

**Investigating the Decline of Social Sciences as a Choice of Discipline for  
Graduate students**



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## Abstract

The study explored the gradual waning of social sciences in particular Sociology as a preferred discipline to pursue graduate studies amongst the students who graduated their bachelor's degree from Forman Christian College University, Lahore and University of the Punjab, Lahore. Sociology is a significant discipline to understand human behavior, society, culture, governance, and social change. In recent years, however, there has been a decline in the number of students enrolling in various social science subjects in their higher studies, particularly sociology. This study was conducted to determine the reasons for the loss of interest and to see how the factors affected students' academic selections. This study employed a qualitative research approach. In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 graduate students from the two universities, one private and one public, both in Lahore. The universities were chosen using convenient sampling and participants were selected using purposive sampling and were those who possessed the necessary knowledge and experience, and were able to provide meaningful insights into the benefits and challenges of studying sociology. Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis was used to explore the themes and patterns in the data. The results showed that there were some significant reasons for the drop: lack of career opportunities, low social recognition, lack of academic guidance and lack of understanding of the usefulness of sociology. The study gives recommendations to the teachers, university authorities and policy makers to increase students' awareness and involvement in social sciences. It concludes that guiding and counseling will enhance future students' understanding of the importance of sociology in solving the real-life problems in the society.

## **Introduction**

Sociology is the science of society, people and how humans live in society and interact with one another (Giddens & Sutton, 2021). It helps us to know about social issues, culture, family setups, and social problems that prevail in the community. In the past sociology was seen as an important discipline that could get students to think critically about the world around them (Berger, 1963). However, a number of students have studied the subject of sociology as their major in recent years but it is not the major studied. There is a general trend towards the subjects most likely to offer the best prospects of employment, such as business studies, IT, and engineering, which most of the students are interested in (Brown & Hesketh, 2004). This transformation has raised an alarm to the teachers, colleges, and policy makers because the loss of sociology might lower the awareness of the students on significant societal concerns (Mills, 1959). The overall purpose of this study is to find out the reasons why the students are avoiding the study of sociology and the social, cultural and economic factors behind the declining trend in choosing sociology as a degree program major.

## **Background of Study**

There has been a sharp decline in the number of Graduate students choosing social sciences programs for their educational degrees in different universities across the globe for last few years (UNESCO, 2016). Other subjects like Sociology, Political Science, Anthropology and International Relations which were considered fundamental to the study of the society and human behavior have been neglected in recent years and are now replaced by other subjects like business, computer science and engineering. At present these fields have looked more beneficial and promising to students which has lead decrease in the number of students opting for subjects like sociology. Sociology is one of the subjects that is focused specifically in this research. It attempts to gain insight into the motivations students have behind their disinterest in sociology as a discipline of study (Macionis, 2022).

This is not only an educational, but also a social problem with this reduction in the preference of social sciences. These disciplines help people in the development of informed citizens, critical thinking, as well as solving complicated problems such as inequality, governance, and cultural understanding. At the same time, as people take fewer courses in social sciences (Giddens &

Sutton, 2021), there is a fear that the voices of the people to challenge systems, explore human behavior, and find solutions to societal problems are lost. Students, parents and teachers, indeed the society itself, are being tempted to opt for courses that promise better job or higher income prospects shortly after graduation and thus are less popular among youth, for example, social sciences such as sociology. This is a major transformation that needs to be grasped by all those who want to improve balanced education development, including teachers, policymakers, and institutions.

## **Research Problem**

The drastic decline in empirical studies in sociology as a major has created a question of the future of such academic subjects and the position of this discipline in creating responsible citizens. Although social sciences are important to facilitate critical analysis of human actions, government and culture, the number of students enrolling in the area continues to decrease (Al Qawasmi, F., & Zweiri, M., 2022).

Limited research has been conducted to understand the reasons behind the decreasing interest in sociology as a major discipline among students of the younger generation. Parental behavior, society role, peer pressure, employment condition and social science subjects' value are among the factors which have a significant influence on students' lack of interest (Shakil, S., Ali, M., Khan, M., & Iqbal, H. , 2025). All these influences have not, however, been studied in the local context sufficiently. Hence, this research aims at examining the causes of this massive drop and also at exploring the perception of students on sociology as a subject compared to other subjects.

## **Research Objectives**

1. Identify graduate students' attitudes towards their enrollment in the social science programs, especially in the field of Sociology.
2. Explore the impact that parents, teachers and society have on student's perception of Sociology as a discipline and academic decisions.
3. Investigate how the career opportunities influence graduate students' decisions to pursue Sociology as their major.

