminatory practices also motivated School Leader C to serve marginalized students at her school and reduce some educational disparities and create a path for more equity in society.

Sense of Responsibility and Possibility

Participants' motivation to promote social justice was, in part, rooted in their sense of responsibility and the possibility for a fair and just society. Participants discussed their religious responsibility towards the poor and social justice as a mandate of faith. Six of the 11 participants shared that their faith required them to take proactive steps to make social institutions fairer and society itself more just for the under-served marginalized population. For example, when asked: "Does religion play a role in your motivation to serve marginalized communities?" School Leader J shared that accountability for her actions towards the poor was a significant motivator. She shared,

> it states in the Quran (holy book of Muslims) to be good with people, 'do good, and you will get good' …You will be asked about it on the day of judgment, 'how did you help poor people?'

To a much greater degree than School Leader J, School Leader G expressed that religion served as the primary motivation behind her work to serve poor and marginalized

communities. She posited that being a good Muslim meant more than fulfilling Islamic religious obligations (prayer, fasting, giving alms, etcetera). It was about serving your Creator by doing things that are not obligatory. She stated:

> On the day of judgment, if Allah asks you … 'what have you done for my poor people,' because if you pray, you do it because that's *farz* (religious obligation) if you do *zakat* (give alms to the poor), you have to do it because that's also *farz*, what have you done just for the sake of Allah? That is the whole purpose behind my struggle.

Both school leader G and J's statements mirrored the beliefs or MM of 4 other school leaders who also felt that their faith drove them into promoting social justice by serving the poor and marginalized.

Religious beliefs, in turn, led many school leaders to actively seek out and support poor and marginalized communities through this "service" profession. For instance, School Leader A said, providing support through an educational opportunity was like

> believing in the possibility of unlocking a child's unlimited potential… [having that] sense of possibility and that unwavering belief that the child can do it. It doesn't matter where the child came from.

Echoing School Leader A's hope in children's potential and future, School Leader G explained the rural neighborhood where her school is now, "there were children [and] there was no school there. Children were playing on the hills all day long." The community was under-resourced, and, despite educational policies, children were obviously not being served. She also believed in the possibility of children's potential and success in the future if they were provided with an educational opportunity, and this motivation led her to start her school. Much like School Leader G, School Leader E discovered that children were out of school because there were no schools in their community. She shared,

> no kid went to school there. Some of them work…every kid is working as soon as they're old enough to start toddling… they either go out to beg or work. So I just ... impulsively started a school.

School Leader E felt that school-aged children should not have to experience child labor or begging to earn a living, etcetera; it would be better and more appropriate if children received an education. This observation reflects the larger problem in Pakistan; that is, extreme poverty and a lack of schooling that leaves many children with no access to formal education and children were engaged in child labor (evaluating the pervasiveness of the child labor issue in contexts beyond rural Islamabad is beyond the scope of this dissertation).

Similarly, School Leader G, a primary and secondary school leader for 20 years in rural Islamabad, was motivated to set up a school for historically marginalized students because she recognized her privilege and saw how others lack it in key ways. She recalled an incident at her cousin's house in Islamabad,

> I was being served by a little girl, 11-year-old working as a maid, my granddaughter was about the same age, and that broke my heart. And I went back to my husband [and said] we've got to do something for children like these.

School Leader G observed the young child, a girl, was engaged in domestic labor while her granddaughter was probably in a drastically different situation, most likely a "privileged" or "sheltered" life. She was motivated by a sense of possibility for social change that if vulnerable children, such as the 11-year-old girl serving her, were given the right educational opportunity, then they might be able to participate more fully in society. School Leader G, similar to all participants, had developed MM and a sense of possibility that educating all children was key to have a more inclusive and just society and started her school in a far-flung rural area where there were no other schools. Correspondingly,

all school leaders set up schools serving marginalized students in rural areas to improve students' life and work prospects.

Seven participants acknowledged their motivation, in part, to serving marginalized students was due to a sense of responsibility to protect children living in poverty from harm and abuse. This theme of protecting children from harm and abuse closely aligns with and is possibly the basis of participants' conceptualization of social justice as protecting vulnerable people from harm. For example, School Leader A reflected on her experiences witnessing extreme child abuse and neglect,

> There's a child who's going through sexual abuse at home. So, we went out of the way to involve the legal department or health department… whatever was needed to [protect the child].

She was keenly aware of the prevalent issue of child abuse in the community and protected children by connecting them to the right resources. She was motivated to ensure vulnerable students were safe from harm. Much the same as School Leaders A, five other participants believed that serving vulnerable children was not only providing children with quality education but also ensuring students were safe from harm. They believed in the possibility for social change; if at-risk children were given their rightful educational opportunity, then they might be able to participate more fully in society.

In sum, witnessing discrimination and the lack of opportunity for certain people motivated several participants to serve marginalized children. These participants were cognizant of their privilege and opportunity and were driven by a sense of responsibility – religious, personal, and social – to do their part to improve the conditions in society.

Critical Life Experiences as Turning Points

Three school leaders discussed critical life experiences that helped shaped their belief or MM to care for underserved and marginalized students and catapulted them into starting a school. They talked about experiences that changed their lives for them or those around them negatively. The most common factor in this theme was school leaders coming close to death or experiencing the death of a loved one and realizing that they needed to add meaning to their lives with the goal of serving marginalized communities. For example, School Leader D believed his close childhood friend died in an earthquake. In an attempt to find his friend and give him a proper funeral, he walked through the rubble of the quake and saw the devastation. School Leader D shared,

> we saw it completely fresh before anything had been removed…that walk that I took, that long 12 to 14-hour walk, was very emotional because there were dead people around, I couldn't see most of them, but you could smell them because this was already the third day. Half the people who died were children because it was a school day, and it was like 8:30 or 9:00 a.m., so school was in session. When you walk past, and you can tell what building this is … you realize that there was a school and the roof had fallen, and there's like 80 or 90 children under that roof… I saw all of that destruction while in search…[of] my childhood friend. I walked, and I decided that I will make a school in his name.

School Leader D's commitment and passion for serving marginalized students sprang from his traumatic experience of seeing so much death and devastation, including students. Before this experience, he shared that he had a well-established career in the Information Technology sector with no inclination towards starting a school. He elaborated on how this singular but critical incident made him commit to starting a school. This critical incident challenged School Leader D's existing MM, with its values, beliefs, assumptions, and generalizations, that were no longer adequate for his life situation. He started thinking differently and decided to do more "meaningful" work,

triggered by this disorienting experience that challenged his MM. School Leader D acknowledged that his decision to start the school was an emotionally distressed one, yet 15-years later, he continues to be committed to promoting social justice in the earthquake-affected region. He said that justice and equity in education are not limited to building a school and offering free high-quality education to students in the disaster-struck zone. For him, it was about intentionally shaping policy and practice to prioritize access for children directly impacted by the earthquake, such as orphans and the economically disadvantaged people who lost their homes and livelihoods, and other marginalized populations, such as girls, by reserving 50% of the seats for girls.

Unlike School Leader D, who had no prior interest in starting a school, School Leader F always had a passion for serving marginalized communities and had worked with refugees in the past. However, the trauma of a brain tumor and not knowing how much time she had to live challenged her MM and catapulted School Leader F into instant action. School Leader F, who was leading two schools serving marginalized students, shared her experience:

> I got this brain tumor, and that is what made me turn things around. I quit my job and… I was in hell - psychologically and physically …I said now is the time that I need to start my school because I don't know how … the cancer will progress…I will go mad if I keep sitting at home … because I've worked all my life and God had given me the opportunity to give back now.

School Leader F felt that she had been given a second chance and, in her view, it was time to serve and "give back" now. School Leader F concluded, "[it is] very satisfying, very fulfilling." The challenging experience challenged her MM to act differently and start serving marginalized communities by improving their social conditions, and this served as a source of personal joy and fulfillment.

Similarly, School leader G shared a critical incident that shaped her commitment to serving marginalized communities. She lost her father at a young age, and her family struggled to make ends meet. Life became hard. She described the experience with her voice trembling,

> I was only 10, and my younger sister was six months old when my father passed away, and after the death of my dad, I know how hard it was …to get an education…I cannot explain when I see these children, it is sort of fulfilling for me.

School Leader G's experience helped her relate to others' difficulties in getting an education. Her struggles instilled within her a passion for promoting access to quality education for marginalized people. Just like School Leader F, she found fulfillment and joy in serving children. In sum, critical life experiences, such as coming close to death or losing a loved one, challenged participants existing MM to think and act differently and motivated participants to add meaning to their lives. They said that by serving communities and giving back to marginalized people, they are serving the public good.

Summary of Research Question 2

To summarize, this section addressed participants' motivation to transform their schools into (what they view as) inclusive and socially just learning environments for all students (see table 3 below). There were three overarching themes influenced by personal experiences, education, values, and beliefs, revealing participants' MM that motivated them to serve as school leaders in rural primary and secondary schools. First, many school participants were deeply influenced by a role model, mostly an activist family member addressing issues of equity and justice for vulnerable people. Second, most school leaders witnessed inequity and discrimination in education based on people's socio-economic status, geographic location, gender, religion, etcetera. This exposure

made some participants recognize their privilege and opportunity. They felt motivated by a sense of possibility that if proactive steps were taken, the educational system had the potential to be fair and equitable for all children. Third, and finally, a few school leaders had particularly traumatic and critical life experiences that challenged their existing MM, which influenced their behavior and catapulted them into serving marginalized children and serving the cause of justice and giving back to improve marginalized peoples' life chances proved to be fulfilling and rewarding for them. They continued to be motivated by a sense of joy and feeling good about giving back to the community and providing marginalized students with access to schools.

Research Question 3: School Leaders' Actions and Strategies

This section answers the third research question: *What actions and strategies do rural primary and secondary private school leaders utilize to promote social justice in their schools to address the educational inequities for marginalized students?* Findings revealed that participants were transferring their conceptualization of a socially just, equitable, and inclusive education into actionable leadership practices and strategies while serving marginalized students and communities in the rural outskirts of Islamabad. This section illustrates participants' efforts to create more socially just schools to meet marginalized students' perceived well-being and academic needs. Across the data collected, this study found three themes of actions and strategies school leaders used to address the educational inequities for marginalized students and promote social justice: (1) *Enhancing Marginalized Students' Access to High-Quality Education,* (2) *Building School-Community Relationship and Keeping Students Safe from Harm,* and (3) *Navigating Child Labor and Conservative Mindsets*.

Enhancing Marginalized Students' Access to High-Quality Education

The theme of enhancing access to school builds on participants' conceptualization of social justice as enhanced access to high-quality education for marginalized students (as discussed in question 1). This theme emerged when participants discussed their strategies and actions to promote social justice for marginalized students in under-served rural areas by (1) *Intentionally Building Schools in Underserved Conservative Communities* (2) *Shaping Admission Policy to Prioritize Access for Marginalized Students* (3) *Building Capacity to Improve Teaching and Learning* and (4) *Integrating Supplemental Support into the Curriculum for Students with More Needs.*

Intentionally Building Schools in Under-Served Conservative Communities

Looking towards actions that enhanced educational access and, thereby, promoting social justice and equity, the theme of participants establishing schools in under-served and marginalized rural communities quickly emerged. More precisely, all participants intentionally set up their schools in rural communities with no schools or not enough to serve all children. Additionally, participants were cognizant of the conservative culture that increased student dropping out or never enrolling – especially girls – and intentionally built their schools in areas to make it easier for students to access and, thus, more likely for them to come. Participants' concern with the practical and conservative culture was reflected in statements like the following from School Leader E:

> We embed it [the school] in the heart of the community. If there's a bit of a clearing, we will set up a structure over there, and then it's easier to access... These children won't come if they have to walk two or three miles…and when it comes to the girls, there's no question about it; they will not come.

School Leader I reflected on the patriarchal culture of the community, "They (community members) would have a problem that: how is a girl going to come alone to school?" The

conservative patriarchal culture was prevalent in the rural community where she had set up her school and created oppressive power structures. Therefore, traditional gender roles were more embedded in the community leading to less educational access for girls and preparing girls to be in the home to raise children. Both School Leader E and I considered the conservative culture of the community and the practical problem distance from school posed. They enacted justice by embedding the school within the community for easy access for students, particularly females.

Seven participants attended to the concerns of large distances and sociocultural conservative gender norms common in their local communities, and some offered transportation to combat these challenges. These seven schools were harder to access because their catchment area was spread out over a few villages, or they were located in hard-to-access hilly areas, or they were in extremely conservative neighborhoods. For example, School Leader A, who was school leader at an all-girls secondary school in a rural hilly area, highlighted that the catchment area of her school was across six villages. She acknowledged that the large distance, hilly terrain, lack of public and personal transportation, and the conservative nature of the communities were challenges. She provided transportation to combat these challenges so girls could avail themselves of the educational opportunity: “we provide transport…a girl can’t just walk alone in that area; there is no such concept … even walking is a huge thing.”

However, offering free transportation incurred significant overheads and needed extra financial support. For example, School Leader D acknowledged, “there is quite a bit of expense, so we try to find sponsors for our children because… we do not charge [the children] anything.” In other words, participants found ways to combat various concerns

to enhance access to schools for marginalized students so that educational opportunities could be taken advantage of.

Shaping Admission Policy to Prioritize Access for Marginalized Students

The strategy to promote social justice by shaping school admission policy to prioritize marginalized students' admission quickly emerged. Ten participants were concerned with equity and purposeful in finding ways to increase access for marginalized students, e.g., orphans, students with disabilities, girls, students from low-income families, with an inclusive admission policy. Additionally, all participants served children, most of whom were first-generation students or students living with uneducated adults. For example, School Leader F prioritized orphans and students with disabilities in her admission policy:

> We give priority to orphans … we are looking at disabilities… if they have learning disabilities, we accept them because we know that they will not have a chance anywhere but here.

Similarly, School Leader C enacted justice by including: "[children with] disabilities as part of our inclusive strategy, and our children are in the worst forms of child labor." Both School leaders C and F were purposeful and intentional in their inclusive admission policy, including children with disabilities and those engaged in labor, who are often not enrolled in school, and specifically focused on enrolling marginalized students. In a similar manner to School Leaders C and F, School Leader J shared,

> We prioritize orphans. Next, we look for cases; if the child has parents separated or divorced or their mothers died, we give them a priority. Third, we give priority to children whose parents are drug addicts, and … [finally] we look at their per month income.

School Leader J highlighted her strategy of intentionally seeking out the most vulnerable children and providing them with an educational opportunity to have a chance at upward

socio-economic mobility. This strategy built upon participants' conceptualization and belief that social justice in education meant ensuring students who may otherwise struggle to access a quality education was provided with priority access to their schools.

