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## Factors Contributing to School Refusal among School Children

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### ABSTRACT

School refusal is critical problem for students' academic success. For some students, going to school is their biggest fear, which has become a growing concern over the years, not only for parents, but school personnel as well. The present study was aimed to find out the prevalence and causes of school refusal among school children. 120 students of grade 7 and 8 and their parents were taken as sample from the Sadiq Memorial and District Public School, Kasur through simple random sampling. School refusal assessment scale revised (SRAS-R) was used to evaluate the functional conditions of school refusal. Data was analyzed through frequency, percentage tables, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and independent sample t- test. The results indicated that boys experienced more refusal than boys. Major cause of school refusal was found to be more due to pursue attention from significant others. It is recommended that further research should be conducted to see the factors contributing to school refusal among school children.

**Keywords:** *school refusal.*

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### INTRODUCTION:

School refusal and school phobia are the terms used interchangeably to describe a particular behavior of students. Kearney and Bensaheb (2006); Kearney (2008) referred school refusal as to dishonest absence of a child, refusal to attend school or being bothered to attend classes. Children or adolescents who are considered "school refusers" appear to dislike and fear aspects of school and diligently refuse to be there in an unwilling way (Stroobant & Jones, 2006). Usually children and adolescents between 5 – 17 years of age experience school refusal (Kearney, Cook, & Chapman, 2007). Youths who miss long periods of school time, skip classes, arrive late at school, display severe morning misbehaviors in attempts to refuse school, attend school with great dread and somatic complaints that precipitate pleas for future nonattendance, fall along the school refusal range (Kearney & Bates, 2005). School refusal also refers to anxiety-based absenteeism, including panic, social anxiety, and general emotional distress or worry while in school (Suveg, Aschenbrand, & Kendall, 2005). School refusal among students has multiple causes and is a diverse syndrome that serves many functions (Fremont, 2003). Their unwillingness to attend school that can indirectly affect the behavior (Kearney, 2008a) has many causes which may include child, family, and school

characteristics. Some child characteristics usually related to school nonattendance embody psychopathology, social skills deficits, psychological feature difficulties, health issues, learning disabilities, and emotional disorders (Kearney, 2008). Lee and Miltenberger (1996) described four possible functions which were the factor of school refusal behavior.

- To avoid school-based stimuli that provokes a general sense of negative affectivity.
- To escape dislike school-based social and appraising things.
- To pursue attention from important others,
- To pursue tangible reinforcers outside of school (Kearney et al., 2004).

### Avoidance of School-Based Stimuli

"Avoidance of fear/anxiety producing situations at school; the function is to avoid Fear provoking situations and diminish the anxiety associated with being at School". The first condition involves youngsters who keep away from school so as to flee peer-based concern and show that they "feel bad" in school. Additionally, these youngsters avoid school owing to amendment they have to built from one state of affairs to another. These transitions embody car/van to class, class to canteen, or taking part in the field to class (Kearney et al., 2004). This function of behavior is to avoid negative stimuli that aggravate a child's

fears and anxieties regarding school. Children who acquire this function are generally younger and may go to school on a regular basis but with immense fear (Briesmeister & Schaefer, 1998).

#### **Escape Aversive School-Based Social and/or Evaluative Situations.**

"Avoidance of aversive social situations at school; the function is to avoid unpleasant or anxiety provoking social contact that occurs at school". According to Briesmeister and Schaefer (1998) youth in this group could be exhibiting social phobia and are often elder children and teenagers who reject schools as to flee things. Specific things embody beginning and maintain discussion with peers, serving to or taking part in games with others, taking part in cluster events, and/or uptake in very canteen with others. Additionally, youth might also refuse school so as to flee critical things like as examination, verbal presentations, writing on sheet, walking in a hall or into a classroom, and playing gymnastically or musically ahead of others. Adolescence that refuses school in order to escape situation sometimes refuses school solely throughout a key critical state of affairs. However, some youth during this group show a lot of frequent and unnecessary absence. Additionally, there are some teens that refuse school due each to flee and to avoidance (Kearney et al., 2004).

#### **Pursue Attention from Significant Others**

This function could demonstrate behavior of a student with separation anxiety or depression. Youth during this cluster usually don't have worries concerning school, however comparatively, are drawn a lot of engaging outside of school (Briesmeister & Schaefer, 1998). This situation typically refers to younger children who ignore school as a way of accomplishing concentration from primary caregivers. It's quite common for these youngsters to concentrate work with their folks and reveal severe morning unhealthy behavior so as to try doing therefore. Though separation anxiety is at times present in this group, the most practicality is attention-seeking behavior (Kearney et al., 2004).

