

## **Unveiling the Veiled Facts: A Survey on Literacy Situation in Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

*Literacy is at the heart of the world development and human rights because it is good for the individual, the economic well-being, society, political stability and for community. The title of the study was “Unveiling the Veiled Facts: A survey on literacy situation in Pakistan” The main focus of research study was to get reliable estimate of literates through household survey among the population of selected rural and urban areas of district Muzaffargarh; to find out the gaps between reported literacy and measured literacy so that to provide reliable literacy rates; to recommend a criteria for reporting reliable literacy rate in the country in the up coming census in Pakistan. The tool designed to carry out the study were two separate instruments were used. The subjects of the study were between 10-59 years population who have completed their primary education but not completed their elementary level of education were found 1812 persons in which 1187 person from 256 households. Just 104 were participated in tested. After data collection, coded data was analyzed. Researcher used certain procedure like as sum of coded values, percentage distribution, and average. It was showed that tested literacy rates based on results obtained in tests measuring basic level of literacy 29.9%, middle level of literacy 17.9% and self-learning level of literacy 6.4% compared with reported literacy rates 38.5%. It was found that overestimation of literacy was 8.6% in district Muzaffargarh Pakistan.*

Key Words: Reported literacy, Tested literacy, Unveiling, Veiled, Overestimation

### **1.1 Introduction**

Education and literacy both are related with the development of the country. It is a good reason that countries having more literacy rate are more developed than the countries having low literacy rate in the world because it is inter-dependent and inter-connected with each other. It leads to life long learning and have a considerable contribution for sustainable human/individual development. It is a strong tool for empowering society, groups and nations to take part in social and economics development. (Mohanty, 2007) Literacy remained a crucial issue in Pakistan since 1947. Government took different steps to improve literacy rate in the country. Government's commitment can be observed in all education policies and plans. National Education Policies of 1972 and 1979 show Government's deep awareness of literacy issue whereas National education policies of 1992 and 1998 provide clear literacy plans.

Literacy and Mass Education Commission was first time established in 1981 as a major national literacy agency in Pakistan. Definition of literate persons also remained changed and data representing literacy rate in special time frame also is prepared under the literate person definition in that special time. Here literacy rate and the definition of literate person are being presented to support the assignment (UNESCO, 2006).

Census Year	Definition of Literacy	Literacy Rate
1951	One who can read a clear print in any language	16.4%
1961	One who is able to read with understanding a simple letter in any language	16.3%
1972	One who is able to read and write in some language with understanding	21.7%
1981	One who can read newspaper and simple letter	26.2%
1998	One who can read a newspaper and write a simple letter in any language	43.9%

Economic Survey of Pakistan (2005) estimated Pakistani literacy rate 54% for the year 2004 according to definition that a person is literate if he/she can read and write a simple letter and do simple daily life calculations. Data revealed approximately 01% point increase in literacy ratio. It is the result of Government planned and deliberative effort toward eradicate illiteracy. Here in this assignment a detail review of major literacy programs and projects is being presented (Literacy.org, n. d.)

On the other hand illiteracy is a curse and great harmful for the development of society. It should be abolished with an iron hand because it champ the economy of the country. It is a huge deprivations and it lead to other deprivations. UNESCO 2004, seems agreed with the statement illiteracy stem to poverty and poverty stem to other deprivation in society. In the light of many researches it has been proved by the researched and eminent scholar that low literate people have low living standard, less means of income and it creates high level of mortality rate. Mohanty, 2007 again seems to be agreed that illiterate people more likely to smoke, less likely to aware of hygienic problems, have shortened life expectancy and lake of public involvement in the society.

Adult literacy is remained an important issue not only in developing countries but developed countries also from decades. Though international organizations are to facilitate but the governments are free to take initiatives and practice different strategies regarding their social, cultural and financial circumstances. This causes variations among policies, plans, implementations and outcomes of the adult literacy programs adopted by different countries. In this assignment a study of the models of adult literacy programs taken in four countries, India, China, Bangladesh and Pakistan is being presented.