During the interview, the question arose about whether school leaders can confer or deny admissions. School Leader F, who was a school leader of two primary schools, stated,

> The advantage of a private school is that you can make rules as you go along, with public schools you have to take directives from above … as a leader in a government school you would never be able to do this.

As such, participants were exercising their freedom to act and intentionally adjust policy and practices; in this case, by adapting admission criteria that prioritized admission for certain student populations. In sum, ten participants adapted admission criteria to ensure marginalized students had priority access to admission in their schools and illustrated the participants' actions to bridge the opportunity gap in education. And, if participants were specifically focusing on educating orphans, students with disabilities, children engaged in child labor, children who are internally displaced, economically disadvantaged, etcetera, then these were probably children who are among the least likely to have a chance to get an education and other support.

Another common enactment theme was school leaders finding a way to accelerate older students' education (such as 10 to 15-year-old children attending school for the first time). Six participants enacted justice by enrolling students who were much older and never been to school before. School Leader A explained, "We had so many students who have never gone to school and like…we can't just take a student in 6th grade because it is age-appropriate… he's never been to school earlier; he won't be able to do it." These six

school leaders (i.e., school leaders A, C, E, F, G, and K) incorporated fast-track programs to bring older students to the age-appropriate grade level in a short period. For example, School Leader F said, "[We offer] speed literacy classes if children are 13 or 14 years old and they want to start studying and missed the opportunity and … grown up working, we have special classes for them."

Similarly, six other participants had programs for students who dropped out in primary school and re-enrolled as adults. For example, School Leader C shared,

> [we offer] a second chance program … we take about six months to 18-months to allow them to finish their Matriculation or 8th Grade.

These efforts indicate participants' providing suitable opportunities for older students so they could succeed academically. In sum, participants enacted social justice by enrolling marginalized students in school and providing supplemental supports to help them succeed academically. They also focused on students at risk of dropping out or never enrolling, such as orphans, students with disabilities, first-generation school students, and older children.

Building Capacity to Improve Teaching and Learning

Almost all 11 participants enacted social justice by building teacher capacity to serve students. This theme builds on participants' conceptualization of social justice as ensuring marginalized students have access to high-quality education. They believed that good teachers are key to achieving high-quality education. They perceived a "good" teacher as one who could recognize and accept differences in students and meet individual student needs to promote social justice.

As noted in Chapter Two, there are some limiting factors in rural communities, such as untrained and unqualified teachers and participants had to hire locally; to hire

from outside the community would require incentive, and teachers generally want to move to the city and not rural areas in search for jobs. School Leader H explained,

> In rural areas, it's very difficult to get quality teachers because they have been born and brought up and educated in cities. And you take them to a place like Anwar Kot (Pseudonym for the village) and tell them to stay there for six months, and there's no McDonald's, there are no cinemas, and there's no malls, they're not going to stay here because for the same sort of money they would get a good job in the city…[and] they'll get to do more in the city. So, primarily hiring a teaching staff in this area is a problem in a typical rural setting…they (teachers) are not professionally trained [and] they have no interest in teaching. They …mark their attendance [and] have the students copy some work off the board (rote culture).

To counterpoise the limitation of uncertified and untrained teachers, across the analysis, all school leaders incorporated teacher training and workshops and also provided teachers with resources for self-directed learning through technology. These actions promoted social justice in classrooms via teachers who encouraged student participation in discussions and student voices to be heard. School Leader D spoke about the importance of a "good" teacher to nurture students' critical thinking skills and engaging students in learning to improve their academic achievement:

> the critical thing is the teachers, as far as I am concerned. The school is the teacher … we can have a school under a tree as long as we've got a good teacher.

His remarks reflected several participants' belief that teachers play a central role in delivering high-quality education, and this belief turned into action by building teacher capacity to serve students.

Based on interviews and artifacts, it seems all 11 school leaders were improving the quality of classroom instruction with a special focus on removing rote-learning culture from their schools. Participants indicated that rote-learning was limiting because it trained students to memorize and think based on what they had memorized rather than

developing creative and critical thinking skills. School Leader E shared her approach to removing the culture of rote-learning:

> We get them (teachers) away from the rote system …we have mentors … their job is not just a policing role to see who is doing what wrong, but to actually help on the job…or to help teachers with checking copies on how to do it efficiently.

School Leader E found that these practices "helped us to build teacher capacity gaps, and the teacher capacity gaps are huge, we are also hiring from the same crop." School leader E hired teachers from the same community as the students or the "same crop" – implying that teachers probably studied in schools that encouraged rote-memorization instead of conceptual learning. She was cognizant that teaching practices needed to be altered if they were focusing on providing quality education. In response, School Leader E's action and strategy provided training and mentoring for teachers to foster students' critical thinking skills and conceptual learning and refrain from the rote culture.

Across the analysis, school leaders' strategy and action were to build teacher capacity so that the teachers, in turn, could nurture students' critical thinking and independent learning. For example, School Leader C believed in transferring capabilities from the agent (teacher) to the beneficiary (a child) to foster independent learning. She shared:

> my intervention designs are always where you are giving those capabilities transferring it from the agent, whether it's a teacher or whatever it is, that agency goes to the beneficiary totally… the child should understand [concepts] intellectually, emotionally … whatever is needed.

She also explained her concepts of equity with an example,

> If I teach a child a story…two years from now, the child will know how to deconstruct every story and beyond … that child actually becomes capable and doesn't need an intermediary anymore.

She wanted children to be capable of conceptual and independent learning without the help of a teacher in the long run. School Leader E shared her strategy of regular teacher training and focusing on areas that needed special attention. She stated:

> [we] constantly train our teachers… we spend a lot in their training, most stringent … one-month long… summer training … refresher training quarterly…fortnightly lesson planning… training… if they have any problems in, for example, Math, then we will do math training or science or social studies training. We invest a lot.

Another prominent strategy and action for participants in this study was using technology to provide high-quality education. This theme emerged as participants discussed the need for ongoing teacher training and perceived technology as one potential resource to achieve on-the-job training. Most participants were creative and relentless in enhancing the quality of education, and they were building teaching capacity through self-learning options to achieve a quality education. For example, School Leader D, whose school was in a far-flung rural mountainous area, said

> we found this alternative of Khan Academy … an offline version… made specifically for a school like ours. You need to download all of them onto one server. Then you can take the server to your school …computers and devices can connect to it (server) and browse the videos as if you were browsing online …we have installed that in the school in our library…

School Leader D expressed the dual benefit of using technology– teachers could prepare and deliver lessons according to international standards, and students could access additional resources for conceptual clarity on topics taught in class.

Similar to School Leader D, six other participants pointed to increasing access to technology for teachers as a strategy and action for ongoing self-taught support for teaching and conducting lessons. They perceived technology as a vehicle to support and broaden teachers' exposure to teaching methodologies, clarify teachers' concepts on what

they were teaching, and expose them to alternative teaching methods. Additionally, this approach also broadened students' access to a variety of topics beyond their rural community. Four of these seven participants had set up computer labs for students to learn through technology, and teachers could access those labs to prepare lessons and access resources. To build labs and to meet other expenses, school leaders were engaged in constant fundraising through personal connections, event donations, and social media to sustain their schools and increase student resources. They could afford expenses, such as building a computer lab and providing teachers with individual computers/tablets to access resources for self-training and teaching. Participants' goal with the additional technological support was to improve students' literacy and computer skills and also that these skills, in the long run, would considerably increase the students' life odds. In sum, participants' actions of using technology to support teacher/student learning was another vehicle to ensure high-quality education and promote social justice in their schools and classrooms.

Integrating Supplemental Support into the Curriculum for Students with More Needs

Participants took action to promote social justice by providing students with additional support and structure in the curriculum to address marginalized students' individual needs. This theme builds upon participants' conceptualization of social justice as "leveling the playing field" and ensuring that every child, regardless of their identity, is provided with the opportunity to learn skills to make their mark in the world and participate fully in society. The theme of providing supplemental supports also builds on participants' conceptualization of social justice through a relevant and useful curriculum for students in their current and future lives – specifically one that provides skills and

knowledge to pull them out of poverty. To that end, most participants designed interventions based on the perceived needs of students. Some of these actions included (1) *Adapting the Curriculum,* (2) *Finding Ways to Progress Marginalized Students' Education,* and (3) *Providing Students with Quality Vocational Education.*

Adapting the Curriculum. All eleven participants highlighted adjusting the curriculum as a strategy and action to benefit students. This theme emerged when participants spoke about enrolling marginalized students and finding ways to progress their education, extra academic support for first-generation and older students, and teaching students vocational skills as part of their schooling. For example, as mentioned previously, all participants served children who were mainly first-generation students or students living with adults with limited or no formal education. This issue posed concerns, School Leader H explained,

> Teachers complained that children don't do their homework. We teach them something, and then they go home, and they're just running around and playing around.

Parents complained that "you send us home assignments …and we don't know how to deal with these assignments." Teachers, of course, wanted home assignments complete, but most parents were unable to provide children with the support to complete home assignments.

In response, nine of the eleven participants enacted educational equity by providing additional hours of support (before and after school) for students who needed help with assignments or any extra academic service. For example, School Leader D offered "a homework hour … to make them (students) do their homework under the supervision of the teachers. We …take that load from the parents." Similarly, School

Leader H provided daily morning and weekend sessions for students who needed extra help completing assignments. Much like School Leaders D and H, seven other participants provided supplemental supports for first-generation school students to eradicate disparities in academic achievement and work towards equitable support.

Ten of the 11 participants also engrafted content into the curriculum to make it relevant and useful for the students. The question arises, if there is one national curriculum, then how were school leaders choosing what to follow and what not to follow when students eventually must appear for board examinations? As per policy, the national curriculum is the standard curriculum, and the provinces and local regions can modify the curriculum to meet their requirements. This allows for flexibility to adjust the curriculum based on student needs. To that end, participants added elements of student representation (where students' concerns and resolving those issues were discussed) so that students could identify with the stories. For example, six school leaders added storybooks about marginalized children, such as children with special needs or orphans, children who were relentlessly bullied, or children suffering through calamities and natural disasters, etcetera. The stories were building on themes about community support for individuals and encouraging building community, togetherness, and tolerance. In other words, participants engrafted content into the curriculum relevant to the students and communities they were serving.

Participants incorporated tolerance and social cohesion into the curriculum to increase acceptance of diversity as a strategy and action to promote social justice. One such strategy and action was engaging students and teachers in communal practices, such as cooking and eating together, replacing existing practices of intolerance. As mentioned

earlier, some rural communities surrounding Islamabad have diverse ethnic groups and a large concentration of immigrant communities, such as *Pashtuns*, Afghan refugees, internally displaced people - earthquake or flood victims - while the "native" Islamabad population was *Punjabi*. When faced with student divisions, school leaders strategized to promote inclusion through communal practices to break away from habits of intolerance that perpetuated division and marginalization. For example, School Leader F shared a compelling strategy that encouraged inclusion and tolerance. School Leader F said,

> kids would help teachers cook, and they would help distribute food…the older kids used to beat up younger kids, so we would tell the older kids to make sure the younger kids have washed their hands, then give them food, and make sure they have eaten well. So, you know people who eat together stay together.

The goal was to establish an inclusive space through a practice centered on food and coming together with students from diverse backgrounds to share a meal and engage in conversation. School Leader F highlighted that Christian children would be attacked, and other children would call them *kaafir* (infidels). In response, School Leader F gave messages of tolerance in the assembly:

> I said, 'they are *ahl-e-kitab* (people of the book). Allah accepts them.' And then read out one of the *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet) and all that. I told him that if I ever find out that anyone is beating up a Christian child … I am not going to put up with that. So, they all became friends.

This action indicates the boundaries and expectations for equal treatment in school for all children regardless of students' identity. It was also about not accepting this behavior, making it clear that intolerance was not accepted.

School Leader I chose not to use the national curriculum for Islamic studies to build social cohesion and tolerance because the subject content privileged one and marginalized everyone else. He said, "we don't …[want] religious debates in the school

because that creates more friction." This shows that School Leader I was mindful of serving a diverse student population. This was one of his inclusive strategies to create harmony instead of "friction" among different student groups. In sum, all participants engaged in practices that encouraged inclusion and tolerance. Their goal was to make their schools inclusive and safe for the wide range of students they were serving.

Providing Students with Quality Vocational Education. The theme of providing students with quality vocational education was prominent for school leaders in this study. They were supplementing the existing curriculum with an alternative curriculum that included trade skills. This strategy built upon participants' conceptualization of social justice of "leveling the playing field." Participants considered the ground reality that poverty led many children into child labor to earn an income, and they accommodated children accordingly. Some children might have to drop out and, according to school leaders, it was useful to teach them skills alongside academics, such as hairdressing, tailoring, plumbing, etcetera, so they could escape poverty and were more employable. School Leader G highlighted that children living in unsafe environments, such as her students, were prone to become part of gangs, transformed into professional beggars, or forced into other sorts of manual labor. By providing them a safe haven in school and teaching them a skill or craft, School Leader G believed she could enable them to earn a respectful income. For example, School Leader G said,

> my first aim was to fight against poverty …children who won't be able to go for higher education due to their circumstances, so from [grade] 6 to 10 we teach boys plumbing, welding, electric, and to girls [we teach] dressmaking, beautician course, and cooking.

Similarly, School Leader I shared her strategy, "usually after Matriculation or after [Grade] eight… they usually go for different jobs. We teach them vocations also… I

have a stitching school as well…sometimes, I'll ask one of the tailors that we will pay you Rs. 500 just teach them." In a similar manner, School Leader K was "teaching them how to do sales and marketing" within the school. School Leader K said,

> if some children want to work in the canteen, we encourage them to sit in the shop. We tell them that whatever they sell, they will get a commission accordingly… you have to sell things, and then you take your reward.

School Leader K further explained her actions, "we are trying not to just educate the students, but … teach them some skills alongside." In sum, school leaders were teaching students trade skills alongside their basic education to earn a decent income in the future.

Building School-Community Relationship and Keeping Students Safe from Harm

Ten school leaders highlighted the strategy of understanding and engaging the rural community to better serve the marginalized students and build trust to ensure students could attend school and do well. This theme builds upon participants' conceptualization of social justice as supporting students' well-being needs and keeping them safe from harm. Participants shared that the school-community relationship was essential to monitor student well-being at all times, especially after school hours. A common leadership strategy to engage the community was by collaborating with a community "gatekeeper." They referred to community gatekeepers – influential people – to build the school-community relationship. For example, School Leader E, who was school leader for about 25 years and currently leading eight schools in under-resourced communities around Islamabad, shared her strategy of engaging the school community:

> when we enter a community, we do a survey to find out how many households there are, get some social, economic information on each household, size and backgrounds and social income level… then we form a P.T.A., a Parent-Teacher Association.