#### **Pursue Tangible Reinforces Outside of School**

The last functional situation of school refusal consists of youngsters who reject school so as to pursue tangible reinforces outside of school; cluster typically rummage around for activities

with friends, riding bicycles, staying home to sleep or watch TV, or participating in drug use or criminal acts. This sort of school refusal tends to be more chronic than the other functional groups and usually related to intensive family conflict (Kearney & Silverman, 2005). Maladjustive parent-child relationships are of explicit interest as a result such relationships comprehend different problems like as separation anxiety that is an important part of school refusal (Kearney & Silverman, 1995).

Adolescents with school refusal behavior could miss a vital part of their initial education, thereby sustaining serious and, possibly, long-academic deficits. These children may also suffer a loss of vanity and confidence, inflicting social and psychological issues in their development. So, early identification is crucial in reducing the danger of later issues. Research ought to be conducted on this topic in order to know it utterly and create awareness regarding it especially in Pakistan.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- Prevalence of School refusal among school children.
- Causes of school refusal among school children.

#### **Research Questions**

- Do school children suffer from school refusal?
- How many children suffer from school refusal?
- What are the causes of school refusal school children?

#### **Instrument**

The detail of instrument is given below:

School Refusal Assessment Scale Revised (Kearney and Silverman, 1993)

School refusal assessment scale revised (SRAS-R) was used as instrument designed by Kearney and Silverman (1993) to gauge the relative strength of 4 functional conditions of school refusal behavior mentioned earlier (avoidance of school-based stimuli that provoke a general sense of negative affectivity, escape dislike school-based social and/or critical things, pursue attention from vitat others, pursue tangible reinforcers outside of school) in youth for good reliability of the SRAS-R factor (Kearney et al., 2004). These four factors

were the lime light of the research. The SRAS is predicted on clinical and analysis proof that youngsters refuse or have problem in attending school for variety of various reasons related to negative and positive reinforcement (Kearney and Silverman, 1991). Permission was taken to use this scale by British Journal of Psychopathology. This instrument is composed of twenty four questions and each question is rated on a scale of 1 to 4, from never to always. Tool was translated in Urdu language instead of English to reduce the bias of translating the questions for parent and children (respondents) as they could not comprehend English language.

### Procedure

This study was an attempt to find the factors contributing to school refusal among school children from Kasur District. This was a quantitative research and a survey was conducted to collect the data. A sample of 120 grade7 and 8 students and their parents were randomly selected from Sadiq Memorial and District Public Schools, Kasur.

A meeting was set up with the administration of both Sadiq Memorial and District Public School, and purpose of the study was explained to them. Permission was taken from the principals of the respective schools to conduct research on their students. The school administration and teachers collaborated and helped at every step of the data collection. School Refusal Assessment Scale Revised was given to the students through random sampling method. School Refusal Assessment Scale-Revised (SRAS-R; Kearney, 2002) assesses school refusal behavior based on the functional model. This scale is designed to identify the self-perception of the four main factors explaining the causes underlying school refusal: (a) avoiding stimuli or situations related to the school setting, (b) escaping from aversive social or evaluative situations, (c) seeking caregivers' attention, and (d) obtaining tangible positive reinforcement outside of the school. The students were given time to fill the questionnaires. The questionnaire was explained to them and they were assured regarding their privacy that their information will be kept confidential. Total score were then evaluated to check factors contributing to school refusal among school children. 4 – 5 questionnaires were filled by respondents in one

visit and data was accumulated in 9 weeks, which took 20 – 25 minutes per respondent.

### Data Analysis

The data was analyzed through SPSS software (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) and findings were drawn. Frequency, percentage tables, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and independent sample t- test were used for analyzing the data

### Factors Contributing to School Refusal among School Children

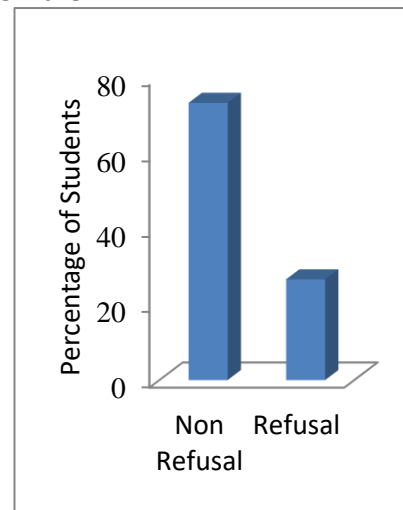


Figure 1 Prevalence of school Refusal among school children.