Pakistan, a south Asian country, holds 803940 square kilometer area and approximately 180 million population (United Nation, 2009). In National census of Pakistan (1998) a literate person was defined as “one who can read newspaper and write a simple letter in any language”. Viewing this definition, Federal Bureau of Statistics (2009) estimated literacy rate of Pakistan 56% for the year of 2008. Data presented by FBS shows a large gender disparity against females. Their literacy rate is 43% compare to 68% of males. There are also wide differences among literacy rates of provinces. Punjab has highest literacy rate with 57% and Baluchistan with lowest 48%.

Literacy involves a continuum of reading and writing skills, often extending to basic arithmetic skills and life skills. The literacy rate reflects the accumulated achievement of primary education and adult literacy programmes in imparting basic literacy skills to the population. Because of the need to collect internationally comparable data, the concept of literacy is usually reduced to the standard definition “the ability to read and write, with understanding, a simple statement related to one’s daily life”. Most of the countries of the world collect and measures literacy rate in different ways. Usually they rely on national population censuses that take place every five or ten years, or household, labour force or other demographic surveys. Some use literacy surveys to collect more detailed data. Additional data from national publications and reports and from ad hoc surveys are used to supplement literacy statistics at the international level. Literacy ideally should be determined by measuring the reading, writing and numeracy skills of each person within a social context. Organizing such measurements during national population censuses may be too time-consuming, costly and complex. However, some countries do require census enumerators to administer a simple test by asking each person in a household to read a simple, preselected text.

But enumerators usually determine literacy status on the basis of self-declaration or a declaration by the head of the household. That sometimes gives rise to concerns about data reliability and thus comparability. Some countries may equate never having attended school with illiteracy or having attended school or completed grade four with literacy. But the latest UN recommendations on censuses advise against assuming any links between school attendance and literacy or educational attainment. (United Nations 1998)

## **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

The main focus of research study was to get reliable estimate of literates through household survey among the population of selected rural and urban areas of district Muzaffargarh; to find out the gaps between reported literacy and measured literacy so that to provide reliable literacy rates; to recommend a criteria for reporting reliable literacy rate in the country in the upcoming census in Pakistan.

## **1.3 Methodology**

The research survey was descriptive in nature and following procedure was adopted to complete this piece of research.

### **1.3.1 Population**

The population of the research study was comprised both urban and rural areas of District Muzaffargarh. Population age between 10-59 year group who have completed fourth grade schooling but not elementary schooling were population of the study.

### **1.3.2 Sampling**

As mentioned above that this study was based on district Muzaffargarh. It has four Tehsils and each tehsil was further divided into two strata; rural and urban by the researcher using stratified sampling method. So four villages and four towns from each tehsil of District Muzaffargarh were randomly selected. Eight houses from each village/town were randomly selected for survey.

## **1.4 Tool Development**

### **1.4.1 Stage One**

A household roster was developed by the researcher. The household survey was used to get background information of the respondents. Stage one helped to identify the literates from the population. This survey contained the following information:

- Basic household member's information
- Basic household information
- Information on means of acquiring literacy

### **1.4.2 Stage Two**

A survey questionnaire (Literacy Test) was developed based on the UNESCO literacy definition and the parameters used in surveys conducted in other countries like Lao, Bangladesh, Ghana, Nepal, Botswana, Ondangwa, Ethiopia and Kenya. The questionnaire was administered on the selected sample to test the literacy skills. The test was measured; Background information of respondents, Reading skills, Writing skill, Numeracy and Visual skills.

## **1.5 Data Collection**

Before starting data collection the research visited to the potential respondents through local leaders and other influential people to establish good rapport with the local community. These introductory meetings facilitated the researcher to build up good rapport with respondents. Appointments were fixed according to the community convenience. This procedure helped to collect information about their personal lives. This process also helped in the identification of literates who were between 10-59 years age group and have completed primary education but not completed elementary. After identification of literates, the researcher administered the test on the identified adults.

## **1.6 Data Analysis**

After collected data, two data sheets were prepared followed by feeding the data in the sheets. One sheet will for house holds information and the other for literacy skills test. The coded data will be filtered and analyzed by experts using certain procedure like sum of coded values, percentage distribution, and average of summed values.