The P.T.A. head is "one of the more influential persons of the community." Through the P.T.A., the schools collaborate with the community for student well-being. School Leader E highlighted why it was essential to engage the community: "drugs are rampant, and our children need to be safe from drug abuse, someone … steals the hand pump in the community we take the issue to the P.T.A head." To be clear, School Leader E meant that people potentially commit petty thefts, such as stealing a water hand pump with the intention of selling it to purchase drugs. School Leader E concluded, "every problem that we have, we go back to them…community engagement is essential for this kind of community." Almost like School Leader E, School Leader F described the under-resourced rural community she was serving: "it's like a desert, mud huts that are in a bad way… people doing drugs, gambling…it's the most unnerving feeling when you go there." School Leader F strategized ways to engage with the community through working with the community's religious leader, or the community "gatekeeper" contacted and hired him as a school teacher. She shared:

> there was a … [minority religious leader] doing good work. I said, 'look, this (school) is for your community, I do not have any agenda [and] I am not changing anyone…you can teach the kids, I'll give you money.' He was very poor …so I gave him a salary … and I employed his wife …[and] his relatives… I give them books and bags, now my school is in a church … and it has been running for the last four years.

School Leader F's strategy was to involve the community in the school via employment. Her intent for community engagement to promote their overall well-being, she shared, "I wanted the whole community to be involved in this as it was not only for these children."

Eight out of 11 school leaders spoke about influential individuals in the community, such as community leaders and gatekeepers, doubting their schools' mission. Participants noted that it was common for locals to distrust non-natives or foreigners in

close-knit communities due to their suspicion of foreign agendas or planned evangelism, especially since almost all the schools were free to students. The distrust of locals was reflected in statements such as the following from School Leader D:

> *Mullahs* (religious preachers) were against us…there was a lot of propaganda against our school, that this is a school for *yahoodees* (Jews) because we had recruited foreign volunteers, 'they are trying to show our children the wrong path.' Over the years, it has gotten better, but initially, people were a bit reluctant.

School Leader H shared an almost similar experience as School Leader D of initial distrust from the locals and propaganda against his school. He shared:

> people who don't send their children to schools do a lot of propaganda against the schools because they cannot understand that someone is doing it with good intention. They think they are Freemasons or …Christians or … Jews. They have accused me of not being a Muslim as well.

It seemed that locals sometimes resisted sending their children to school because they perceived school as a tool to change them; indoctrinate or evangelize their children. If the community leader or "gatekeeper" announced that the school is not to be trusted, participants had many resulting hurdles to overcome before they could establish a healthy, trustworthy, and collaborative school-community relationship.

School Leader F highlighted a common enactment theme for most participants: building trust and respecting local community traditions and practices. She explained,

> You know this is a very delicate thing that we're treading upon, peoples' ethnic background, their religious beliefs; I don't want to break the fabric of the society. You want a change in the mindset, it takes time …you educate them, and the youth will bring the change.

Other school leaders also emphasized that building trust should be a priority for a justice-driven school leader. For example, School Leader D shared,

> I told them [teachers] very clearly, you will not mess with their cultural beliefs, religious beliefs, because that is a whole can of worms that I do not want to mess

> with…don't …paint a bullseye on your back … that they are trying to modernize our children and they have become *kafir* (infidels).

School Leader D focused on building community trust by providing marginalized students with an education that did not "mess" with their beliefs, tradition, and culture. He refrained from advocating for social change because he was mindful of the resulting resistance the school would face from locals.

School Leader F, who was a school leader in a Christian community, noted the importance of building trust, she stated:

> gain their (Christian community's) trust as then only a school leader can be successful…mostly if a Muslim person comes into their community, the objective is to convert them. I didn't have any agenda like that. I could take a kid from the Christian community and put him in my lap.

Her approach was not to convert the Christians to Islam but to care for them regardless of their religious identity. Findings suggest that the Muslim communities were suspicious of school leaders promoting foreign agendas and evangelism and the Christian community was suspicious of Muslim agendas. Arguably, trust issues were huge and contended if school leaders wanted to enroll students. Over time, School Leader F's natural inclination to accept the community as they were, without ulterior agendas, helped her gain the community's trust. School Leader F stated,

> We celebrate Christmas. I get them presents. They sing hymns *Yasu Maseeh* (Jesus, the Messiah). I am sitting on the ground looking down, and I'm also crossing my hands. This is respect like you are sitting on the floor with them, praying with them. Nothing will happen to me.

She was participating in the community festivities and respecting community traditions. This indicates the expectations for equal treatment and respect for all children.

Across the analysis, school leaders emphasized the importance of understanding the community context to tailor their practices and effectively meet student well-being

needs. School Leader F shared her concern about street gangs and bullies "living in the same vicinity, they (gang members/street bullies) did not want these children to be educated. They wanted these children to work under them…roaming around the streets and doing drugs." In addition, she explained that some students were addicted to drugs. Both school leaders F and E offered healthy after-school activities and clubs for students to protect them from drugs and other forms of abuse prevalent in the communities they were serving. School Leader F enacted justice by protecting children and strategized to create a safe space after school corresponding with the student needs. She had a focus on programming and

> opened up an afterschool health club for them (students) from 3 -5 for two hours … within the school …[offering] healthy activities like taekwondo, cricket.

Likewise, School Leader E shared her strategy:

> [we started a] youth program because I want them to be engaged in more healthy activities, we teach them to use computers, teach them to speak in English…

Their actions to deal with these concerns, similar to four other participants' actions, were shaped by the community and student context. Across the analysis, school leaders believed that if children were safe from harm, then they were in a better place to avail themselves of the educational opportunity they were provided with.

Eight of the 11 school leaders spoke about their long-term goal for the community to see the advantages of education and stop resisting educating their children. Participants expected this change in mindset towards education to take time and realized that there is a process. For example, School Leader J stated, "The last year or so we had no resistance from the parents, except a few. It was like a change of mindset over a very short span of

time." She explained that parents saw the value of educating their children when they would

> see their children (in clean and tidy uniforms) and how well their child is doing (on-stage performances). They used to feel so proud of their [child's] achievements. This change [happened] with time…in the third year, there's a marked change.

Much like School Leader J, School Leader E shared that she witnessed the community's positive change in mindset towards education for girls. She stated,

> changing mindsets, that the school has one of the highest female enrollment rates now. Previously girls would only study till fifth (grade), …[now] the girls wanted to study on [so we] have middle school… [and] just overnight, 24 girls registered …now that number is going up, and they are eager to learn.

In sum, school leaders employed various strategies to build trust, improve the school-community relationship, and collaborate to meet student well-being needs. These strategies effectively brought about a positive change. Over the years, eight participants believed that building trust and respecting the community practices shifted the community mindset positively towards educating their children. From a MM perspective, participants seemed to challenge and influence the community's underlying assumptions and generalizations (MM) about the value of education. Subsequently, influencing and shifting their thinking and behavior or MM towards educating their children.

Meeting Students' Basic Needs. Participants' actions and strategies to meet student's basic needs builds upon their conceptualization of social justice (Question 1). They believed that social justice was only possible if students' well-being needs were met and they were safe from harm. To that end, participants connected with the community and built relationships to meet student's basic needs, and every school leader provided financial support, meals, and groceries to support the students and their families. This

increased the probability of children taking full advantage of the educational opportunities that school leaders were striving to provide.

As mentioned earlier, all 11 participants worked in under-served communities, where families were living in poverty, and largely survived on a daily wage. For example, School leader G discovered "a lot of children don't even get a proper meal when they go home…if they get lunch, it's only *chapati* (bread) with *kava* (black tea) or sometimes with tea (tea with milk)." To meet their immediate needs, School Leader G provided "lunch in school… we [also] distribute… groceries in that area." Similarly, School Leader J offered "food …we have an entire menu for the week… we give them seasonal fruits, egg, and milk every day." Six school leaders served free meals in-school to students to meet their immediate needs (i.e., access to balanced nutrition). Especially during the global pandemic COVID-19, when this study was conducted and schools were closed, all participants supported families struggling to make ends meet by providing them with food rations.

Additionally, schools that charged a nominal fee canceled the student fee. They were also helping educate students and their families on ways to stay safe and providing students with homework assignments to continue with their education from home. School leaders were meeting students' basic needs and their educational needs through such practices, but a byproduct was connecting with the community and building relationships with the community. In other words, this strategy also served as a path to connect with the community. For example, School Leader K said,

> parents get relief from these kinds of practices, and they tell their neighbors that 'they teach our children as well as take care of us.' We deal with them as if they were our family.

According to School Leader K, the approach towards the school community should be one of caring and creating partnerships where the school provides community support and the children with a quality education. In sum, school leaders were proactively finding ways to keep children in school, and students' access to food and fee-waivers was an incentive to encourage families to allow children to continue with their education.

Free Medical Services. One of the compelling strategies that seven school leaders employed was organizing medical services for the entire community. They believed that students and their families needed to be in good health for children to take advantage of the educational opportunity. They spoke about several barriers that low-income rural communities encountered to receive basic medical services, such as traveling great distances to access medical services at a cost that they may not afford. Unfortunately, quality healthcare comes at a great cost, making it available only to those who can afford it. To solve this issue, School Leaders B, C, E, F, G, J, and K collaborated with philanthropist organizations and doctors to provide free basic health care and checkups for their students and school communities. For example, School Leader B said, "our school community receives services such as eye checkups, general checkups; this is all free of cost for them."

Similarly, School Leader F had mobile "medical units which come fortnightly… I had the entire community's eyes checked up and got glasses for the kids who needed them." Four participants collaborated with close friends, school trustees, and other contacts to ensure students and communities are provided with basic health free of charge. For example, School Leader J said, "for the general checkup, we have a trustee. A close friend of his is a doctor." Similarly, school Leader K shared, "a trustee of ours … is

a medical doctor." With these collaborations, school leaders were able to form alliances and meet the medical needs of children and their families.

Child Protection Services. Four school leaders collaborated with organizations that offered child protection. For example, School Leader E said, "a girl was kidnapped a few months ago…we asked *Saahil* to step in, and they did child protection training for us." Almost similarly, School Leader F worked with Child Protection Bureau to investigate "children who are on the streets and who do not go to school…[is] child trafficking going on? … or making a child do too much work or just children who are not going to our school we inform the Child Protection Bureau." Like School Leaders E and F, six other participants collaborated with organizations that provided child protective services to ensure children were safe.

In sum, participants strategized and enacted social justice by forming alliances within the community and with external organizations to provide services to marginalized communities to better meet student well-being needs. They utilized a holistic approach in caring for students and families to ensure students were safe and had access to basic protection and services to enhance their well-being. This helped increase the chances of children enrolling in school and taking advantage of the educational opportunity that school leaders were striving to provide. As a side benefit, in doing so, the medical doctors, specialists, and philanthropists had an opportunity to contribute to where the need was greatest.

Navigating Child Labor and Conservative Mindsets

All participants believed that children should be in school studying; children working at such a young age went against school leaders' MM of social justice and

equity in opportunity. Six participants actively discouraged child labor and were navigating mindsets that didn't view education as a priority. A major challenge for participants was serving low-income rural communities where child labor was common, and both parents and children didn't view education as a priority since money was needed to support the family. At its heart, many community practices and perceptions were rooted in extreme poverty that kept children out of school. For example, School Leader K stated, "we had to go and encourage them [parents] to send their children to school …they would say 'No, it's a waste of time… [if they work] they can earn some money.'" Hence, participants had to proactively find ways to enroll and keep children in school.

Many school leaders spoke about raising awareness about child labor and promoted efforts to combat labor. For example, School Leader I said, "when the girls get a little older… they start working with their mothers where the women are domestic workers." To combat child labor, three study participants were equipping families to help make a living. For example, School Leader B bought sewing machines: "we would give their mothers sewing machines because we were putting their bread earner in the school." The sewing machine was an incentive for mothers to earn "a living … we actually had to purchase seven or eight sewing machines so that we could get started." Four other participants helped families get skills and earn money, so they were motivated to let their children study. Others provided monetary incentives to parents in exchange for sending their children to school.

Three participants faced a similar predicament of wanting to enroll children engaged in labor but approached it differently. They incorporated an afternoon shift for students who were working. School Leader E explained,

> this was part of the need … they have to work; we are certainly not going to take them away from their income earning capacity because how will the family put food on the table?

Much like School Leader E, School Leader J started an afternoon shift "to ensure that if they (children) are working at a certain time then the other half the day they can come to school." In School Leader J's opinion, the afternoon shift ensured that

> if they are working at a certain time, then the other half the day they can come to school…he is washing the car. He is doing this and other stuff, but at least he's getting an education at the same time.

In other words, these participants believed that they could not entirely stop child labor – because of extreme poverty and the families' need for extra income – but they strategized and made accommodations so children could both work and study. These actions highlight school leaders who worked with and adapted to the community context to meet the community's perceived needs to ensure that students could enroll and remain in school.

Another common challenge for participants was navigating conservative mindsets. Participants mostly served conservative patriarchal communities with a low tolerance for male interference with their women and children. For example, School Leader E described the community, "they don't have access (to drinking water and sanitation facilities, essential health services, etcetera) and opportunity (for social and financial mobility, etcetera) to begin with and then, on top of that, they're so conservative that …there is no question of … sending their girls to school." In these settings, school leaders had to take actions for good measure and work within the local-area cultural norm. For example, in communities where girls dropped out after grade 5, some school leaders set up separate class sections for girls to continue studying. They also hired an all-

female staff and teachers to encourage girls' enrollment to motivate the community to send their daughters to school. In the context of this study, most school leaders established schools in communities where patriarchy was prevalent and created oppressive power structures. Therefore, traditional gender roles were more embedded in the community leading to less educational access for girls (Latif, 2009). Additionally, all school leaders served low-income communities, and some were in unsafe neighborhoods where the basic needs of children and security were a social justice issue. Resources were not readily available, for example, access to training or professional development. For school leaders. They seemed to rely on their experiences, values, and assumptions (or their MM) to arrive at decisions that influenced their actions.