Figure 1 shows the prevalence of school refusal among children. The result indicated that only 26.7% of the respondents experienced school refusal

**Table 1: Demographic Information of Children**

Demographic	n	%
Gender		
Boys	60	50
Girls	60	50
Birth Order		
1	37	30.8
2	37	30.8
3	14	11.7
4	11	9.2
5	21	17.5
No. of Siblings		
1	5	4.2
2	8	6.7
3	14	11.7
4	36	30.0
5	22	18.3
6	35	29.2

Table 1 shows (76.7%) students were from grade 8th and majority of them (69.2%) were girls,

(30.0%) children had 3 siblings and (30.8%) were either 1st or 2nd born child of their families.

**Table 2: Demographic Information of Parents**

Demographic Variables	Fathers		Mothers	
	f	%	f	%
Parents Age				
30-40	26	21.6	33	27.5
41-50	31	25.9	17	14.1
51-60	8	6.8	5	4.1
Occupation				
Housewife	0	0	35	29.1
Doctor	1	0.83	1	0.83
Agricultural	14	11.6	3	2.5
Teacher	13	10.8	14	11.6
Engineer	3	2.5	0	0
Businessman	18	15	2	1.6
Army	6	5	0	0
Labour	10	8.3	0	0
Education				
up to primary	6	5	1	0.83
Matric	23	19.1	23	19.1
F.A	8	6.8	10	8.3
B.A	14	11.6	12	10
M.A	14	11.6	8	6.8
Monthly Income				
5000-10000	10	8.3	1	0.83
11000-20000	13	10.8	9	7.5
21000-30000	11	9.1	7	5.8
31000-40000	9	7.5	0	0
41000-50000	7	5.8	2	1.6
51000-60000	2	1.6	1	0.83

Table 2 shows the demographic details of parents of respective participants. Results indicated that 27.5% mothers between the ages of 30-41, majority of them (29.1%) was house wife, (7.5%) mothers had 11000-20000 monthly income and (19.1%) of mothers were matriculated. (25.9%) fathers were between the ages of 41-50, (11.6%) fathers were handling agriculture, (10.8%) father had 11000-20000 monthly income and (19.1%) of fathers were matriculated.

**Table 3: Summary statistics of scales of SRAS-R Instrument**

	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Avoidance of negative affective-provoking	0.00	4.00	1.18	0.77	0.96	1.28
Escape from aversive social situation	0.00	4.00	0.98	0.83	1.04	1.00
Attention-getting behaviour	0.00	4.67	2.03	0.96	0.09	-0.35
Positive tangible reinforcement	0.00	4.33	1.68	0.96	0.35	-0.15
SRAS-R Scale	0.17	3.42	1.47	0.66	0.31	-0.15