## **Research Questions**

1. What are the eminent indicators of aversion in the selection of social sciences as major amongst graduated students?
2. What economic, cultural, and social issues do students mention that affect their decisions about what they should study – especially about their decision to choose sociology as a major?
3. How do students who are graduated perceive the impact of career opportunities on their decisions to pursue Sociology as their major?

## **Significance of Study**

The present research is significant as it points towards a potential issue in higher education: the loss of interest in social sciences, specifically sociology. Identifying the cause of this decline helps universities make adjustments in their instruction, curriculum, and guidance for students' academic and career development. The results of this study are useful for teachers in making their teaching more interesting and for policy makers in encouraging the value of social sciences in Higher Education. The study aims to assist parents and career advisors in guiding students to select academic majors that are appropriate for their interests and career objectives.

The results aim to help institutes better curriculum of educational programs that better align with the aspirations and needs of the job market. This study can make them more aware of the utility of sociology and the importance of dealing with the issues of the real world and it could enable them to create learning environments where theory is related to the practice. In conclusion, the aim of this research is to sensitize universities and society regarding the ongoing significance of social sciences in educating the thoughtful, socially conscious, and responsible human beings.

## Literature Review

The decline of social sciences in Pakistan is attributed to the historical neglect, lack of institutional support, low value of social sciences in society and external economic policy pressures. In 2025, Pakistan's literacy rate is 61-63%, higher for men (approx. 68%) and lower for women (approx. 52%), which leaves the other half of humanity oblivious or unaware (Ikram, 2025). Educators and policy makers have questioned why these fields are so vital to the critical examination and nation building of which they are so essential, yet they are being ignored in the academic and public sphere. From a literature review on this topic, it is evident that their decline has been influenced by sociocultural factors and due to the outdated old curriculum, weak policy integration, and low investment (Kemal, Zaidi, 2002)

It provides one of the first serious attempts to address this question. In his article he argues that these disciplines are not sufficiently funded, the way of teaching them in these universities is obsolete and out-of-date, and that there is a monumental lack of power research infrastructures and ignorance. He says that social sciences are not given much priority as compared to STEM subjects because they are not perceived as hard and important in the economy. The view is also assisted by the fact that there have been no visible contributions of social sciences national development. It leads to low enrolment in schools. Society with low interest rates has been maintained due to funding and technology. He also points out that in the technical area research is always helpful in influencing the policies of a government, but the social science research is of little consideration in Pakistan's policy making process. This results in thinking that these fields have little or no application in Pakistan.

Kemal is of the opinion that genuine reform will entail making specific investments in the modernization of curriculum, training faculty, renewing technology, and instilling collaboration between scholars and policymakers. Alternatively, their assertion is that the field will face stagnation and the capacity to develop inclusively and to make evidence-based decisions will diminish, which in turn will diminish Pakistan's capacity (Al Qawasmi, F., & Zweiri, M., 2022). In their opinion, internal inertia and external neglect are to blame for the decline of these disciplines. Many departments of universities have not brought their attention to the modernization of their curriculum; they have retained the tradition of their didactical approaches and the ways of studying and researching as they were in the past to address the social, technological and political

changes of our times. The lack of funding and more up-to-date information means that the discipline is less relevant to today's societies with such stagnation. The authors stress the importance of innovation, interdisciplinary and involvement of global and online trends in the teaching and research process. According to their study, there are two aspects to the issue: external marginalization and internal resistance to the change.

This issue of diminishing interest of students in social science has been a recent research focus in Pakistan. Social sciences are often neglected because students do not see them as useful subjects, due to the fact that their parents may not be interested in teaching them those subjects (Ahsan, H., & Khan, M. J., 2023). Despite this, their study, analyzing and observing the decline of social sciences as a choice of discipline among Graduate students, contradicts the notion that this shift is representative of structural and societal attitudes. They believe that this needs to be achieved through strategic planned reforms such as improved career counseling, awareness campaigns, improved teaching, and adequate funding to equip the updated technology to modern standards so it keeps up with the rest of the world to make the social sciences more popular and engaging. The social sciences' weak state is also related to structural and institutional conditions.

S. Akbar Zaidi discusses how state bureaucracy, donor influence and the lack of professional associations have affected the building of strong scholarly communities (Zaidi, S. Akbar, 2002). Zaidi writes in the paper that the absence of viable academic communities has led to low standards of research, reduced publication rates and limited influence on domestic discourses. The social sciences are not vibrant enough – devoid of scholarly networks, they are not linked with real-life policy issues in Pakistan. Another major contributor to the drop in social sciences is the career/career making relationships of the students. In a study where the researchers surveyed 500 university students in Lahore to find out how personal choice, parental influence, and social media influences career choice (Shakil, S., Ali, M., Khan, M., & Iqbal, H. , 2025). According to their findings, parents' expectations, in particular their professions, and their preferences, are the strongest influences on career decision-making.