Early marriage was also a prevalent concern and a hurdle for participants' efforts to enroll and retain students. Child marriage was a socially welcomed cultural practice in many of these communities. To illustrate the problem, School Leader E shared personal experiences with the custom of early marriage, saying that,

> In our communities, they're married so young…I used to chat with these kids [in grade 2] …And I didn't see this one bright girl, so I asked the teacher …She said, 'Madam, she got engaged.' So, I said, swallowed a couple of times, and then said, okay, she's engaged but not married, so then why did she drop out of school? … 'her fiancé is sitting in grade 5, and he says that she is my fiancée, she would not come to school any longer'…we kept pushing back that girl's marriage till at least fifth grade, and then she did get married. Over there, 12 and 13 are considered too late. I said …How can you get her married off when she hasn't even reached puberty as yet?

School Leader E was actively pushing back the marriage age for some students by making girls critically question the practice and be more aware of their rights. Similarly, School Leader F shared the gravity of the situation where daughters are, at times, sold off because they are considered a burden. She shared:

> She was only 15 years old, her father, a Pashtun man, got her married off to a 60-year-old and the mother-in-law was beating … this girl, and the guy … would tell her to cook, clean his shoes and massage him. The girl ran away and came back to her father …Father said, 'I sold you off, you have to stay. I have another 4-5 children…I can't afford it that's why I got you married off in the first place.'"

School Leader E shared her feelings of encouragement, witnessing a shift in the girls' thinking and behavior (or MM) when they displayed increased awareness and courage to stand up for their rights. According to School Leader E, she felt motivated, "energized, going, and growing" when:

> these girls say, 'we will not get married early. We don't want to have ten children. I mean, that is a palpable change, so it's way beyond just education; we are changing mindsets.

Similarly, School Leaders, A, D, and F, implicitly and explicitly, advocated and made efforts to change mindsets (or MM) by making girls aware of their basic rights, their right to an education, and push-back marriage age. In sum, participants expressed that a change in mindset and the oppressive practice of early marriages would take time. However, they were determined and passionate to bring that social change eventually. These actions and strategies highlight that participants were understanding the community context and shaping their actions according to students' perceived needs.

Summary of Research Question 3

Participants employed various strategies and actions to enhance marginalized students' access to high-quality education that seemed to build upon their conceptualization of social justice as providing marginalized students with equal and quality schooling opportunities. They did this in a few ways, such as: building their schools close to underserved rural communities so marginalized children could attend school; shaping their admission policy to prioritize the admission of marginalized

students; equipping students with job-market skills; providing training and supplemental assistance to improve teacher/student learning and promote social justice in the classrooms, etcetera. Moreover, participants collaborated with the community and external organizations to meet students' basic needs, such as: providing food and rations, fee waivers, transportation, as an incentive to encourage families to prioritize education and allow children to enroll and continue with their education. In sum, school leaders actively and passionately enacted justice by enhancing access of marginalized students to a quality educational opportunity, meeting their well-being needs, and keeping them safe in their rural schools and communities for them to take advantage of the educational opportunity participants were striving to provide.

Chapter 5 - DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter discusses the findings, emerging theory, and implications from my constructivist grounded theory study. Using social justice leadership (Theoharis, 2007a) and mental models (Senge, 2006) as a conceptual framework, the discussion builds on its original purpose: to explore how Pakistani school leaders conceptualize and implement social justice leadership. Based on a purposeful sample of 11 school leaders, the significance of this study is that it gives insight into social, cultural, educational, and religious influences on the conceptualization of social justice and adds to existing research on social justice leadership (SJL) and mental models (MM) in a Pakistani national context. The following three questions guided this study:

1. How do rural primary and secondary private school leaders conceptualize social-justice-oriented leadership to address the educational inequities for marginalized students in Pakistan, e.g., based on gender, socioeconomic status, religion, etcetera?
2. What motivates Pakistani school leaders to transform their schools into (what they view as) socially just schools for marginalized students?
3. What actions and strategies do rural primary and secondary private school leaders utilize to promote social justice in their schools to address the educational inequities for marginalized students in Pakistan?

I interpret and discuss the findings of this study situated in literature, my work experience as a school head, combined with my familiarity of the specific sociocultural context, and Pakistan's National Education Policy (NEP, 2009; 2017). As mentioned earlier, this study draws on Theoharis' (2007) comprehensive list of characteristics of

socially just leaders in the United States for exploring the conceptualization, strategies, and actions of my study participants. Theoharis' SJL characteristics (2007), although in a different national context, were used as a starting point to compare and build theory on SJL within the Pakistani context. However, this work recognizes that participants' MM (values, beliefs, experiences, assumptions, generalizations, etcetera) were constructed within the sociocultural context of Pakistan and influenced by values, structures, and philosophies that are different from the Western world. Accordingly, participants' MM likely influenced how they conceptualized and enacted justice and equity for marginalized students.

The following section gives a summary of key findings and emerging theory from this study. Next, I discuss each research question related to the key findings, followed by a discussion of this study's emerging grounded theory that builds on extant literature and findings from this study. Finally, I offer implications for research and practice and make recommendations for areas of future research.

Summary of Key Findings and Emerging Theory

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that participant school leaders conceptualized social justice as (1) delivering high-quality education to marginalized students; (2) fostering their critical thinking skills; (3) meeting their welfare needs; and (4) providing a safe school environment. Similar to existing literature, participants perceived social justice through the lens of equality and equal opportunity in education and society for all children; they considered students, regardless of their background, as equals academically, but recognized certain students were not on a level playing field (Theoharis, 2007; Williams, 2018). However, participants sometimes sent out mixed

messages indicating conflicting MM of social justice. For instance, they spoke about children being academically and socially equal. Still, some participants also believed that their students had no existing knowledge or goals of value (discussed in the section on emerging theory).

Furthermore, similar to the existing literature of SJL, study participants valued diversity and extended cultural respect to all students (Sainz & Jacott, 2020; Theoharis, 2007, 2009). That is to say, participants valued learning about the diverse student culture and established respectful behavior within schools with clear expectations of non-discrimination ethnic and religious minorities. For instance, participants set expectations for both teachers and students that discrimination based on labels was unacceptable, such as discrimination based on student's ethnicity, class, gender, disability, religion, etcetera. In this regard, it seems that the way leaders conceived of SJL or social justice, more broadly, is similar across settings, despite the different social and cultural contexts of each country.

Participants in this study were internally motivated to transform their schools into (what they considered) socially just schools for marginalized students. They shared salient and challenging experiences of growing up with role models and witnessing disparities between their privilege and what others could access that developed within them MM of strong philanthropic values, a utopic vision for society, feelings of empathy, and a belief in giving back to society. Their experiences prompted them to address educational inequities in opportunities for marginalized students. Participants' motivation factors were consistent with their strategies and actions promoting social justice, showing the alignment in their MM of social justice and promoting social justice.

Participants' actions and strategies to promote social justice built on their awareness of social inequality in education and other areas of marginalized students' lives. For example, they observed educational inequities due to social class, conservative and patriarchal norms, unsafe conditions in underserved communities, etcetera, which compounded marginalized children's hurdles. As such, participants put their views of justice into social action by setting up schools in underserved rural communities to enhance marginalized student access to quality education. They also worked to promote child safety by providing special assistance to at-risk students, meeting their well-being needs, and creating a school atmosphere that fostered a sense of belonging for all students. They also enacted social justice by enrolling and retaining marginalized students in school by adjusting admission policy and curriculum and providing students with supplemental supports to help them succeed academically.

Finally, the emerging theory from this C-GT study is a five-step theoretical model illustrating the relevance of MM to participants' conceptualization, motivation, actions, and strategies of (what they viewed as) SJL to address the educational inequities for marginalized students in Pakistan:

- Mental models influence school leaders' views and actions to promote social justice
- Mental models of social justice as an equitable opportunity in society for all
- Mental models of social justice in education as equitable access to high-quality education with personal consideration for all children
- Mental models of social justice leadership as raising students' critical awareness, so they question and dismantle oppressive power structures

- Mental models of leadership as leading from a position of power with an adult-centered, hierarchical, and savior approach

All five steps of the theoretical model illustrate the influence of participants' MM on their thoughts and processes of SJL. The first four steps are largely congruent with extant literature on MM and SJL. However, step five focuses on participants' conflicting MM of leading from a position of power with an adult-centered[20], hierarchical, and "savior-like"[21] leadership philosophy that is different from Western literature that emphasizes the process of SJL as democratic and encourages student voice and agency (Leadership & 2004, 2004; Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005). Thinking of participants' conflicting MM of social justice, some of their conceptualization also seemed counterproductive and problematic to their cause of promoting social justice. It seemed that limited formal training in leadership – specifically limited training about equity and social justice – coupled with sociocultural norms shaped their conflicting MM of leadership.

Yet, school leaders' seemingly contradictory MM of social justice was consistent with Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions (2014) that posits individuals are highly unlikely to pursue goals that contradict or question the larger societal group norms and oppressive structures. Pakistan's low score on Hofstede's *individualism* and *indulgence* dimension indicates a collectivist and restrained society where individuals feel highly restrained in their actions by societal expectations (Hofstede, 2014). Similarly, in my study, adults and school leaders were authority figures based on societal group norms.

[20] believing that adults inherently know better than children
[21] the need to save people by solving their problems

Students were restrained by societal and group expectations not to contradict or question their decisions. Although, when viewed from a SJL lens, school leaders MM of leading from a position of power with an adult-centered, hierarchical, and savior approach reproduces an oppressive structure that is problematic because it implicitly sends messages of expecting conformity and silent obedience that disempowers students.

This section summarized the key findings and emerging theory from this study. I now discuss each of my research questions in more detail, synthesize my findings, and situate them in the existing literature. Following that, I discuss the emerging grounded theory from this study in relation to MM and social justice leadership.

RQ1. Participants' Conceptualization of Social-Justice Leadership

How do rural primary and secondary private school leaders conceptualize social-justice-oriented leadership to address the educational inequities for marginalized students in Pakistan, e.g., based on gender, socioeconomic status, religion, etcetera?

The findings of this study suggest that school leaders predominantly conceptualized social justice in education as *all* children having access to high-quality education and opportunity, including marginalized groups based on gender, SES, ethnicity, belief, caste, origin, and age. All 11 participants' conceptualization of social justice seemed to be rooted in their MM shaped by their backgrounds, upbringing, experiences, beliefs, and values combined with their awareness and concerns about educational access disparities. Notably, study participants rarely used the terms "social justice, "equity," and "inclusion." However, during the interviews, participants expressed an understanding of social justice and their concern about children from marginalized groups by using terms such as "fair," "equal opportunity," and "enabling education."

Additionally, they described high-quality education as one that encouraged marginalized students to critically question and challenge oppressive structures and narratives that contribute to their marginalization (e.g., breaking barriers based on gender or class) and helping students live better lives and contribute more fully to society.

A noticeable difference between this study and Theoharis' study (2009) was that his participants identified as leaders of social justice, while participants in this study did not claim to be or identify themselves as leaders of social justice. Participants identified as a far more humble identity of providers of educational opportunities and wraparound services for marginalized children who would otherwise struggle to access schooling. They understood social justice as offering marginalized students learning opportunities that would help them climb out of intergenerational poverty, such as teaching students trade skills so they could earn decent wages as adults. They felt educational justice raised students' critical consciousness of oppressive and marginalizing structures, so that they were equipped to recognize, address, and dismantle these structures.

Moreover, this study found that all study participants weren't overtly advocating for change or raising students' critical consciousness to combat deeply embedded structures like patriarchy, or the culture of early marriages, etcetera. Instead, participants were cognizant of the norms and traditions of the rural communities and strategized interventions to avoid creating community alarm and student dropout. Some participants worked to raise students' awareness of their constitutional rights and oppressive structures that create factors surrounding their marginalization. And, eventually, by trying to foster critical consciousness, they were equipping students to combat deeply rooted structures that created inequities and worked to marginalize them. Participants believed

that students would bring about social change by breaking down the oppressive and marginalizing structures prevalent in society. Reflecting the belief of a majority of participants, School Leader F shared:

> You know this is a very delicate thing that we're treading upon, peoples' ethnic background, their religious beliefs; I don't want to break the fabric of the society. You want a change in the mindset; it takes time …you educate them, and the youth will bring the change.

Participants' views on social justice are comparable to research studies in the West that find social justice leaders enable students to develop critical awareness to recognize and address oppressive structures and marginalization factors that create inequities (D. DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014a; Dillard, 1995; McKenzie et al., 2008; Theoharis, 2007a).

For many people, education is the key to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (U.S. Declaration of Independence 1776). However, some scholars argue that the education system is used as a tool to maintain the oppressive socio-political order (Jemal, 2017; Matthews, 2004), and this could be the case in Pakistani classrooms where rote memorization and regurgitating information is encouraged (Shaheen, 2011). Studies indicate education as a tool to perpetuate societal imbalances through rote learning and memorization that transmit tacit messages to students about attitudes and values of the social hierarchy and (Lord, 2017). For instance, a working-class education in Pakistan emphasizes rote learning and passive obedience, while the elite are provided with an education that conveys the values of leadership and autonomy. Participants in this study, similar to research, believed in raising critical consciousness[22] of inequities and

[22] Critical consciousness refers to the ways in which individuals come to understand and challenge oppressive social forces (Clark & Seider, 2012)

oppressive norms so students could resist them and discouraged practices like rote memorization; otherwise, they shared, the result is inequity spreading through individuals and systems in perpetuity (Jemal, 2017).

Ultimately, all participants shared a similar MM of social justice based on their efforts to foster students' critical awareness and consciousness, but they used different approaches. For example, four primary school leaders exposed children to art, educational field trips to literary festivals, puppet shows, etcetera, outside the rural community to pique their curiosity. School Leader A, an all-girls secondary school leader, being mindful of the extreme conservative and patriarchal nature of the rural community where she worked, believed that students' critical consciousness could be fostered through dialog. As a leader, she nurtured dialog with students in hallways and encouraged teachers to foster students' critical consciousness and curiosity about their social worlds through dialog in classrooms. This approach is similar to Western research that suggests students become critically curious about their social world by engaging in conversation and dialog (Freire, 1970). Through this process, people become more aware and start to understand oppressive structures and systems and are motivated to challenge these oppressions (Freire, 1970). Several scholars (for eg., Freire, 1970; Lewis, 2012; Seider et al., 2017) consider critical curiosity[23] a key catalyst and precursor to developing critical consciousness. Freire (1970) argues that critical curiosity should be fostered for students to become critically conscious. Therefore, as supported by literature, participants piquing students' curiosity could lead to planting the seed of critical consciousness.