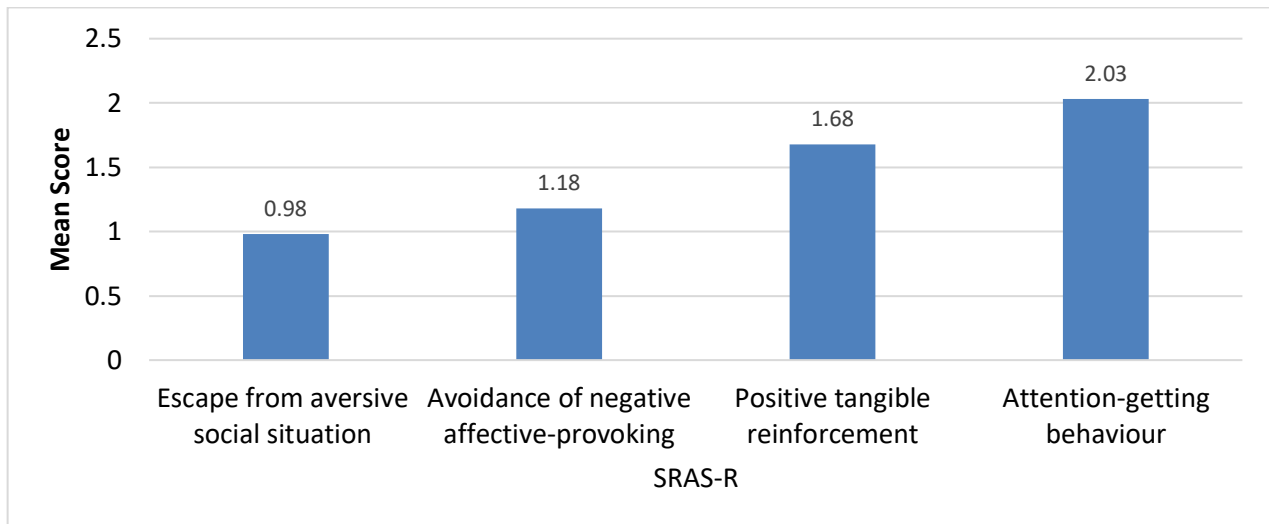


Figure 2: Mean score scales of SRAS-R instrument

In figure 2, the overall results indicate that students shows more susceptibility of school refusal due to attention getting behavior as the mean of attention getting behavior (M=2.03) is higher than other factors

Table 4: Gender difference

	Male		Female		t	df	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Avoidance of negative affective-provoking	1.51	0.49	1.46	0.48	0.57	118	0.57
Escape from aversive social situation	1.40	0.47	1.41	0.44	0.17	118	0.86
Attention-getting behaviour	1.67	0.48	1.69	0.43	0.20	118	0.84
Positive tangible reinforcement	1.66	0.49	1.65	0.46	0.17	118	0.87
SRAS-R Scale	1.56	0.45	1.55	0.43	0.10	118	0.92

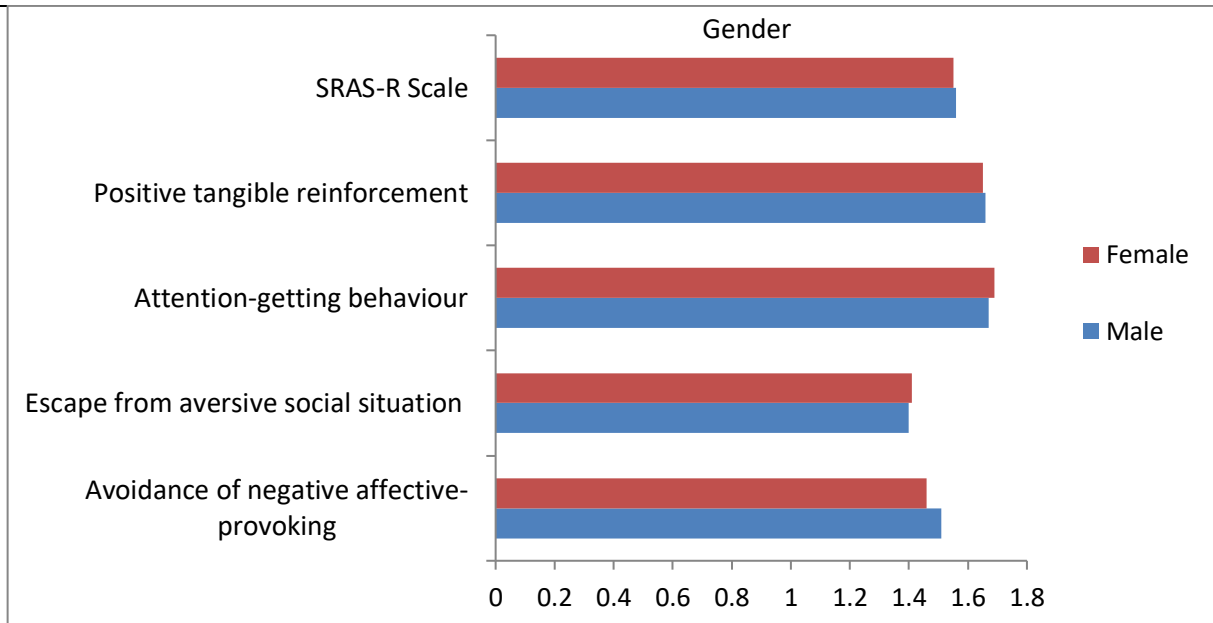


Figure 3: Prevalence and Causes of School Refusal among Male and Female Students

In figure 3, the overall result in graph indicates that males show more vulnerability towards factors related to school refusal as mean scores of males is higher than female. Males show more susceptibility on factors

F1 and F4 which indicate that they were more likely to avoid stimuli or situation related to school setting that provokes a general sense of negative affectivity and obtaining tangible reinforcement outside the school respectively as compared to females. Male mean score shows more endanger to refuse school due to factor F1 i.e. avoid stimuli or situation related to school setting. Whereas both genders had almost the same susceptibility towards factor F2.