## 1.7 The Results and Discussion

### 1.7.1 Reported Literacy Rate

The main objectives of the study were to identify the gaps between Reported literacy and Tested literacy and to get a reliable estimate of literates through household survey. All household members 10 or above were asked that they can read and write with understanding a short statement of daily life. In Pakistan the literacy rate is reported by the government by counting the number and percentage of all the people who completed the primary level of education. For reporting the literacy rate, the government does not take any test to test their literacy skills of the people. It merely counts the numbers and reports the literacy rates. During survey some caution were observed for following reasons:

- During the survey, surveyor did not visit each house and sat at specific place and got information about all households of the village from one or two person.
- Sometimes surveyor sat in schools and got information from students about their households which were not reliable.
- It was also observed during the survey that mostly surveyor automatically by self assumed the condition of household.
- Mostly surveyors did not take this practice seriously.

Due to these factors literacy rates of Pakistan were not reliable and literacy rates have a tendency to be exaggerated.

**Table 1: Reported Literacy Rates in Muzaffargarh**

Area/ Subgroup	Tested Sample	Tested Sample %	Male %	Female %
District	457	38.50%	41.0%	36.0%
Urban	304	66.52%	70.84%	62.2%
Rural	153	33.48%	35.68%	31.28%

Table1. describes that tested literacy rate in Muzaffargarh district is 38.50% in which male and female ratio is 41.0% and 36.0% respectively. There is strong variation between rural and urban areas of the district.

**Table 2: Reported Adult Literacy Rates**

Source of Information	Both Sex	Male	Female
Population Census 1998	28.45%	40.87%	14.77%
Projected Literacy Rate 2008	38.78%	53.57%	24.38%
Researcher Survey (2008)	38.50%	41.0%	36.0%

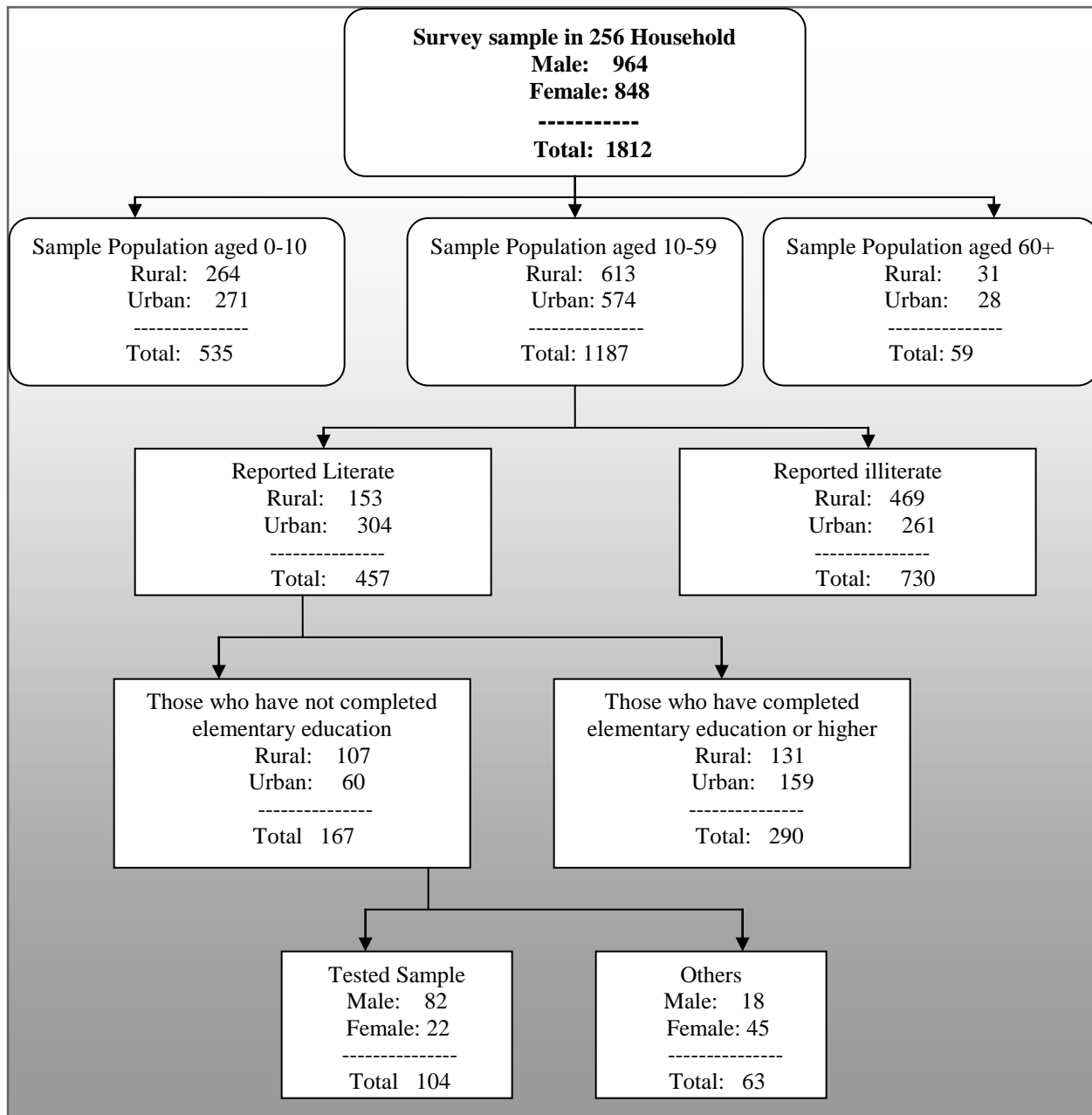
Table 2 portrays the Reported adult literacy rates of district Muzaffargarh aged (10-59) by government of Pakistan in different time periods; there are some sources of information to report adult literacy rates these are; population census (1998), projected literacy rate by 2008 and Current researcher survey (2008) by researcher himself. Population census (1998) shows 28.45% literacy rate of district Muzaffargarh and projected literacy (2008) with 3.38% per annum growth rate is 38.78%.