A large number of students reported their parents' discouragement of selecting the social sciences due to their belief that this field was not as honorable or as financially stable as the other subjects which seem to be promising for a career in Pakistan. This influence from the family is often overruled by individual interests. Social norms also have a great impact on the aspirations of

students in raising their aspirations by making occupations such as engineering or medicine to be celebrated because in this country they have a better scope. The study also revealed that, although students value their choice, yet they are not adequately counselled or directed to make sound choices. In general, young females were more likely to be affected by parental expectations compared to young males due to Pakistan's wider sociocultural norms (Ahsan, H., & Khan, M. J., 2023).

Structural barriers to the crisis are in addition to cultural factors that have aggravated the crisis. Students are discouraged to study these subjects due to the lack of higher education and the low social value of these subjects (Michael, 2024). It also indicates that most of the students consider social sciences as a last resort as opposed to a career of choice. The non-sense of these disciplines is further undermined by poor career counselling, lack of institutional support and lack of demand and requirements. Furthermore, the article also highlights gendered trends: while the society imposes the obligation on females to finish their education within a relatively short time, males don't opt for social science as they are believed to be financially unstable. Also, the social sciences are not well exposed by the students since learning curricula in early schools are more inclined towards STEM disciplines. When there is no practical training in fields such as journalism and communication, it only reinforces negative perceptions about journalism.(Ahsan & Khan, 2023).

This unemployment in terms of employability is related to the bigger problem of graduate unemployment. As it is mentioned in the article 'Disaggregating the Graduate Unemployment in Pakistan' (Ahsan, H., & Khan, M. J., 2023), although higher education enrollment increased significantly during the last two decades, the number of available jobs did not meet the increase of graduates. The unemployment rate of graduates from other disciplines such as social sciences, arts, and humanities is high in Pakistan as compared to the graduates from technical & professional discipline.

This can be attributed to a number of factors, such as lack of cooperation between industry and academia, the fact that university curricula are not tied to the needs of the labor market, and few or little practicability and use. Furthermore, it points out that these obstacles are exacerbated by gender inequality, with one of them being the obstacle for a woman graduate to get into the game. The article suggests the need for skill education, cooperation between industry and education,

curriculum changes, and policy intervention as means to address structural unemployment. Put together, these studies give one a clear explanation of the decline of the social sciences in Pakistan.

The current crisis is also caused by historical neglect (Kemal, 2005), internal disciplinary stagnation (Al Qawasmi, F., & Zweiri, M., 2022), weak institutions structures (Zaidi, S. Akbar, 2002), cultural and familial career choice factors (Shakil, S., Ali, M., Khan, M., & Iqbal, H. , 2025), ineffective exposure, and infrastructure (Michael, 2024), and high unemployment rates. These problems are linked and the vicious cycle starts in that students are not encouraged to join a field because the value of the field in the society is low, and there are few opportunities to get job in that field.

It has also reflected the status of the sociology as a discipline in Pakistan with its challenges faced to date and opportunities it has provided. Sociology still faces challenges in the form of absence of institutional support, untrained faculty members and less linkage between theory and practice in the background of Pakistan. Nonetheless, this also mentions that there are increasing prospects of the field, particularly since Pakistan is experiencing complicated social problems, including inequality, urbanization, and cultural transformation.(Gulzar H. Shah & Bushra Abdul-Ghaffar, 2005).Universities can assist in restoring the image of sociology and improving enrollment through a combination of overcoming outlined challenges and reminding society of the applicability of sociology in everyday issues. This school of thought plays its role in the aim of this current study which is to determine the factors responsible for the students dropping out of sociology and how sociology can be given new life through creating of awareness, guidance and practicing to make it meaningful again in higher education.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice**

This theory accounts for the fact that individual choices are influenced by society and/or the personal experiences of an individual. The key concepts provided by Pierre - habitus, field, and capital - point to why students give more preferences to subjects other than social sciences as their major (Bourdieu, 1986). The way people think or act as a result of what has happened to them in the past and how they have been brought up is their habitus. When a particular student is brought up in a setting where applied courses such as medicine, business or computer sciences are considered as more lucrative courses they begin to feel that the social sciences such as sociology is not as important as these other courses. The Field is the larger system, e.g., the educational system or the body of regulation that assigns greater importance and respect to some of the subjects than others. Today the spheres of business and technology are more popular than it had an influence on the choice of a student (Giddens & Sutton, 2021).