[23] the eagerness to learn more about and develop a deep understanding of issues of social justice (Clark & Seider, 2012; Shor, 1992)

Moreover, to develop students' critical consciousness, School Leader A, an all-girls secondary school leader, valued engrafting local literature into the syllabus, literature students could relate to and identify with. She encouraged teachers to critically review the literature in class with students to raise students' critical consciousness. The special focus could be because School Leader A's school was in a far-flung and patriarchal rural area with fewer opportunities for educational excursions, such as literary festivals and puppet shows. Critical conversations and literature were also a more feasible way to raise female students' critical consciousness in a highly patriarchal culture where girls were not expected to roam freely in public spaces. As such, excursions outside school raised community concerns about the school's mission of "modernizing" girls that goes against the nature of the patriarchal and conservative norms of the rural community. In other words, the leader found ways to raise students' critical consciousness while working around sociocultural norms and trying to avoid creating community alarm.

All 11 participants also demonstrated a disposition of care and concern for students and saw child well-being as their conceptualization of social justice and as a social justice objective (Dillard, 1995; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004). Participants worried about how systems and institutions serve people unequally; they were serving rural communities where there was a dearth of health care and economic opportunity, along with prevalent educational injustices that put marginalized children at risk of dropping out or never enrolling in school. As mentioned earlier, they conceptualized social justice in education as all children having access to high-quality education, as supported by the National Education Policy (2009). However, in practice, universal access was not the case. Ideally, they believed that the state should create the conditions

of a just society and that institutions should help citizens experience the state's vision of a just society. They sought to make the spirit of a just society a reality, even without any systemic or institutional support. They sought to change others' lives for the better by providing them with an equitable educational opportunity that they believed students deserved but were deprived of.

Additionally, participants' understanding of social justice as taking on a caring approach that responds to the needs of children, such as providing them with a nutritious breakfast at school, is also supported by research (Clothier, 2020; McIsaac et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2003). Studies find that a description of social justice includes adequate nutrition, education, opportunity, security, health care, and loving relationships. In other words, children do not starve and are not continuously abused. This allows children to participate actively in school (Clothier, 2020; Spencer et al., 2019; Smith, 2003).

Participants also shared salient and challenging experiences that seemed to shape their MM of social justice in education, especially experiences they found to be the most significant, such as coming close to death, losing a loved one, the influence of role models, or witnessing profound disparities in accessing basic rights. Participants felt they added meaning to their lives by serving the common good and "giving back" to marginalized people. Based on this study's findings, it is highly likely that these salient and challenging experiences, in part, served as turning points and seemed to shape participants' MM, or how they consciously and unconsciously gave meaning to an experience and reacted to situations to promote social justice. Overall, my findings indicate that participants' MM of social justice were influenced by salient and challenging experiences, philanthropic values, witnessing inequities, and a disposition of care and

concern for marginalized communities. Subconsciously, there were probably multiple factors motivating participants to promote social justice.

School leaders also shared some problematic conceptualizations of their leadership roles while serving marginalized students, such as an adult-centered, hierarchical, and savior-like approach. Their MM of decision-making as school leaders to address inequities and issues of social justice seemed to include adults but not students. In the cultural context of Pakistan, adults, parents, and school leaders are viewed and act as authorities. Here, the leaders' MM of SJL as adult-centered were congruent with and influenced by the cultural and social hierarchy in place. However, when viewed from the Western perspective of social justice leadership, not adapting an inclusive decision-making approach and excluding students is problematic and disempowering students; it keeps marginalized students in a weak position in relation to other actors, such as school leaders, teachers, and school community, and added to student marginalization. For example, eight participants made statements similar to the following by School Leader J, "[students are like] blank slates…an empty canvas that is sent to you to paint as you like." Most participants expressed a belief that children had no existing knowledge of value to better their lives. In sum, participants had inconsistent views of social justice and sent out mixed messages: they believed and worked towards students' critical consciousness so students could challenge oppressive structures, and, at the same time, their adult-centered, hierarchical, and savior-like approach created an oppressive power structure that diminished student voice and agency.

RQ2. Participants' Motivation to Promote Social Justice

What motivates Pakistani school leaders to transform their schools into (what they view as) socially just schools for marginalized students?

The majority of school leaders demonstrated internalized motivation to promote social justice and increase educational opportunities. It seemed participants' values and beliefs in a fair, equitable, and just society, consciously and subconsciously, developed their MM of social justice. In other words, participants' philanthropic values and a strong belief in giving back to marginalized communities seemed to serve as motivation and developed their MM of leadership for social justice. Studies find that leaders' personal beliefs and values (or mental models) are significant in advocates of social justice (Brown, 2004; Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005; Preskill & Brookfield, 2009; Wang, 2018). For example, school leaders transform their democratic values to promote greater student engagement and the need for democratic participation in decision-making to ensure all voices are heard (Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005).

As discussed in Chapter Four, a few participants shared the influence of close family members who were their role models and significant contributors towards social justice in their communities. It seemed participants learned how to conceptualize social justice from witnessing their role models promoting the well-being of vulnerable populations to contribute positively and sustainably to society over time, which motivated them to do something about it. As Benjamin Franklin once said, "Tell me, and I forget, teach me, and I may remember, involve me, and I learn." Their role models were thoughtful mentors who exemplified the values of contribution to their community.

Growing up in close contact with these role models, participants also recognized the need for practical assistance and felt responsible for contributing to their community.

These finding is consistent with both Lawson's (1999) and Srivastava's (2006) study that finds school leaders' role and actions are embedded in their MM that they acquire through years of deeply ingrained beliefs, values, and traditions. Their MM were partly acquired through intergenerational transfers of beliefs and values and partly through experiences and learning (Srivastava, 2006). Similarly, Theoharis (2008) finds evidence that equity-oriented family, friends, and community motivated his study participants to further justice and equity in their work. A few of Theoharis' (2008) study participants were involved in social justice activism alongside their parents and siblings when they were young. In both contexts, my study and Theoharis' study, social responsibility and taking action to make the world a more just place was somewhat of a family expectation (Theoharis, 2008). However, the participants in this study did not necessarily come from families involved in education but chose this "service" profession. Other studies, though not directly linked to school leaders, reveal that people who promote social justice by donating their time, money, and efforts are motivated by the influence of other individuals who donate (Amos, 1982; Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011). Bekkers and Wiepking (2011b) find evidence that observing others making donations can influence other people to give their time, money, effort, etcetera. In sum, the impact of mentors and role models seemed to play a key role in developing school leaders' focus on social justice in a Pakistani context and Western studies.

Participant school leaders' sense of obligation to serve marginalized students in part was the influence of religion. Religious values and beliefs seemed to motivate

participants to promote social justice. Several participants spoke with a firm conviction that their work to promote social justice was a form of religious obligation. They were answerable for their actions on the day of judgment. For instance,

> In various places, the Quran (central religious text of Islam) mentions promoting justice, in your relationships, with people, and everything, with your job…it states in the Quran to be good with people, this is a basic foundation, *Haqooq Al Ibad*[24]…you will be asked about it on the day of judgment.

Following such religious teachings and values, participants wanted to combat injustices and not passively accept marginalized community suffering. Another participant echoed the same belief, "there is a purpose of life, and we are sent to this earth for a purpose, and we have to answer Allah on the day of judgment…when Allah asks … what have you done for my poor people?" Providing vulnerable people with high-quality educational opportunity was her way of fulfilling her religious obligation. Several participants also shared that their religion encouraged tolerance of other faiths and identities, and they were promoting their religious beliefs by raising awareness and tolerance in their schools. In sum, most participants' religious beliefs and values influenced their motivation to promote social justice. This finding echoes Baig's (2011) study in a Pakistani context, where PSL's religious values and beliefs guided their decision-making processes, and he perceived his school leadership as a devoted service to God. These findings also overlap with Western literature on the influence of faith increasing individuals' awareness and belief in promoting social justice (Berger, 2006; Schuyt et al., 2004). Berger (2006) and

[24] *Haqooq al ibad* is a foundational requirement of being a good Muslim which is to keep in mind rights of other people or ensuring the due rights of specific individuals for example parents, spouses, children, neighbors and other Muslims

Schuyt et al. (2004) find evidence that religion influences philanthropic belief and behavior in individuals.

Further, participants witnessed inequities resulting from marginalizing factors, such as SES, gender, and region, or they suffered inequity in opportunity due to being marginalized. Their heightened sense of awareness of injustices in society also served as underlying motivation to enact social justice in education. Participants were aware that millions of children were denied their right to quality education. Their access to quality education may mean the difference between being marginalized for life or actively participating in society. As mentioned earlier, participants had a utopic vision for society, and witnessing injustices and inequities in education and other spheres of life cemented their commitment to do their bit in creating a more just and fair society.

Although not directly related to the cause of education, some studies suggest that people who have personally suffered or had close ones suffering from certain concerns may be more generous to that cause (Bekkers, 2008; Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011). For example, research finds evidence that people who have a pet may generously contribute to animal welfare and not others (Bennett & Blaney, 2003), or people suffering from a certain disease are more likely to support others touched by that disease and donate more generously to help end that disease. Further, Simon (1997) notes that media attention to a certain calamity, such as an earthquake, is positively related to individual contributions. Moreover, the perceived innocence of the recipient increases the willingness to give (Leeuwen & Wiepking, 2013). In the case of this study, participants' awareness of the educational need of vulnerable people in Pakistan, either witnessing or personally

suffering from educational inequities, in part, seemed to contribute to participants' motivation to serve marginalized communities and give back to society.

In addition, critical, salient, and challenging experiences, such as coming close to death or losing a loved one, made participants recognize their need to give back and add meaning to their lives. These experiences enhanced participants' motivation to offer educational opportunities and services to marginalized children who would otherwise struggle to access school. Similarly, research demonstrates the influence of critical experience as formative in developing a social justice orientation (Caldwell, 2010; Goodman, 2011; Pepin, 2015). Caldwell and Vera (2010) posit that the occurrence of several types of critical incidents serves as life-changing moments and develops individuals' orientation towards social justice (Caldwell & Vera, 2010). In my study, critical incidents served as turning points for a few participants to transform their schools into what they considered socially just schools for marginalized students and their communities.

RQ3. Participants' Actions and Strategies to Promote Social-Justice

What actions and strategies do rural primary and secondary private school leaders utilize to promote social justice in their schools to address the educational inequities for marginalized students in Pakistan?

My findings show no major differences in the actions and strategies of social justice leaders between this study and previous studies. These correlations illustrate that themes of school leaders enacting social justice are similar, to a large degree, across contexts and justice as a common, cross-cultural value despite the different social and national cultural contexts. Moreover, the actions and strategies of school leaders to work

towards more equitable education appeared to be grounded in their conceptualization of social justice. However, there are a few differences due to the context the leaders worked in. In the next few paragraphs, I will discuss similarities and differences in the actions and strategies of socially just school leaders in this study and previous studies.

Arguably, this study found congruency between how social justice leaders are described by Theoharis (2007) and participants in this study. Many of my findings also line up with other Western studies on the actions and strategies of socially just leaders (Bogotch, 2002; Cambron-McCabe, 2006; D. DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014b; Odekirk, 2010). For instance, as in previous studies, participants in this study also promoted equitable treatment for marginalized students by trying to secure greater access to educational and social opportunities similar to those of their privileged peers (Cambron-McCabe, 2006; Odekirk, 2010; Theoharis, 2007). They worked to level the playing field for marginalized students by providing additional supports to help them overcome unique challenges and barriers, for example, gaps in academic achievement. Leaders also sought to strengthen basic education and adapted the curriculum to make it inclusive for all students (Bogotch, 2014; DeMatthews et al., 2015; Theoharis, 2007, 2009). Similar to existing research, participants strategized to promote social justice by creating a welcoming and inclusive school environment that promoted communal harmony, such as cooking and eating together, celebrating special days, etcetera. As one school leader stated,

> people who eat together stay together. We brought in social justice by celebrating teachers' day, universal students' day… celebrating all the days that all the world celebrates… Through practices, we broke those existing practices (of separation).

In short, leaders aimed for practices that included and engaged *all* students, despite their differences, to promote harmony and unity and bring children together.

Leaders in this study, like previous research, wanted students to succeed and had high expectations for each child (Theoharis, 2007a, 2010b). School leadership was more than a career for them; their lives were tied to the success and welfare of the students. To that end, participants employed strategies to combine structures for more equitable access to important student resources. For example, similar to existing research in a Pakistani context (see Salfi, 2011; Qutoshi & Khaki, 2014), school leaders in my study prioritized professional development for teachers. Participants collaborated with well-established schools or teacher training establishments to provide professional development for teachers free of charge, so students had qualified teachers. They also worked with teachers to implement differentiation and adaptation to bridge performance gaps, recognizing that every student has individual needs (Cambron-McCabe, 2006; Theoharis, 2007; Odekirk, 2010). Participants recognized that differentiation is a tool that enables all students to succeed together. As such, school leaders enacted justice by incorporating programs, such as extra academic support, to extend the knowledge and skills of every student in every class, regardless of their starting point.

Also, participants' actions and strategies focused on non-academic strategies so families could make education a priority, such as changing admission criteria to focus on enrolling marginalized students and providing wraparound services. This was because participants noticed that education was not a priority for many low-income communities (Kurtz-Costes & Mahoney, 1997; Lee & Bowen, 2006). Education was not a priority, at times, due to low SES and because child labor was so deeply ingrained in the culture that

both parents and children did not consider education necessary for the well-being of children. In many cases, education was not a priority because of poverty; parents' income was insufficient to support the family, and they relied on children's income for survival. Also, as the findings revealed, some of these rural areas were largely underserviced with basic needs and had no schools where children could enroll. To that end, school leaders promoted social justice by setting up schools in low-resourced rural areas to ensure marginalized children could attend school, started afternoon classes for students who had to work, and also offered parents ways to earn extra income so children would not drop out (e.g., providing sewing machines).

Another non-academic strategy, similar to existing studies, was participants actively establishing relationships with key stakeholders, such as community leaders, to meet their social justice objectives (Cambron-McCabe, 2006; Odekirk, 2010; Theoharis, 2007). Knowing the students, parents of students, and the larger community personally and building trust was important for most participants. Studies in a Pakistani context also indicate school leaders' successful practices include collaborating with key stakeholders, parents, and the community to build a culture of trust and school-community collaboration (Salfi, 2011; Qutoshi & Khaki, 2014). Moreover, several Western researchers also note that establishing relationships with community members is important for social justice leaders (Budge, 2006; Cuervo, 2016; Maxwell et al., 2014; Shields, 2004). Participants in this study recognized that some community leaders could assist them in engaging the rest of the community in their student education plans and demonstrate the value of education, etcetera. Also, through these relationships, school leaders were able to develop plans with the consent of the larger community and families.