### 1.7.2 Tested Literacy Rates

The concept of tested literacy referred to measuring the literacy skills of literate person against criteria. For this purpose literacy test was developed keeping in view all the aspects of literacy skills which should be there in a literate person. The purpose of testing literacy level is to find out whether the people who are reported literate genuinely qualify as literates or not. For this purpose, it was determined not to include those people who have completed elementary education as they were understood to be literate and the adults who were 10-59 year age group and have passed four or five grade but not elementary level were selected for test. According to these selection criteria following adults were eligible and were tested. See under figure.

1.8 Determination of survey Sample- Reported Literacy Rate

Figure 1



1.9 Criteria for Reporting Results from the Research Study

The test contained four skills reading, writing, numeracy, and visual skill. Each skill consists of 25 marks and the results from the literacy skills have been finalized as following criteria:

- a. if a person who gets 24.0 percent score; that adults will be considered as “ Basic Literacy Level”
- b. if a person who achieve 48.0 percent scores that will be considered as “Middle Literacy Level”
- c. if a person who gets 72.0 percent scores that will considered as “ Self-Learning Level”

It is cleared that if a person who obtained 25 scores out of 25 in two skills but only 5 scores in third skill that person would not be even counted as a “basic literacy skill”. Likewise in other two skills if a person abstained 12 scores out of 25 in reading, writing and numeracy skills would be assumed as “Middle Level Literate”.