Bourdieu's also explains different types of Capitals that are economic capital (financial), cultural capital (educational skills and knowledge) and social capital (connections and relationships) (Bourdieu, 1986). These capitals somehow direct the educational and career choices of the students. Well-educated and financially prosperous families, for instance, might pressure their children to pursue jobs that might have shorter or lower paths to success, thereby fostering a perception of inferiority and low value among many other students for the discipline of sociology. Hence, Bourdieu's theory helps appreciate that, as well as being a personal decision, the disappearance of sociology as a discipline choice is also a result of social pressure, family influence and the importance ascribed to various subjects within the educational system and social world (Mills, 1959; Berger, 1963).

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The approach used in this study is qualitative research because this study wants to find the cause; why the students of Forman Christian College (A Chartered University), Lahore and University of the Punjab, Lahore who have completed their bachelor's program are not interested to study in social sciences in general and especially in sociology as the field of study in the bachelor's program. The qualitative approach is adopted as it is appropriate because it gives in-depth information regarding students' own experiences, beliefs and social contexts that influence students' educational decisions.

The study type used in this study has adopted the interpretive research model because this kind of research model suggests that truth is socially constructed, and it can be explained by the perception of both the stakeholders of the truth and the truth itself. This allows the researcher to explore the perceptions or viewpoints of the students regarding the social, cultural, and economic factors that influenced students' choices of such subjects as majors. The study aims to unveil the motivations, points of view and attitudes through in-depth interviews with the participants.

### **Sampling Method**

The technique of sampling that was adopted in this study was purposive sampling, where the participants possessed the requisite knowledge and experience of the topic of research.

This was done through the use of purposive sampling, which enabled the researcher to determine the participants based on his/her personal judgment rather than selecting random students. This approach proved to be helpful in gathering information from a few individuals who would be able to give meaningful comments on the subject of the investigation.

The study was conducted on students who have completed their bachelor's degree from Social Sciences Department of Forman Christian College University and University of the Punjab. The selection of these two institutions was done using Convenient Sampling. The primary goal was to

gain insight into the attitudes of the graduate students and the factors that have led to the drop in student interest in sociology as a major.

Forman Christian College (A Chartered University), Lahore and University of the Punjab, Lahore each had 10 graduate students selected for this research. These two universities have been selected because one is a private university and other is public university both are situated in Lahore. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the participants to ensure students who have the relevant experience in the social sciences will be included in the study.

The researcher learned from this that he could obtain the information from students who could explain the reasons why sociology is losing popularity among the new generation.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data by interviewing students. The in-depth interviews were free and interactive in a way that the researcher can lead the conversation with the already set questions and leave the participants to share their experience in detail. The questions focus on the viewpoints of the participants about sociology, the influence of their work expectations and demands, the pressure they feel from parents and society, and their overall attitude towards the discipline.

The interviews were in person, they lasted approximately 30 minutes, and the location for conducting interviews was determined based on availability and comfortability of the participants. All respondents were informed of the purpose of the research prior to the interview date; they were informed with their consent that they would be audio taped during the interview so that the transcriptions would be accurate and this also assisted in developing a grounded analysis. In addition, there was greater number of notes produced to capture significant observations and information about the situation.

### **Data Analysis Approach**

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data, which is a technique involving the identification of themes, grouping and elaboration of repeated themes in qualitative data. It started with transcribing and explaining the interviews, and intensive reading of the interviews to determine the key themes. The researcher then comes up with the first codes, cluster ideas that can

be grouped, and organize them into possible themes. The themes were modified, developed, and named based on the key findings of the study.

Thematic analysis is particularly suitable for this study because it enables the investigator to determine the similarities within the answers of the participants, and also to determine the different or opposing perceptions of the opinions of the students with different backgrounds and school institutions. The research provided a stable and detailed picture of the deteriorating popularity in social sciences. Braun and Clarke a six-step thematic analysis was used

1- Collect the data

2- Engage with the data

3- Categorize extracts of the data.

4- Mint the code categories of the codes.

5- Conceptualize the themes of the categorized coded extracts.

6- Interpret the findings and present them.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Additionally, in this research, the respect and fairness of all participants is important. The researcher explained the intent of the study to the participants and obtained consent to participate in the study as well as to answer interview questions. The participation was voluntary; the participants had the right to refuse and to withdraw. Additionally, the researcher maintained the confidentiality and privacy of all students. The researchers also did their best to ensure privacy, by avoiding the use of names of real people. The data was only used academically/for research purposes. The researcher did not include their own bias or discrimination in the explanation of the information that he/she obtained on the students. This results in the findings being the truth. With the observance of these principles of ethics, the study contributed to maintaining integrity and respect for the rights of the student and had a positive contribution to determining the reasons why students are renouncing to study Sociology. Consent was sought prior to any audio recording for research purposes and participants' informed consent was sought on the nature and

purpose of the study. The demographic information gathered during the research was kept at the utmost level of confidentiality to ensure that the research participant(s) privacy is maintained. The researcher had access to the data collected which was used only for academic and research purposes and efforts was made to keep the participants anonymous throughout the research.