**Table 5: Class difference**

	7th		8th		t	df	p	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
Avoidance of negative affective-provoking	1.43	0.33	1.50	0.52	1.43	0.68	118	0.498
Escape from aversive social situation	1.30	0.37	1.43	0.48	1.30	1.39	118	0.168
Attention-getting behaviour	1.64	0.32	1.69	0.49	1.64	0.51	118	0.612
Positive tangible reinforcement	1.61	0.34	1.67	0.51	1.61	0.58	118	0.563
SRAS-R Scale	1.50	0.29	1.57	0.47	1.50	0.84	118	0.404

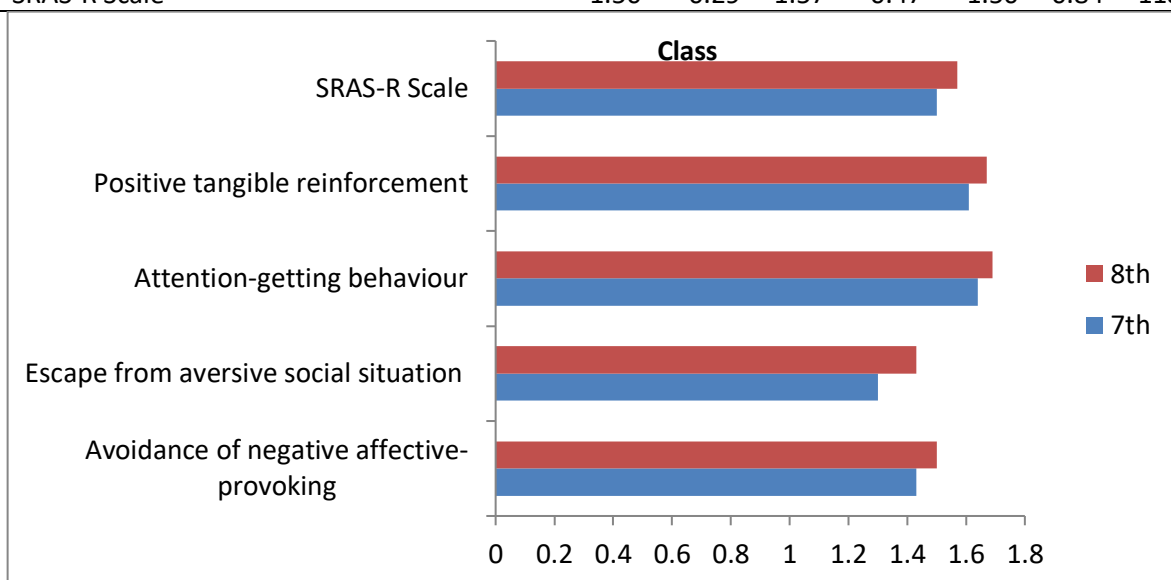


Figure 4: Prevalence and Causes of School Refusal among Grade 7 and 8 students

In figure 4, overall results showed that 8th class students had more susceptibility of refusal due to seeking caregiver attention than 7th class students. Results in graph indicate that 8th class students had vulnerability of school refusal due to F3 (pursue attention from significant others) and F4 (Positive tangible reinforcement outside school) as compared to 7th class students.

**Table 6: Parents' education difference**

	≤Matric			≥FA/F.Sc		t	Df	P
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD			
Avoidance of negative affective-provoking	1.58	0.52	1.38	0.45	1.58	1.43	118	0.158
Escape from aversive social situation	1.42	0.43	1.38	0.44	1.42	0.32	118	0.747
Attention-getting behaviour	1.77	0.45	1.56	0.50	1.77	1.57	118	0.121
Positive tangible reinforcement	1.73	0.42	1.53	0.46	1.73	1.64	118	0.107
SRAS-R Scale	1.63	0.42	1.47	0.44	1.63	1.35	118	0.180