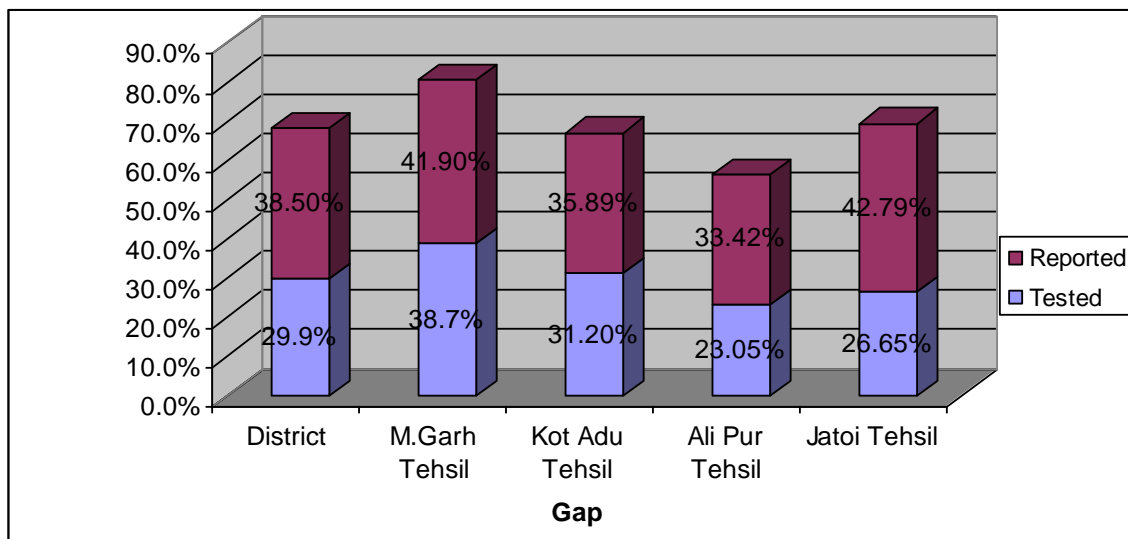
**Table 4: Tested Literacy Rates (3 Skills) for (Grade Wise)**

Education Grades	Basic Level	Middle Level	Self-Learning Level
Grade 4	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Grade 5	24.6%	18.03%	3.3%
Grade 6	42.9%	19.1%	9.5%
Grade 7	25.0%	33.3%	25.0%

Table 4 explores grade wise tested levels of literacy in three levels. The above table indicates that five years or 5<sup>th</sup> Grade of schooling is generally required to achieve basic level of literacy. Just 10% participants have achieved basic level of literacy and no one of them could achieve middle and self-learning levels. But completion of 5<sup>th</sup> grade does not guarantee basic level of literacy because some of them have not attained the basic level of literacy.

**1.10 Comparison between Reported and Tested Basic level Literacy Rate**

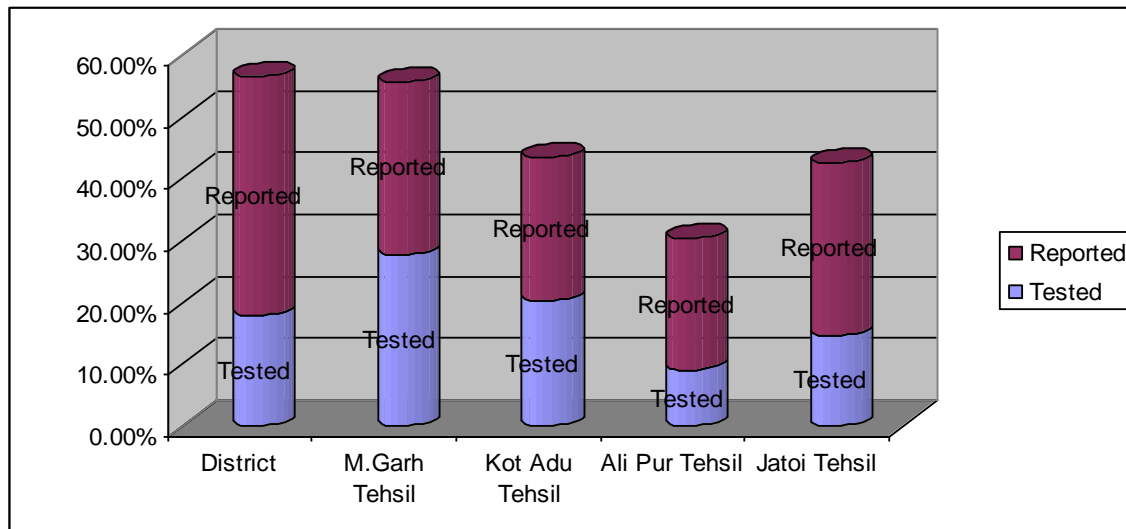
**Graph 1**



Graph 1 differs between the reported and tested basic literacy rates for the population aged 10-59, in District Muzaffargarh there were four Tehsils; Tehsil Jatoi is highly exaggerated. As a whole difference in district Muzaffargarh between reported and tested Basic literacy rate is 8.6 percent.