## Findings

The results of the qualitative interviews that were carried out with the participants about the decreasing interest of the graduated students in the social sciences disciplines especially Sociology as a choice of their major are presented in this section. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data to look for common themes and views among the participants. By using the in-depth interviews by the participants and subsequent transcriptions; three major themes emerged that explain the declining trend in selecting social sciences as an academic major.

### The following themes were identified:

1. Indicators of Aversion to Sociology as choice of Major
2. Socio-Economic and Cultural Influences on Academic Choices
3. Perceptions of Career Opportunities and Their Role in Decision-Making

### Demographic Information of Participants

Participant	Gender	University	Program
1	Female	University of the Punjab Lahore	BS Economics
2	Female	University of the Punjab Lahore	BS Sociology
3	Female	University of the Punjab Lahore	BS Psychology
4	Male	University of the Punjab Lahore	BS Sociology

5	Female	University of the Punjab Lahore	BS Psychology
6	Female	Forman Christian College Lahore	BS Sociology
7	Female	Forman Christian College Lahore	BS Psychology
8	Male	Forman Christian College Lahore	BS Education
9	Male	Forman Christian College Lahore	BS Education
10	Female	Forman Christian College Lahore	BS Sociology

The participants came from various academic backgrounds – from social sciences, sociology, education, economics and psychology, which provided both a sociological and a different perspective of the social sciences, but within the classification of social sciences.

### **Theme 1: Indicators of Aversion to Sociology as choice of Major**

The most noticeable outcome of the interviews was the idea that social sciences and specifically sociology are not as preferred as professional or technical studies. A few speakers noted that, when compared with other social sciences, sociology is not seen as being applicable. A participant who was studying economics said:

*“Most students now prefer subjects that are directly linked to government jobs, business, or professional degrees because they pay more. Sociology is often seen as less practical.”*

Similarly, another participant stated:

*“Most students do not see it as a strong or practical field. They prefer degrees that clearly lead to jobs and stable careers. In today’s competitive job market, students often prioritize disciplines that offer better employment opportunities and financial security.”*

The answers showed that it seemed that there was a lack of professional direction in sociology which made students less inclined to major in sociology.

Another recurring observation was that sociology is frequently viewed as a secondary or less competitive academic option. A psychology student shared:

*“Many students think it does not provide clear career direction or high-income potential. Even during admissions, very few students mention sociology as their first preference.”*

Peer influence was another factor that arose in this disaffection. One of the participants said that it is because most students around them opt for jobs related to their profile, they feel that they must take the same route. One participant explained:

*“When you see everyone choosing strong fields, you also feel pressured to do the same. This social influence can affect students’ academic decisions, even when they have a personal interest in Social Sciences.”*

But students who picked the sociology indicated that the issue is not with the sociology, but rather, with the lack of understanding of it. “An explanation by a sociology student:

*“Most students run after degrees that look more professional and high paying. They don’t really understand what sociology is about. As a result, sociology is often not considered a preferred choice among students.”*

In general, the results indicate that the interest in sociology is declining and this is mainly due to the perception of the inapplicability, competitiveness and professional relevance.

## **Theme 2: Socio-Economic and Cultural Influences on Academic Choices**

A second key theme during the interviews was the prominent socio-economic and cultural drivers impacting on student decisions about their schooling. The importance of the decisions about university majors made by participants, influenced by their parents and family expectations, and by society's values was consistently highlighted.

It seemed that the influence of family was especially strong on influencing students' educational paths. One participant spoke about why her family played a factor in her not studying sociology:

*“My family had a strong influence. They encouraged me to select a subject that would help me get a secure job in the future. They believed sociology would not provide that security.”*

Similarly, another participant explained:

*“My parents clearly told me to choose a subject that has a good scope and earning potential. They did not consider sociology a good option.”*

Parents' responses suggest that stability and financial security are important factors in parental guidance of children in academic decisions.

The decisions are also influenced by cultural expectations. Students mentioned that some professions like medicine, engineering and business are in high esteem and that it helps them to choose such a profession. One participant explained:

*“In Pakistani society, families prefer degrees that promise respect and income. They often encourage their children to choose fields that are considered more secure and prestigious.*

Another participant expressed a similar perspective:

*“Society still puts doctors and engineers on a pedestal. These professions are generally viewed as more successful and rewarding compared to other fields.”*

These results therefore suggest that students' academic decisions are greatly affected by the conceptions of success in society. The majority of the participants indicated that the success is sometimes connected to financial stability or social prestige and not necessarily to the personal interest or social contribution.