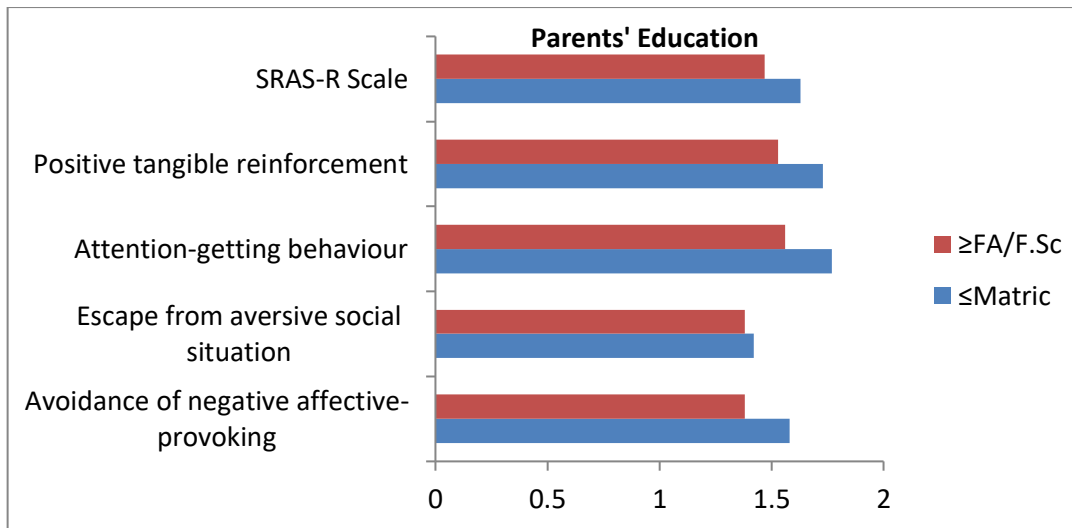


Figure 5: Parents' Education and Prevalence and Causes of School Refusal among School Children

Parents with matriculation and lower studies had more school refusal in their children as compared to parents with intermediate and higher studies. F3 i.e., Pursue attention from significant others was the most prevalent factor among all other factors. In F2 (escape from aversive social or evaluative situation), parents with both educations show almost similar results.

Table 7: Birth order difference

	Birth Order						ANOVA	
	1st		2nd		≥3rd			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	P
Avoidance of negative affective-provoking	1.56	0.49	1.45	0.44	1.46	0.52	0.62	0.541
Escape from aversive social situation	1.45	0.51	1.42	0.44	1.36	0.42	0.43	0.652
Attention-getting behaviour	1.73	0.48	1.64	0.37	1.67	0.51	0.35	0.706
Positive tangible reinforcement	1.74	0.54	1.64	0.47	1.61	0.42	0.86	0.427
SRAS-R Scale	1.62	0.48	1.54	0.40	1.52	0.44	0.54	0.582