**1.11 Comparison between Reported and Tested Functional Level**

**Graph 2**



Graph 2 denotes that deference between reported and tested functional literacy rate in district Muzaffargarh. According to above table out of four tehsils two of them were highly exaggerated. The difference between reported and tested functional literacy rate of district Muzaffargarh 20.6%

### **1.12 Findings**

Following are the finding from the analysis of the study.

- a. The study finds that Reported literacy rate in Muzaffargarh district is 38.50% in which male and female ratio is 41.0% and 36.0% respectively. Table 1
- b. The study finds that the reported adults literacy rate for total population aged 10-59 years is 38.50 percent with 41.0 percent for male and 36.0 percent for female, this result is in the range of projected literacy rate (2008) which is 38.78 percent by government of Pakistan. Table 2
- c. The study finds that eligible population at lower and upper Primary level 64% and lower Elementary level is 35.1%. Tested population at lower and upper Primary level is 65.1% and lower Elementary level is 34.9% in this sample survey. Table 3
- d. This study indicates that five years or 5<sup>th</sup> Grade of schooling is generally required to achieve basic level of literacy. Just 10% participants of grade 4 achieved basic level of literacy and no one of them could achieve middle and self-learning levels. But completion of 5th grade does not grantee to attain basic level of literacy because some of them have not attained the basic level of literacy. Participants of lower elementary level have attained significant scores in all skills at all levels e.g. (basic, middle and self-learning). Table 4
- e. The study finds that tested literacy rates based on results obtained in tests measuring basic level of literacy, middle level of literacy and self-learning level of literacy compared with reported literacy rates. The survey shows that overestimation of literacy in district Muzaffargarh is **8.6 percent**. Table 5
- f. The participants in the literacy tests were selected under specific criteria which the government of Pakistan has declared. According to sampling criteria only **29.9 percent** participants have meet basic level of literacy. So, **70.1 percent** population of district Muzaffargarh is illiterate.
- g. From total sample the difference between reported and tested functional literacy rate is 20.6% as a whole, Tehsil Muzaffargarh and Kot Adu have miner difference but difference in Tehsil Ali Pur and Jatoi is highly pronounce, it is 12.17% and 12.57% respectively. Graph 1

### **1.13 Conclusions**

In the light of findings of the study it is concluded that there is significance gap between reported and tested literacy rate.

- a. The findings of the study shows the majority of the responds have not meet the criteria of basic level of literacy and they are considering as illiterate.
- b. In the light of the findings of the study it is concluded that majority of participants of four grade have not meet the basic level of literacy.
- c. It is concluded from the findings that five years of schooling doesn't guarantee to attain the basic level of literacy.
- d. In the light of findings of the study it is concluded that majority of the participants of lower elementary have achieved maximum level of literacy
- e. It is conclude from the finding that in Tehsil Jatoi has the high level of self-learning level or sustained functional level.
- f. In the light of findings of the study it is concluded that a significant gap is pronounced between reported and tested functional or middle literacy rate in Muzaffargarh.

### **1.14 Recommendation**

In the light of above mentioned findings following recommendations may be suggested.

- a. In the light of the finding of the study it is recommended that major improvement should be ensuring in primary education and schooling to overcome illiteracy.

- b. The survey finding recommends that NPA should reflect a broad vision of a learning society and life-learning.
- c. In the light of the findings of the study that governments should prevent the flow of new illiterate through achieving UPE.
- d. The findings of the study recommend that quality control measure should be taken on different stages of census during collection stage and reporting information.
- e. In the light of the findings of the survey it is recommended that monitoring process should be strengthen so that to ensure accuracy.
- f. The findings of the study recommend that NGO's should provide reliable data to Ministry of Education.
- g. In the light of the findings of the survey it is recommended that Improving literacy skills if new literate through spare time education.
- h. The survey finding recommends that it is necessary to provide schooling to unschooled adults.
- i. The survey finding recommends that Broad Based Community Meeting (BBCM) should be conduct to give awareness about literacy to the people.
- j. In the light of the findings of the survey it is recommended that Syllabus of the primary and secondary classes should be developed job oriented.
- k. The findings of the study recommend that by increasing adult education programs, literacy rate can be increased.
- l. The findings of the study recommend that more research work should be done on this topic for to diagnose some other problems.

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