Some participant also reported supportive family environments which enabled them to engage in the study of sociology in an interested manner. One participant said, for example:

*“My parents were supportive because they had already seen my sister succeed in this field.”*

On the contrary a sociology student shared:

*“At first my parents were unsure, but when they saw I was serious and passionate, they supported me. Their encouragement gave me confidence in my academic choice and future goals.”*

The responses show that while cultural and family pressures may deter students from selecting sociology, students from a supportive family environment may have a positive impact on their academic decisions related to the selection of a major in social sciences in general and Sociology in particular.

### **Theme 3: Perceptions of Career Opportunities and Their Role in Decision-Making**

One of the most significant factors was the perception of students about the career opportunities available in the career they selected. Perception in respect of career opportunity emerged as one of the most influential factors which influenced the students in their decisions of choosing social sciences in general and sociology in particular as a subject of graduation. Many of the participants think that the opportunities of the subject are not extensive or clear as compared to other subjects.

Financial security and employment opportunities were frequently cited as key concerns. One participant stated:

*“Job prospects were the main factor. I wanted to avoid the risk of unemployment after graduation.”*

Another participant expressed similar concerns:

*“I personally think it is not a practical field. I wanted something more career-oriented and financially secure.”*

These perceptions reveal the important role that concerns about economic stability play in students' academic choices.

A lack of awareness about career pathways in sociology contributed to these concerns. Many participants admitted that they were not fully aware of the career opportunities available to sociology graduates. One participant explained:

*“Not very much. That lack of information makes the subject less attractive.”*

Another participant shared a similar perspective:

*“I know about NGOs and research, but I don’t know the full scope.”*

However, participants who were familiar with the field described a wider range of career opportunities. One sociology student stated:

*“There are opportunities in NGOs, research organizations, teaching, and even international organizations.”*

Similarly, another participant explained:

*“You can go into research, development sector jobs, policy work, and even corporate roles.”*

Several of the participants said that, although they believe that there may be other options, it takes extra effort, like further learning and education, networking, etc., to be a successful sociologist. One participant noted:

*“It can lead to a successful career, but it requires extra effort, higher studies, or foreign opportunities.”*

The participants also felt that universities could make an important contribution to the development of students' perception of sociology through the provision of clearer career guidance. One participant stated:

*“If universities clearly show career paths, more students might consider sociology.”*

Another participant suggested:

*“Universities should provide internships, career seminars, and alumni talks so students can see the practical value of the field.”*

In general, this study implies that the lack of clarity of the career prospects and lack of awareness of professional career seriously affect the drop of interest in sociology as a subject. The students' decision to specialize in other subjects in social sciences (economics, psychology and education) is however driven by

## Discussion

This decline in the number of students choosing to study sociology appears to be related to changing priorities among the students and to the changing demands of society. Most of the participants indicated that today's students want to choose courses that are related to work, money and career. Business, computer science, engineering, and economics degrees are frequently deemed to be less risky options since they are thought to offer more definite careers. The neglect is not because of the loss of the value of sociology, but because people consider it to be uncertain in practice. This gives reasons for the stance of (Ahsan, H., & Khan, M. J., 2023) which state that employability has become a crucial factor in educational choice-making.

Family influence was also a significant influence in student choice. Many of the respondents indicated that parents pressure children to select those subjects in which there is higher earning potential and respect in the society. In some cases, students who once were interested in sociology, changed their mind because of the dissatisfaction of the family members on the topic of their study. It is a facet of a culture in Pakistan, in which parents can play a significant role in educational decisions. In addition, (Shakil, S., Ali, M., Khan, M., & Iqbal, H. , 2025) found that the parental expectations strongly affect the youth's career choices.

This is also a major concern with regards to the social image of different jobs. Doctors, engineers and businessmen are more respected than socially science graduates, the interviewees kept repeating. A measure of success is typically measured by salary, job position and conspicuous position. This is because, unlike other courses sociology is not always given the same level of publicity; therefore, students may not readily take it. This discussion can be related to the theory of practice of Bourdieu, which explains how an individual's choice of action is influenced by the values and beliefs of the society he or she lives in. The findings of this study also reflect Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital, where students' educational choices are shaped by their backgrounds their families social and what people are expecting from them their perceptions regarding future success (Bourdieu, 1986). Students who belong to environments that value professional and technical fields are more likely to perceive sociology as less rewarding and less prestigious because they think that medical and business fields can give them success.