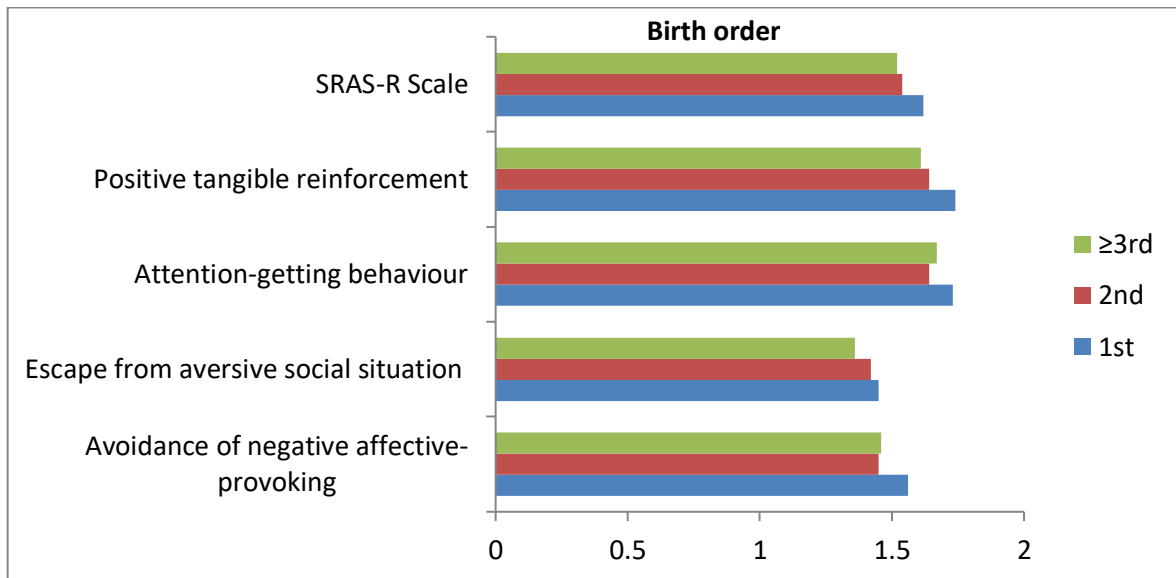


Figure 6: Prevalence and Causes of School Refusal according to Birth order of Students

In figure 6, results showed that students with 1<sup>st</sup> birth order faced more refusal than 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> birth order. The most endanger factor of refusal is F3 in all birth orders i.e., seeking caregiver attention and obtaining tangible reinforcement outside the school than other factors.

Table 8: Number of Siblings difference

	No of siblings						ANOVA	
	≤3		4		≥5			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	P
Avoidance of negative affective-provoking	1.67	0.50	1.47	0.47	1.41	0.46	2.79	0.066
Escape from aversive social situation	1.56	0.54	1.38	0.46	1.35	0.39	2.03	0.136
Attention-getting behaviour	1.78	0.46	1.71	0.50	1.61	0.43	1.47	0.235
Positive tangible reinforcement	1.76	0.53	1.72	0.55	1.57	0.38	1.83	0.165
SRAS-R Scale	1.69	0.48	1.57	0.47	1.48	0.39	2.12	0.125



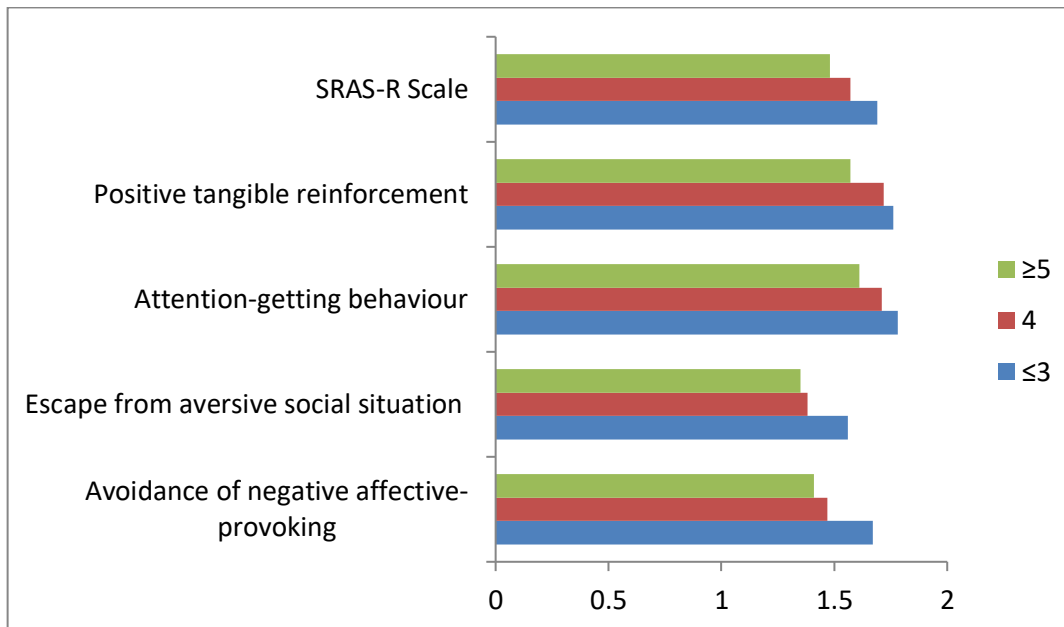


Figure 7: Number of Siblings and Prevalence and Causes of School Refusal

Overall results show that students who had  $\leq 3$  siblings faced more refusals. Most assailable factor is F3 i.e., pursue attention from significant others which is higher in students with  $\geq 3$  as seen in figure 5.