Finally, through community collaborations, leaders could better ensure the safety of children, meet their perceived needs, and provide wraparound services, such as medical services, nutritious food, etcetera, so that children could benefit from the educational opportunity provided to them.

This study's results indicated that participants were responding to Maslow's five-tier motivational theory of human needs. Leaders' MM to promote social justice started with meeting students' physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization by achieving their full potential, for example, through getting an education to pursue their talent. Additionally, as social justice theorist Lee Anne Bell (1997) stated, "the goal of social justice is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs." In this way, participants' MM of social justice in education seemed similar to Western literature on SJL that meets student needs by establishing and maintaining support networks in the community based on group participation (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Theoharis, 2007a).

Further, a difference in my study with existing literature was that participants were not specifically training teachers to recognize the labels and categories by which some people marginalize others, such as race, class, and gender, that might create barriers to equity (Shields, 2010; Theoharis, 2007b). This could be because a majority of teachers belonged to the same communities as students. Therefore, school leaders may have assumed teachers to be aware of these labels by which students are often marginalized. However, when a discriminating incident occurred, such as ethnic or religious discrimination, leaders made it clear during morning assembly to both teachers and

students that discrimination based on labels was unacceptable, such as discrimination based on student's ethnicity, race, gender, religion, etcetera.

Another difference between the actions of leaders in my study compared to the Western literature of SJL was that participants in my study were not seeking support from like-minded school leaders (see Cambron-McCabe, 2006; Odekirk, 2010; Theoharis, 2007). Leaders seemed to rely more upon their MM of leadership, or a combination of personal values, beliefs, and experiences, to inform their school leadership practices. This may seem surprising since participants spoke of leadership challenges, the struggle of school management, lack of resources and trained teachers, and the ever-present financial constraints as emotionally overwhelming and debilitating. For example, School Leader B reflected, "nobody supported me in this cause I started getting emotionally drained, and when you start getting emotionally drained, you can't really get anything else done." Similarly, School Leader E stated, "one of my biggest challenges … that I struggled with …[was] not much support." As supported in the literature, mentors or like-minded leaders in similar situations may offer school leaders the opportunity to understand challenging issues and manage daily leadership challenges better (Cambron-McCabe, 2006; Odekirk, 2010; Theoharis, 2007). School leaders in this study wanted support from like-minded school leaders. However, they could not access that support because there was no established platform where they could come together to collaborate and offer leadership support.

This study's results indicated that participants are responding to Maslow's five-tier motivational theory of human needs. Leaders' MM to promote social justice started with meeting students' physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs,

esteem needs, and self-actualization by achieving their full potential, for example, through getting an education to pursue their talent. Additionally, as social justice theorist Lee Anne Bell (1997) stated, "the goal of social justice is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs." In this way, participants' MM of social justice in education seemed similar to Western literature where SJL also meets student needs by establishing and maintaining support networks in the community based on group participation (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006; Theoharis, 2007a).

To this point in the chapter, I have focused on discussing the findings from this study and situated them in related literature. I highlighted study participants' MM that inform their conceptualization, motivation, strategies, and actions of SJL in the context of rural private primary and secondary schools in Islamabad. In the next section, I focus on the emerging theory from this study, utilizing concepts from MM to explore how participants conceptualized and enacted social justice leadership in a Pakistani rural private school context.

Emerging Grounded Theory

Glaser and Strauss (1967) posit that the purpose of GT is to generate theory that identifies concepts and categories that could then be linked to theoretical models (Corbin & Strauss, 2012; Glaser & Strauss, 1967b). The emerging theory from my study builds on existing literature on SJL and MM and is grounded in school leader participants' MM of SJL in the context of private school leadership in rural Islamabad. As noted in my literature review, there is a wide variation in how people describe and enact social justice leadership (Bogotch, 2002; Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Dillard, 1995; G. Furman, 2012;

Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Theoharis, 2007a). Studies find evidence that individuals' values, beliefs, and experiences influence their behavior and is formative in developing a social justice orientation (Caldwell & Vera, 2010; Goodman, 2011; Pepin, 2015). In consideration of the results of this study, the emerging five-step theoretical model (see Figure 4) illustrates the influence of MM to participants' conceptualization, motivation, actions, and strategies of (what they viewed as) social justice and social justice leadership This study offers MM as a lens to understand school leaders views of justice and equity and how they subsequently enacted social justice to address inequities prevalent in their schools and communities to support marginalized students. In other words, their conceptualization and actions of SJL were based on their MM or their experiences, beliefs, values, and assumptions of justice and equity. Moreover, MM was an appropriate lens to explore school leaders' views of SJL due to unique education policies and procedures, sociocultural hierarchies, oppressive structures, and, specific to a Pakistani context, school leaders, for the most part, do not have the basic school leadership training to serve marginalized students in a rural setting.

The first four steps identify concepts connecting participants' MM and its influence on SJL. The fifth step in the theoretical model focuses on participants' conflicted MM of social justice that diverges from existing literature on SJL.

- Mental models influence school leaders' views and actions to promote social justice
- Mental models of social justice as an equitable opportunity in society for all
- Mental models of social justice in education as equitable access to high-quality education with personal consideration for all children

- Mental models of social justice leadership as raising students' critical awareness, so they question and dismantle oppressive power structures
- Mental models of leadership as leading from a position of power with an adult-centered, hierarchical, and savior approach

Based on the results of this study, step one of the emerging theoretical model provides insight into participants' MM influencing (what they viewed as) social justice. Participants' MM of social justice were likely influenced by role models, religion, witnessing inequities, and critical incidents, such as exposure to injustices in education, work, etcetera. School leaders' MM comprised philanthropic values, religious beliefs, and a strong belief in giving back to marginalized communities. These values and beliefs or MM motivated participants to promote social justice by creating greater opportunities for marginalized students to access high-quality education and fulfill their need to "give back" to society. Baig's (2011) study in a Pakistani context demonstrates the influence of school leaders' values and beliefs to interpret the situations and guide their leadership decision-making processes. Extant Western literature also finds evidence that personal beliefs and values (or mental models) are significant in advocates and leaders of social justice (Brown, 2004; Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005; Preskill S. & Brookfield, 2009; Wang, 2018). Berger (2006) and Schuyt et al. (2004) posit that philanthropic values and behavior in individuals are influenced by faith. In sum, step one of the emerging theoretical model suggests that participants' MM influenced their notions of social justice and also cemented their commitment to creating a more just, equal, and fair society.

Next, step two of the emerging model highlights participants' overall MM of social justice as equity and opportunity for *all* in society, including marginalized children.

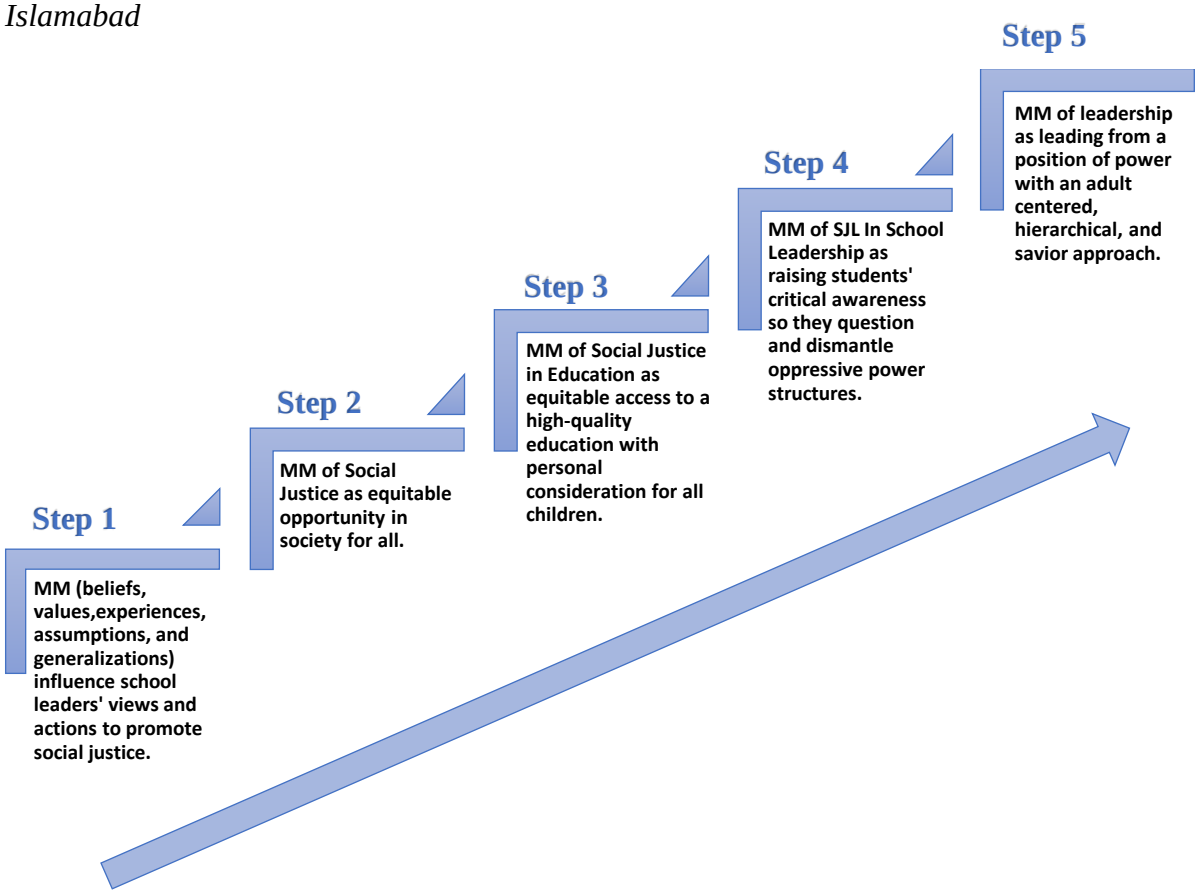
Participants' MM of social justice was through the lens of equality and equity in opportunity for *all* children in society, including marginalized children. They envisioned creating a more just and equitable society by providing high-quality education that encouraged marginalized students to be critically aware to question and combat oppressive societal structures that contribute to their marginalization, such as gender or class barriers, and helping students contribute more fully to society. Similarly, existing Western literature demonstrates that school leaders with a social justice orientation recognize the inequity towards marginalized student groups and take actions that eliminate those inequities (Bogotch, 2002; Cole, 2015; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014b; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Furman, 2012; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Ruff & Shoho, 2005).

Following this, step three of the emerging model builds on participants' MM of social justice that influenced their actions and strategies to promote social justice in education. Such as providing marginalized children with (what they perceived as) high-quality education while consideration for students' individual needs. Step three is supported by literature that highlights understanding and meeting students' personal needs so that they can take advantage of educational opportunities to promote social justice (Theoharis, 2007). Further, this study's results indicated that participants responded to Maslow's five-tier motivational theory of human needs. Leaders' MM to promote social justice started with meeting students' physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization by achieving their full potential, for example, through getting an education to pursue their talent. Further, as social justice theorist Lee Anne Bell (1997) stated, "the goal of social justice is full and

equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs." Based on the results of this study, participants' MM to get students to the point of achieving their potential influenced their actions and strategies.

Figure 4

Mental models framing the five-step emerging grounded theory on social justice leadership in the context of primary and secondary private school leadership in rural Islamabad



Next, step four of the emerging model indicates participants' MM of social justice in education emphasized raising students' critical awareness and consciousness[25] so they could break free from the oppressive structures and claim more agency. Study

[25] critical consciousness is described by Brazilian philosopher-educator Paulo Freire (1970, 1998) as the ways in which individuals come to understand and take action against systems of oppression

participants focused on marginalizing conditions, and they encouraged students to think, question critically, and combat the oppressive sociocultural norms and fight for their educational rights as well as their basic human rights in the future. Western-based literature on SJL is largely congruent with the findings of this study in rural Islamabad. It encourages students to become critically aware of oppressive structures and marginalizing factors that create inequities (McKenzie et al., 2008; Theoharis, 2007).

Finally, step five of the emerging theoretical model indicates participants' conflicted and problematic MM of leadership as adult-centered, hierarchical, and savior-like. As mentioned earlier, step five diverges from existing literature on SJL that stresses the empowerment of all actors through participation (Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Odekirk, 2010; Theoharis, 2007a) and the results of this study show that children, while receiving the perceived benefits and support, had little said in what those benefits would entail.

Setting aside Western research on social justice, the emerging theory from my study explains that participants' adult-centered and hierarchical MM of SJL was, in part, influenced by culture and societal norms. When viewed from a Pakistani sociocultural perspective, expectations and pressures in society impact the role of school leaders and change PSLs' behavior and strategies (Simkins et al., 1998)An adult-centered, hierarchical, and savior view of leadership echoes the sociocultural order of Pakistani society. These perspectives naturally extend to school leadership, where it is common practice to use an adult-centered and hierarchical approach to “save” children and promote students' “best” interests (Jehan, 2015). As one participant expressed, "a kid who is uneducated in the village and roams around has no expectations anyway." In

disregarding or undermining children's aspirations, a marginalized and economically disadvantaged child is also denied respect and affirmation for existing knowledge. Studies indicate that a lack of affirmation or undermining children's knowledge or skill can lead to their lowered sense of self-esteem and confidence and reinforces their reliance on meeting the values set by others' standards to feel adequate and worthy (Bergeron, 2016; Pyszczynski & Schimel, 2004).

In sum, the emerging theory from this study supports that school leaders' MM influenced their conceptualization, motivation, and actions to promote (what they viewed as) social justice. Their MM were shaped by deep-seated cultural beliefs, societal norms, values, experiences, and assumptions. Their conflicting and problematic MM of leading from a position of power with an adult-centered, hierarchical, and savior approach to leadership sometimes remained implicit and seemed to complicate the picture. They found ways to empower children, but at the same time, they disempowered them by preventing them from participating in decisions affecting their lives. These MM seemed counterproductive and problematic in their cause to promote social justice.

Implications and Recommendations for School Leadership Training

Based on the finding of this study, I propose that school leadership preparation programs need to have a mandatory component on social justice to better serve marginalized students' needs. My recommendation is to accrediting agencies or the Ministries of Education requiring either formal training that includes a social justice component or formative professional development for school leaders that meets this goal. It was clear that school leaders working to promote social justice for marginalized students in rural communities faced multiple challenges, especially since most

participants had not received formal school leadership training. Even with a clear understanding of the specific community context and individual student needs, there was still a lack of nuance to lead marginalized students. Most participants in this study recognized that they were not sufficiently prepared to be school leaders for marginalized students, but they figured things out and did not let the lack of training hinder their efforts. Formal leadership preparation programs that include social justice components could result in school leaders who can better support the success of marginalized students. Therefore, my recommendation would be to provide specific training to school leaders on social justice to fill the gaps in their knowledge bases. To identify gaps, government and international agencies could utilize a rigorous evaluation process that includes assessing areas specific to social justice education in practice.