The study pointed out another weakness of the sociology: Students are not aware of career opportunities. A few of the participants confirmed they did not know all the domains of sociology and were not aware of the domain of employment in research, policy making, NGOs, development organizations, education, media and human resources. If a student doesn't see things clearly then he/she will tend to opt for the subjects that are considered more organized and marketable. Effective career guidance and the marketing of social sciences also were (Michael, 2024)<sup>[66]</sup>.

Students enrolled in sociology had a different point of view. They considered the discipline to be useful, valuable, and meaningful to understand society, inequality, culture and human behavior. They believe that they need to work hard, be educated, and gain experience along with skills in order to be successful in this area. This shows that most of the negative perceptions are based on the information that is limited and not actually the nature of the subject.

The universities to play a significant role in this scenario. The participants suggested that the institutions provide internships, alumni talk, visits to the field, seminars and better linkages to the job market. If they get realistic results and true success stories, then maybe the students will think more positively about their sociology studies. The current research is also similar to one launched by (Kemal, 2005) who has recommended that the development of social sciences in Pakistan is hindered due to the absence of institutional support and the outdated systems.

Students' lack of interest in sociology is not the sole cause of decline of sociology as their major subject. This is affected by financial concerns, familial influence, social status and career blindness. Sociology is a valuable field of study, which should be better represented, supported by institutions, and have clear career opportunities to enable students to appreciate its worth.

## **Research Limitations**

The findings of this research have some limitations which were taken into account when interpreting the findings. This did not allow for generalization of the experiences to a bigger sample of students. Since the research has conducted only on 10 students of Forman Christian College University (FCCU) and The University of the Punjab (PU), the findings were not representative for the students of other universities and other regions. Another limitation is that some of the interviews might have given socially desirable responses during the interviews, thus influencing the accuracy of the responses. In spite of the restrictions, the study provides some helpful and insightful information about the potential reasons for the diminishing interest in sociology and a

foundation for future research with a larger, more diverse sample.

## **Conclusion**

The research concludes that the decline of sociology as a major of choice among graduate students is due to a combination of a number of related social, economic and cultural reasons. The interviews indicated that the majority of students have opted for subjects which are closely linked to the job prospects, economic security and appreciation of the job. Sociology is known to few students because it is an uncertain career path and many students aren't even interested in it.

The influence of family was one of the key factors identified that had an impact on students' decision making. Parents in most instances would advise their children to major in areas that are deemed to be safe and reputable like business, engineering, medicine, or computer science. Sociology does not necessarily have the same image in society, so students might be pressurized into pursuing other courses. Social attitudes also play a role as the social attitudes tend to value occupations on income and status more than academic or social contribution.

The study also reveals that the lack of knowledge regarding the possibilities of employment to the field has been a negative factor in the interest of students. Many participants did not know about the various possibilities of research, education and development organizations, policy making, media and HR. This means that sociology is perceived weak not only by the masses but it also does not have career guidance and effective promotion.

The students, who chose sociology, referred to the discipline as substantial and helpful to comprehend society, culture, inequality, and human behavior. Their responses showed that sociology is viable with the right resources, such as skills, further study, internship, and work experience, and can lead to a successful career. It is not that discipline is the issue, it is the understanding and expression of discipline.

## **Appendix A: Informed Consent Form**

**Title of Study:** Investigating the Decline of Social Sciences as a Choice of Discipline for Graduate students

**Researcher:** Musa Haroon

**Institution:** Forman Christian College University

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the decline in trends of choosing sociology as a major subject among graduate students.

### **Confidentiality**

All information shared during this study will remain confidential. Your name will not be disclosed, and pseudonyms will be used.

### **Voluntary Participation:**

Your participation is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without penalty.

### **Consent:**

I have read and understood the information above

Demographic information will be collected, but it will be kept confidential for the privacy of the participant.

### **Consent for audio recording:**

Do you give the consent for audio recording for research purposes.

1. I confirm that I have completely read and understood the information sheet explaining the purpose and scope of the research.

2. I have utilized the opportunity to ask questions about the research and have had detailed discussions with the researcher.
3. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw from the study at any given point without specifying any reason. I am completely free to decline or refuse to respond to questions I do not want to answer.
4. I understand that the confidentiality of my responses will be ensured, and my personal information will not be used in the research materials. My identity will be kept secret, and I will not be identifiable in any information in the research report.
5. I allow the researcher to access my responses and use them in her research.
6. I agree that the data collected from my interview may be used in future studies after any information regarding my identity has been removed.
7. I agree to take part in the research above.
8. I understand that a copy of all signed sheets including the consent form and the information sheet will be provided to me and will also be available with the researcher for record.