Table 9: Number of Siblings difference

	Parents Income				t	df	P
	<20,000		>21,000				
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Avoidance of negative affective-provoking	1.61	0.54	1.44	0.46	1.52	70	0.133
Escape from aversive social situation	1.49	0.51	1.41	0.47	0.74	70	0.461
Attention-getting behaviour	1.69	0.45	1.67	0.45	0.15	70	0.883
Positive tangible reinforcement	1.72	0.47	1.70	0.52	0.17	70	0.863
SRAS-R Scale	1.63	0.45	1.55	0.46	0.69	70	0.490

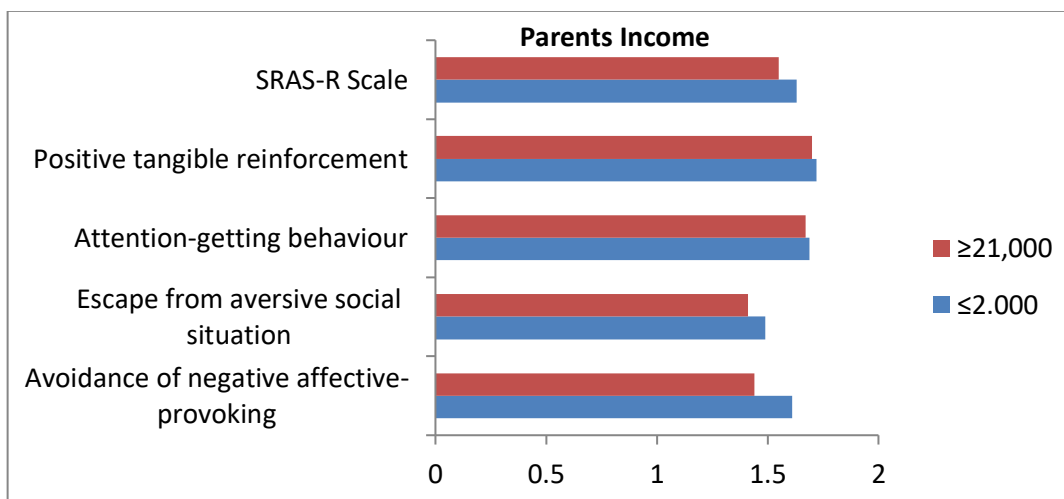


Figure 8: Parents' Income and Prevalence and Causes of School Refusal among School Children

Positive tangible reinforcement (F4) was the most prevalent factor among all other factors and parents with 20000 and below income shows more endanger of refusal than 21000 and above.

## DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted to find out the factors contributing to school refusal among school going children in Pakistan. Current research showed the prevalence of school refusal among 26.7% children. The prevalence found in current research is higher (26.7%) than in previous research by Lydia Brill (2009) at the Greater Nanticoke Area School District in Pennsylvania (14.75%). This ratio is also virtually 5 times more reported by Kearney and Silverman (1995) who concluded 5% school refusal in school-aged youngsters and Park et al. reporting 7.66% in children of primary school (2015) 1-5% school refusal Sewell, (2008). These results recommended that school refusal behavior may be a terribly serious issue that has to be addressed by the Schools of District Kasur.

Results showed that boys experienced more refusal than girls. These finding are in contrast with the finding of Brand and O'Connor (2004) who in their study on school children, found that girls express more school refusal behavior than boys. These findings are also contradicted with (Kearney, 2007) research who suggested that school refusal behavior generally seen equally in boys and girls.

In current research, results show that 1st born children experienced more refusal than 2nd and 3rd and these findings are similar with past research findings suggested that school refusal behavior occurs mostly among children who were the only child of their family or were the first born (Hudson & Rapee, 2000).

Current research showed that children with low income parents had more refusal than  $\leq 21000$  income. These findings are similar to previous research study; Kearney (2001) concluded that our students from low socio - economic backgrounds refuse to go to school more often than students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. In contrast the results of Kearney and Bates (2005) concluded that no significant relation between parent's income and school refusal of children. Father's profession also had no significant effect on the school refusal of the children in the current research. These results are in accordance with the findings of Ahmed (2009)

suggesting no significant effect of father's profession on the school refusal of the children.

Current research showed that students shows more susceptibility of school refusal due to attention getting behavior as the mean of attention getting behavior ( $M=2.03$ ) is higher than other factors. These results are similar to (Kearney et al., 2004) findings which indicate that younger children miss school as a means of obtaining attention from primary caregivers. These results are contradicted with previous research by Brill (2009) that more students reported missing school in order to get positive tangible reinforcement (35%) outside school.

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