Second, findings from this study suggest that school leaders would benefit from developing habits of critical self-reflection, such as reflecting on their MM of an adult-centered, hierarchical, and savior-like approach to leadership. Studies on both MM (Senge, 2006; Johnson, 2008) and SJL call for a close examination and critical self-reflection of assumptions and beliefs of educational leaders because it is necessary to problematize taken-for-granted assumptions and practices (Brown, 2004). Based on the findings of this study, it seemed that limited formal training and certification opportunities coupled with sociocultural norms led to participants not considering student opinions. One way of developing habits of critical self-reflection is for local and district governments to offer leadership training where school leaders could partner with like-minded school leaders and have a platform to talk through ideas and problems and seek solutions together. This kind of leadership development and training could be arranged in

collaboration with non-profits or centers for social justice. Research suggests that leadership training and social justice certification can help prepare school leaders for social justice to critically examine taken-for-granted norms and structures that pose barriers for marginalized students (Bertrand & Rodela, 2018; Cambron-Mccabe & Mccarthy, 2005; Tooms & Alston, 2006). Formally training school leaders could result in more reflection on their counterproductive practices (Bertrand & Rodela, 2018; Senge, 2006). Increased awareness may also shift their savior approach to a serving approach as school leaders. Also, raising school leaders' self-awareness may increase communication and create more meaningful adult-child collaborations to make their schools more inclusive for marginalized students. Children could benefit from the fact that school leaders honor their existing knowledge and aspirations because that would increase students' self-esteem and confidence and yield more democratic learning and positive student outcomes (Fielding, 2004; Mitra, 2004; Shields, 2004). As such, participants in this study could benefit from training or leadership development for critical self-reflection and to approach leadership more democratically to include students in decision-making.

Third, partnering with community leaders, community members, and like-minded school leaders could enhance support systems for school leaders. Partnering with members of the community could also spread the ideas of inclusion and equity throughout the community. This study finds that it is important for socially just school leaders to reach out to the community to learn and understand the sociocultural practices to meet student needs better. Additionally, leaders should also form support networks with like-minded Pakistani school leaders to connect and learn from each other. The

learning of most participants took place in the workplace and a vacuum - they did not work with like-minded socially just school leaders. They could benefit from sharing, recording, and enhancing their experiences in a way that captured the information depending on the situation. For instance, a repository that school leaders could consult as circumstances dictate. It could be an online filing for like-minded school leaders. Existing training and workshops can also provide a platform for school leaders to learn from their counterparts and highly competent content experts to provide better education to marginalized students. It may also increase collaborations between other socially just school leaders doing similar work. Several interviewed participants noted the importance of connecting with like-minded school leaders, as supported in the literature, like-minded leaders in similar situations may offer school leaders the opportunity to understand and manage daily leadership challenges (Cambron-McCabe, 2006; Odekirk, 2010; Theoharis, 2007).

Several policies are already included in the NEP (2009; 2017) for schooling to be more socially just and inclusive, such as ensuring school leaders are trained. The problem lies in the implementation of policies and the lack of availability of affordable leadership training. While there are good educational leadership programs offered at elite private schools, but they are not accessible to everyone because of the high expenses. All the school leader participants in this study indicated that they did not have enough knowledge in school leadership before becoming school leaders. Therefore, my recommendation would be to implement policy and arrange leadership training at the provincial and district level, offering affordable formal leadership training. However, keeping in mind the context of Pakistan and the limited resource availability, the

provincial and local districts may need help from private initiatives such as non-profit organizations or other social services agencies (depending on resource availability in the area) to offer leadership training. Perhaps international agencies, in addition to providing grants, can offer affordable training opportunities to school leaders to make up for the limited government resources. Additional training and professional development could help with the implementation of the national education policy.

Areas of Future Research

I echo Theoharis' (2007) call for further studies on socially-just school leaders in rural areas served by more socioeconomically and racially diverse school leaders. This study explored social justice school leadership in Pakistan, specifically rural Islamabad, and found that school leaders had a lot in common with social justice leadership in a Western context (Theoharis, 2007). There were some contextual differences, such as an adult-centered and hierarchical approach that is culturally appropriate. Continued research into educational leaders promoting social justice in other collectivistic rural contexts is needed to see if an adult-centered and hierarchical leadership approach is common and how this approach speaks to the cause of social justice in school leadership.

Another area for future research can focus on social justice leadership as perceived by students and their families. While this study focused on 11 school leaders and how they perceived and enacted social justice while serving marginalized students in a rural context, future research may ask how students or families perceive social justice and how justice looks from their perspective in urban and rural settings. Possibly, finding students who went to these leaders' schools and seeing if school leaders' efforts made a difference and, if so, what difference the leaders' efforts made in the students' educational

trajectory. Arguably, students and families lived experiences of being marginalized may be different from school leaders in this study, who mostly identified themselves as belonging to more dominant and affluent backgrounds. Accordingly, marginalized student and parent perceptions of social justice in both rural and urban settings can be further explored to better understand how the concept of social justice is constructed and interpreted by marginalized groups.

A key area for further research can be to replicate this study in other rural and urban school settings serving marginalized students. Mental models have been used to understand the difference between effective and ineffective leaders and how they perceive and manage their world (Johnson, 2008). Also, Senge (2006) studied implicit MM that remain unexamined as forming problematic assumptions and generalizations. These studies find that a school leader's actions are embedded in their MM acquired through years of deeply ingrained beliefs (Lawson,1999). Studies find evidence that school leaders struggle with examining their own deep-seated beliefs about students with backgrounds and experiences different from their own (Davy, 2016). Further research into identifying or bringing to the surface school leaders MM, such as whom they perceived as marginalized students or how they understood justice and equity, could result in ways that school leaders can create more socially just schools.

Further research can also investigate what PSL think of the curriculum and the messages of inclusivity in terms of representation of particular groups, stereotypes. and inflammatory images. Existing studies show that the national curriculum promotes a single national culture, religion, and identity that strengthens the existing hegemonic social structure in society (Ali 2015). This study found evidence of school leaders

adjusting the curriculum to make it more inclusive of marginalized students to promote harmony in their schools. Thus, further research can investigate SJLs' views on the curriculum and textbook that could contribute to practical implications for the national curriculum, such as raising awareness on the importance of inclusivity and representation, and eventually contribute to making textbooks more inclusive of representing certain groups.

Lastly, further research could be with school leaders and their reliance on MM to promote social justice leadership to identify areas of leadership training and development. The school leaders in this study were lacking basic training on leadership and seemed to rely on their, sometimes subconscious and problematic, mental models. Relying on their MM without critical reflection, at times, resulted in socially unjust practices, such as reproducing oppressive structures. This study intended to expand the research on school leaders' MM while promoting social justice, and, in doing so, it was revealed that implicit problematic MM could reproduce oppressive structures. Thus, further research on school leaders' MM may contribute to practical implications for school leadership programs and contribute to the conceptual framework of leader's reliance on MM to promote social justice.

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Appendix A

Official Recruitment Letter

Dear XXX,

I am writing this email to invite you to participate in a research study, which aims to understand the perceptions and experience of Pakistani private school leaders in northern Pakistan of equity-driven school practices while serving a marginalized population in a rural region. In this study, the researcher is particularly conducting an exploratory grounded theory study of school leaders in the northern region of Pakistan, specifically the rural area surrounding the federal capital of Islamabad. More specifically, I am interested in answering the overarching research question: How do rural private primary and secondary school leaders conceptualize and enact leadership for social justice to address the educational inequalities for marginalized students in Pakistan e.g., disadvantages based on gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion etcetera

As a researcher, I plan to conduct interviews in April – May 2020, to better understand your perspectives and experience as school leaders. I would like to audio record during interviews so that we can collect the most accurate data possible. The process will approximately be an hour to 90 minutes in length. Second, I would like to make some observations in your daily routine. Finally, I would like to have your CV or a job description for research purposes in addition to the interview data. With your approval, I will organize some interviews with school leaders in May and June via video chat (Zoom, Skype or Google hangouts) and some interviews and all the observations will be in person from July to September ’2020. I will be in Islamabad-Pakistan between July 1 and September 30th.

Participation is completely confidential, and all the participants can withdraw from the study at any time. During the interviews, participants can decide which question they do not want to answer. They can freely express their opinion. With your permission, the interview would be audio recorded, but your comments would be kept confidential and protected. If you have concerns or questions, please contact me by email anytime (pmg26@mail.missouri.edu). Or, if you have questions about the study, please feel free to contact my advisor Emily Crawford (crawforder@missouri.edu).

Your support is greatly appreciated. It will contribute by providing an increased understanding of equity-driven school practices while serving a marginalized population in a rural region in Pakistan.
Thank you for your time and consideration.
Sincerely,
Palwasha K Marwat
Doctoral student Department of Educational Administration and Policy Analysis
University of Missouri

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Project title: A Constructivist Grounded Theory Exploring Pakistani School Leader's Conceptualization of Social Justice-Oriented Leadership

Researcher Name and Contact Information:

Palwasha K. Marwat
Doctoral Student, PK-12 Education
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis
College of Education
University of Missouri – Columbia
+1-573-823-3679
pmg26@mail.missouri.edu

Where will This Study Be Done?

This study will be done at primary and secondary private rural schools, located in rural Islamabad.

Why is This Study Being Done?

This study seeks to explore how primary and secondary private school leaders (PSL) in Pakistan conceptualize and enact social-justice-oriented leadership in order to help marginalized student groups within their schools. The purpose of this research study is to explore PSLs' conceptualization and practices of equity and social justice-driven leadership in rural private school settings in rural Islamabad. There is a dual purpose for this study. First, the findings from this study may contribute to building understanding and substantive theory on social justice leadership in a non-Western context. Second, the findings may be used to inform the practices of rural PSL and education policymakers that are inclusive of the marginalized student populations and congruent within a Pakistani context.

How many people will be in the study?

There will be up to 15 rural private school leaders. All the participants can refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits.

What am I being asked to do?

You will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview online or in-person with the researcher about your experiences as a rural school leader, exploring your conceptualization and practices of equity and social justice-driven leadership in rural private school settings.

Types of data collected

I will gather different sources of information: interviews, observations, school websites.

How long will I be in the study?

The interview may last between 60-90 minutes. You can withdraw from the study at any time. With your permission, the interview would be audio recorded, but your comments will be kept confidential and protected.

What are the benefits of being in the study?
Your participation will contribute by providing an increased understanding of conceptualization and practices of equity and social justice-driven leadership in rural private school settings that are inclusive of the marginalized student populations in rural Islamabad.

What are the risks of being in the study?
This project and your participation in this study are not expected to involve or cause any risks greater those encountered in everyday life.

Confidentiality
Your participation in this study will remain confidential. Prior to data analysis, pseudonyms will replace the names of participants as well as the school to ensure that the material collected and analyzed will maintain completely confidential. Only the researcher will know the identity of the participants and schools.

Future Studies
The information we collect from you for this study will not be used or shared with other investigators for future research studies. This applies even if we remove all information that could identify you from your information.

What are the costs of being in the study?
There is no cost to you

Who do I contact if I have additional questions or concerns?
If you have concerns or questions, please contact me by email anytime (pmg26@mail.missouri.edu). Or, if you have questions about the study, please feel free to contact my advisor Dr. Emily Crawford-Rossi (crawforder@missouri.edu).

Who do I contact if I have questions about my rights, concerns, complains or comments about the research?
If you have any question regarding your rights as a participant in this research or concerns about the study, please feel free to contact my advisor:

Dr. Emily R. Crawford-Rossi
Associate Professor
Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis
crawforder@missouri.edu
Phone: +1 573-884-9554

Or if you feel under any pressure to enroll or to continue to participate in this study, you may contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (which is a group of

people who review the research studies to protect participants' rights and to guarantee a safe space for the participants.) at +1-573-882-31-81 or umcresearchirb@missouri.edu

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I have been given a copy of this consent form. By continuing, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I am aware that I can discontinue my participation in the study at any time. I acknowledge that the contact information of the researcher and her advisor have made available to me along with a duplicate copy of this consent form.

Appendix C

Interview Protocol for School Leaders

Interview procedure:
Thank you very much for this opportunity, I'm interested in learning more about how primary and secondary private school leaders (PSL) in Pakistan conceptualize and enact leadership in order to help marginalized student groups within their schools. The information obtained from this study will be used for educational purposes, and any information obtained through this interview, including identifying information, will remain confidential.

I'm going to start the interview with general background questions, and then, I'll ask more specific questions about school leaders' role and conceptualization of leadership in order to help marginalized student groups within their schools.

Questions

1. Brief History of School Leaders.
   - Tell me a little about your background? What led you to the field of education?
   - How did you come to be a school leader? How long have you been school leader at [Name] school? How did you choose [Name] school to be the school you work at?

2. Values and Beliefs shaping leadership.
   - Could you please share with me your leadership philosophy?
   - Tell me about some of your values or beliefs in connection with your leadership role?

3. School context shaping leadership role.
   - Tell me about the school context, for e.g., school community, socio-cultural context, or the private rural school context. Can you describe for me what it's like? Can you share examples
   - Tell me about how the school context influences your leadership role? Can you share examples

4. Conceptualization of SJL.
   - What is it like working with [Name] school? What is the leadership role like?
   - What sort of students are attending your school? What expectations do you have for your students?
   - Describe for me your first experience when you noticed some students getting less access/resources than others? Can you share examples.
     i. Describe for me why it mattered to you? Or why was it important to do something about [depending on previous question]?
     ii. Tell me about what it means to you to be a leader who is committed to /working towards rectifying educational inequalities?

- Tell me more about the most important ways to deal with improving the educational access or better resources for certain students?
- Describe for me how you think rural private school leaders should serve those who have less access to resources or opportunities in school or society?

5. Enacting SJL, and challenging experiences/reflection/experience/critical feedback:
   - Describe for me how you address the issue of improving the educational access or better resources for certain students? What do you do? Give me some examples.
     - How would you discover [or create] access/resources?
   - Describe for me if you train staff/teachers or provide them with knowledge/practical resources for improving the educational access or better resources for certain students to ensure students succeed academically?
   - Describe for me the leadership challenges do you face when improving the educational access or better resources for certain students? Share some examples.
   - How has the culture or school context influenced your role as school leader? Could you share some examples?