Signature:

Date:

Email (optional for Data Validation purposes):


## Appendix B: Semi-structured Questionnaire

1. Do you think the popularity of sociology has decreased among students?  
کیا آپ سمجھتے ہیں کہ طلبہ میں سوشیالوجی کی مقبولیت کم ہو گئی ہے؟
2. Did you ever consider choosing sociology as your subject? Why or why not?  
کیا آپ نے کبھی سوشیالوجی کو اپنا مضمون بنانے کے بارے میں سوچا تھا؟ کیوں یا کیوں نہیں؟
3. How much do you think parents or family influence your choice of subject?  
آپ کے خیال میں مضمون کے انتخاب پر والدین یا گھر والوں کا کتنا اثر ہوتا ہے؟
4. Do you think sociology is as important as other subjects like business or engineering?  
کیا آپ سمجھتے ہیں کہ سوشیالوجی دوسرے مضامین جیسے بزنس یا انجینئرنگ جتنی اہم ہے؟
5. Do financial concerns or job prospects affect your decision to study sociology?  
کیا مالی حالات یا روزگار کے مواقع سوشیالوجی پڑھنے کے فیصلے کو متاثر کرتے ہیں؟
6. Do you believe sociology offers good job opportunities after graduation?  
کیا آپ کو لگتا ہے کہ سوشیالوجی کی ڈگری کے بعد اچھی نوکری کے مواقع موجود ہیں؟
7. How does your cultural or social background influence your choice of major?  
کیا آپ کا سماجی یا ثقافتی پس منظر آپ کے مضمون کے انتخاب کو متاثر کرتا ہے؟
8. Do you think society values sociology graduates the same as other fields?  
کیا آپ سمجھتے ہیں کہ معاشرہ سوشیالوجی کے طلبہ کو دوسرے مضامین کے طلبہ جتنی اہمیت دیتا ہے؟
9. Do your friends or peers encourage or discourage you from studying sociology?  
کیا آپ کے دوست یا ساتھی سوشیالوجی پڑھنے کی حوصلہ افزائی کرتے ہیں یا نہیں؟
10. Do you think studying sociology can help you build a successful career?  
کیا آپ کے خیال میں سوشیالوجی پڑھ کر ایک کامیاب کیریئر بنایا جا سکتا ہے؟
11. How aware are you of the career options available for sociology graduates?  
کیا آپ سوشیالوجی کے گریجویٹس کے لیے دستیاب کیریئر کے مواقع سے باخبر ہیں؟
12. Would better career guidance make you more interested in sociology?  
کیا بہتر کیریئر رہنمائی (گائیڈنس) آپ کی سوشیالوجی میں دلچسپی بڑھا سکتی ہے؟
13. Do you believe sociology helps develop useful skills for the workplace?  
کیا آپ سمجھتے ہیں کہ سوشیالوجی پڑھنے سے عملی زندگی اور کام کے لیے مفید صلاحیتیں پیدا ہوتی ہیں؟
14. What could universities do to make sociology more attractive to students?  
آپ کے خیال میں یونیورسٹیاں سوشیالوجی کو طلبہ کے لیے مزید پرکشش بنانے کے لیے کیا کر سکتی ہیں؟

## Appendix C: Demographic Information

No.	Item / Heading	Response
1	Age	
2	Gender	
3	Academic Background	
4	Current Program	
5	Year of Study	
6	Overall CGPA	
7	Preferred Field for Graduate Studies	

## Appendix D: IRB certificate



**FORMAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE**  
(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**  
**APPROVAL CERTIFICATE**

IRB Ref: IRB-925/11-2025

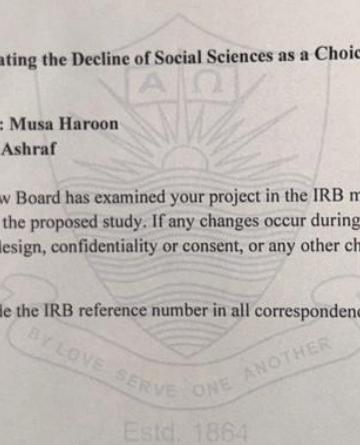
Date: 20- 11- 2025

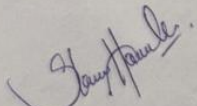
Project Title: Investigating the Decline of Social Sciences as a Choice of Discipline for Graduate students.

Principal Investigator: Musa Haroon  
Supervisor: Taqveem Ashraf

The Institutional Review Board has examined your project in the IRB meeting held on 20-11-2025 and has approved the proposed study. If any changes occur during your research related to participant risk, study design, confidentiality or consent, or any other change, then IRB must be notified immediately.

Please be sure to include the IRB reference number in all correspondence.



  
Dr. Sharoon Hanook  
Conveher-IRB  
Chairperson Department of Statistics  
Forman Christian College  
(A Chartered University)  
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