     Possible follow up:
     - What are the possible challenges for school leaders in this rural neighborhood?
     - In what ways can rural private school leaders improve students' academic achievements in this rural neighborhood?
     - What problems might you encounter?
     - Could you tell me the source of these problems?
- Tell me how you came to focus on issues of caring for improving the educational access/resources for certain students in your school?
- Could you tell me about how your views and actions [depending on the preceding responses] may have changed since you have [challenging experience/reflection] _____?

  Possible follow ups
  - What was it like?
  - If you recall, what were you thinking then?
  - How did you happen to _____ (depending on the answer: take action/intervene)?
  - Who, if anyone, influenced your actions? Tell me about how he/she/they influenced or helped you?

6. Closing questions:
   - As you look back on your experiences, are there any other events that stand out in your mind that led you to care for improving the educational access/resources for certain students in your school?
   - Please share with me, if you have any additional experiences, I did not ask during the interview?

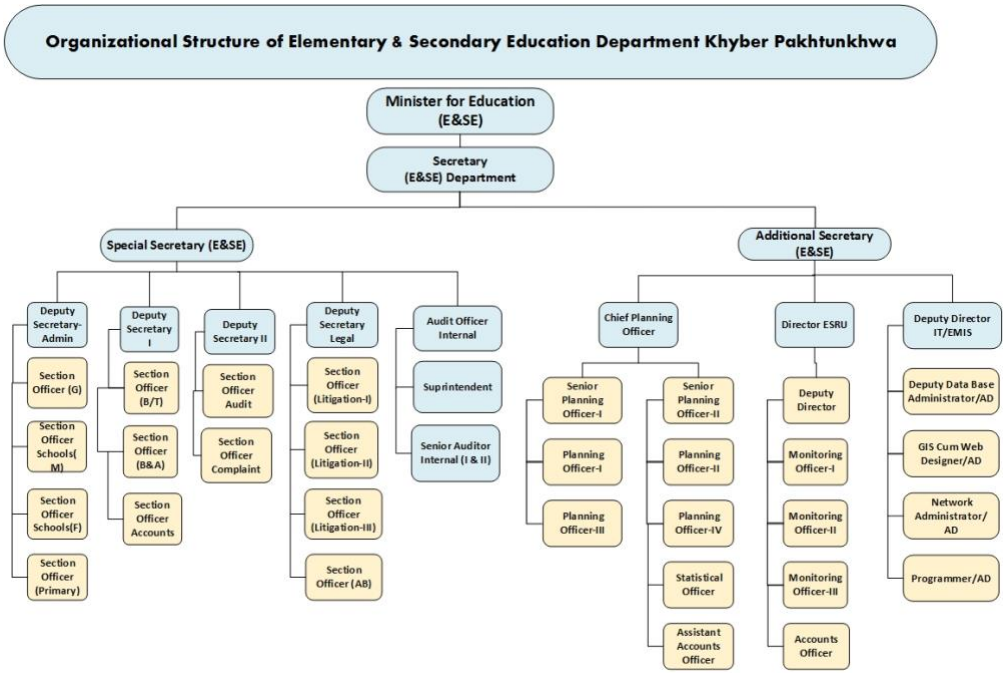
Closing:

Thank you for participating in this interview and for your time. I appreciate you taking the time to answer questions exploring your conceptualization and experiences in your school/community. I may contact you in the future for follow up interview after transcribing and initial analysis or then email/call you if I have any questions. Again, let me assure you of the confidentiality of your responses. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email at pmg26@mail.missouri.edu and if you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research or concerns about the study, or if you feel under any pressure to enroll or to continue to participate in this study, you may contact my academic advisor Dr. Emily Crawford-at crawforder@missouri.edu or the University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board (which is a group of people who review the research studies to protect participants' rights) at +1-573-882-9585 or umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu

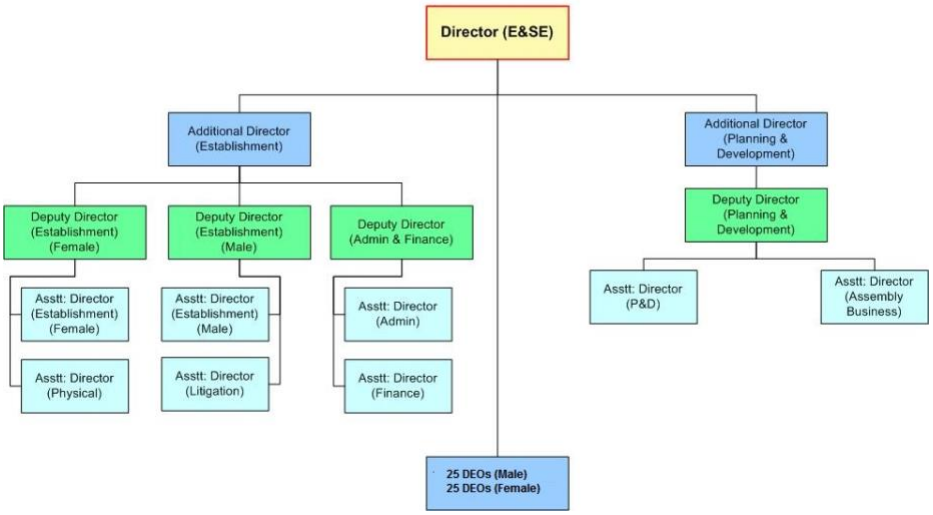
Appendix D

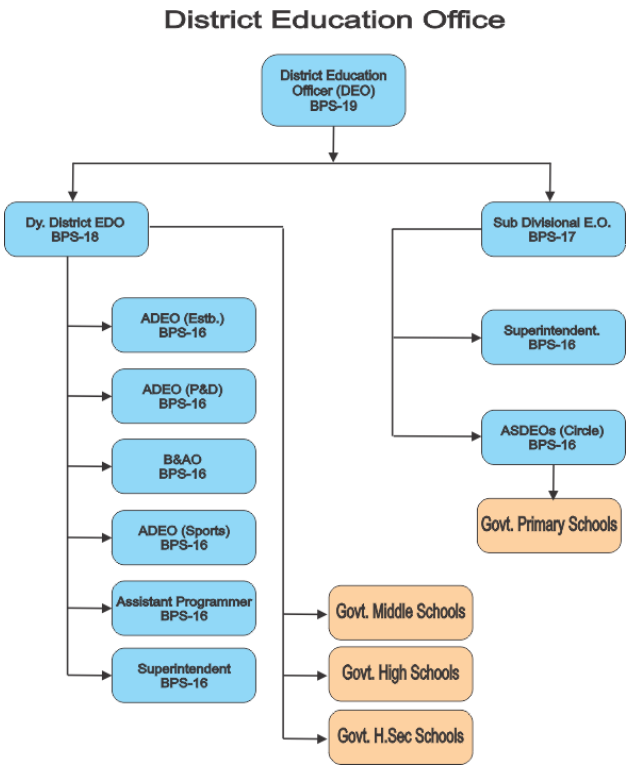
Activity	4/20	5/20	5/20	6/20	7/20	8/20	9/20	10/20	11-12/20	1/21	2/21	3/21	4/21	5/21	6/21	7/21
Proposal Defense*	X															
IRB	X															
Review NEP and literature	X															
Recruit PSL		X														
School documents/		X	X													
Interviews			X	X												
CV collection			X	X												
Transcription			X	X	X											
Data analysis			X	X	X	X										
Write results/conclusion						X	X									
Advisors' review*								X								
Write discussion (first and 2nd draft)									X	X		X				
Advisor's feedback													X			
Full dissertation draft 1-2														X		
Committee's review *															X	
Defense *																X

Appendix E



Directorate of E&SE, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa





Source: (KPKESED, n.d.)

Appendix F

Participant Demographics

For this study I sought PSL who embodied a commitment to equity and social justice. Through personal connections, I was recommended other school leaders who might fit the study criteria and contribute to my study. This snowballed into a potential sample of 24 school leaders. Thirteen PSL met the selection criteria and 11 PSL agreed to participate in my study.

The following information was collected from the participants (see table below): gender, age, religion, highest degree of education, years of school leader experience, years of school related experience (teaching/admin), school location, school building level.

Participant profiles

Category	Age: 30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	Muslim	Years in current school
# of participants	3	1	2	5	11	11
% or Mean	27%	9%	18%	45%	100%	~14

Category	Education			Related education	Related school experience
	Bachelors	Masters	PhD		
# of participants	5	5	1	3	3
% or Mean	45%	45%	9%	27%	27%

	Elementary K-5	Secondary 6-10	K-10	Co-Education	Within 20-mile radius	20–100-mile radius
# of schools	5	1	5	10	7	4
% or Mean	45%	9%	45%	91%	64%	36%

The table above illustrates that all participants identified as Muslims. Nine participants identified as females and two as male and their school administrative experience ranged from 3 to 35 years with an average of 14 years. All 11 participants had a minimum of a college degree, three of them had a degree in education and prior school experience. All 11 PSL worked in rural schools surrounding Islamabad in a 20–100-mile radius around Islamabad. The schools were co-ed except one. Eight schools are free of charge to the students while 3 have a varying low-fee structure.

Appendix G

Research Question 2 Sample Coding: Motivational Themes

1st theme	**Supporting quotes**	**Analysis** *Shaping participants' values and beliefs*
The Influence of Family and Upbringing	my parents were always great social workers …and I used to see both my parents very active within the community.	cultivated within her a strong sense of community with values of giving back and actively contributing to marginalized communities.
	my father was a philanthropist, I think it came from him in the genes.	absorbed the values of altruism and philanthropy from her father and strived to promote the well-being of vulnerable populations
	very large-hearted parents who always thought beyond themselves.	Imbibed values of altruism and advocacy from parents to promote social justice for vulnerable populations
	my father was a role model in the sense …. we weren't brought up thinking of only… self-improvement but of how to improve things for others.	Values of philanthropy, altruism, and promoting the community's well-being by actively contributing.

2nd theme	**Supporting quotes**	**Analysis** *Shaping participants' values and beliefs*
Witnessing Inequity and Discrimination: Sense of Possibility	We had tiered seats; it was terrible.	She believed in valuing and respecting everyone, regardless of their SES and religious identity. This discriminatory practice motivated her to reduce educational disparities and inequities and serve marginalized students.
	there were children [and] there was no school there. Children were playing on the hills all-day long."	Motivated by disparities in access and believed it would be better and more appropriate if children received an education.

	Sense of Possibility "[having that] sense of possibility and that unwavering belief that the child can do it. It doesn't matter where the child came from."	Driven by a sense of possibility that the society could improve if children were supported
	Protecting Children from Harm There's a child who's going through sexual abuse at home. So, we went out of the way to involve the legal department or health department…Shelters like whatever was needed to make happen.	Motivated by the belief that promoting social justice was not only providing vulnerable children with a quality education, but also included ensuring students were safe from harm and they would do well if they received the right support

3rd theme	**Supporting quotes**	**Analysis** **Participants' serving the greater good and giving back.**
Critical Life Experiences	I saw all of that destruction while in search…[of] my childhood friend, I walked and I decided that I will make a school in his name.	His commitment and passion to serve marginalized students sprang from his traumatic experience of seeing so much death and devastation.
	I got this brain tumor… I said now is the time that I need to start my school because I don't know how … the cancer will progress.	Her passion to serve marginalized communities and improving their social conditions was her way of giving back and helping those in need.
	after the death of my dad I know how hard it was …to get education.	Her personal struggles as an orphan instilled within her a passion to promoting access to a quality education for marginalized people.

Appendix H

Theoharis' Social Justice Leaders' characteristics compared to participants in this study

Social Justice Leader (Theoharis, 2007, p. 252)	**Participants in this study**
Places significant value on diversity and extends cultural respect and understanding of that diversity	Valued diversity, learnt about that diversity, and extended cultural respect
Ends segregated and pull-out programs that block both emotional and academic success for marginalized children	This would not apply to my study because the school leader participants were serving only marginalized students
Strengthens core teaching and curriculum and ensures that diverse students have access to that core	Strengthened basic education and adapted the curriculum to make it inclusive for all students
Embeds professional development in collaborative structures and a context that tries to make sense of race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability	Provided professional development for teachers Did not train teachers to recognize marginalization factors that might create barriers to equity but made it clear to both teachers and students that intolerance was unacceptable
Knows that school cannot be great until the students with the greatest struggles are given the same rich opportunities both academically and socially as their more privileged peers	Promoted equitable treatment for marginalized students with greater access to educational and social opportunities similar to those of their privileged peers
Demands that every child will be successful but collaboratively addresses the problems of how to achieve that success	Demanded success for each child and worked in collaboration with adults to achieve goals Did not collaborate with marginalized students (adult-centered approach)
Builds and leads coalitions by bringing together various groups of people to further agenda (family, community organizations, staff, students) and seeks out other activist administrators who can and will sustain him or her	Developed and lead coalitions with key community members and external organizations primarily to protect and provide comprehensive services to children. Did not seek out activist like-minded school leaders for support
Builds a climate in which families, staff, and students belong and feel welcome	Worked to promote a welcoming, inclusive, and safe school for students;
Sees all data through a lens of equity	Viewed all data from an equity perspective
Knows that building community, collaboration, and differentiation are tools to ensure that all students achieve success together	Recognized that the establishment of a community, collaboration and differentiation are tools that enable all students to succeed together
Combines structures that promote inclusion and access to improved teaching and curriculum within a climate of belonging	Combined structures that foster inclusion and access to better education and curriculum in a diverse school environment
Becomes intertwined with the life, community, and soul of the school	Strongly associated with school and community. Their lives were tied to the success and welfare of the students.

Copied with author's permission (Theoharis, 2007, p. 252)

Vita

Palwasha Marwat was born in Peshawar and raised in Lahore, Pakistan. Before attending the University of Missouri (Mizzou) on a Fulbright scholarship, she attended the University of Sheffield, UK, where she earned a master's degree in Education in 2014. From 1997 to 2000, she attended the National College of Arts in Lahore, where she received a bachelor's in graphic design.

While at Mizzou, Palwasha was officially recognized as a 2019–2021 Jackson Scholar at the 2019 UCEA conference in New Orleans. This two-year program provides professional networking, opportunities for professional development, mentoring and development of graduate students in the field of educational leadership. She was also elected the President of two student organizations Missouri University Fulbright Organization (MUFO) and Education Students and Scholars Global Network (ESSGN) for two consecutive years. In her leadership role, Palwasha organized events so that international students could socialize, network, and support one another in their adjustment to life abroad. She was recognized by the Missouri International Student Council in 2019 with the International Recognition Award and the Chancellor's Excellence Award.

Currently, Palwasha lives in a major city in Pakistan.