

Early Dropouts in the Schools: Barrier to Successful Workforce Readiness



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Education is the most important tool for building a successful nation. It is a vital investment for human and economic development. The importance of suitable workforce has always been emphasized in the business world. Skills and appropriate education is essential for achieving this. High dropout rate of the students have been observed and reported not only in the higher education area but also at primary and middle education level. The current study focuses on understanding the factors responsible for early dropout of the students in school, belonging to the lower income family. This will support further policy making.

Keywords: Dropout, School & Lower Income Group

1. Introduction

The importance of suitable workforce in the organization have been emphasized a lot for its success. Gender diversity is one of the aspect of creating a heterogeneous high performing set of employees. As per the article published in business news daily 20 may 2019, based on the study of McKensey women representation is still quit low. However, there is a disparity not only in the organizations but also in the number of girls completing education. According to UNESCO under Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) right to education and right to lifelong learning should be equally available to women¹.

The progress of every nation is dependent on the education of its citizens. Education is the most important tool in alleviating poverty. It is a vital investment for human and economic development. It contributes in transforming individual and inculcating values of wisdom, bravery and determination. Even though we are living in the 21st century there are students who do not complete their education. Dropout refers to a person who stops attending school before finishing. The problem of dropouts has been in picture from the time schools were built. There are still students who leave school because of numerous factors. Not all students who join school complete their education. This is not a very happy state to have so many young individuals leave their education in between. The number of dropouts varies between and within countries.

India has made a tremendous progress in making education accessible to approximately 96% students. It has not only targeted the urban areas, but has also made education reach to those residing in rural areas and those belonging to low income group families. Policy makers have made great efforts in ensuring education becomes a part of each child's life. The number of students who enroll do not necessarily complete their education. The government had introduced Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education. The main aim of this act was to ensure proper norms, standards and conditions essential for accessible and quality elementary education for children from all backgrounds. India has been a part of the UNICEF-UNESCO out of School Children Initiative, which includes children at risk of dropping out of school. Initiatives like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan have also been implemented. In order to motivate students to attend school another law was passed stating that o student will fail till class 8. A lot of academic reasons are also involved that encourage students to leave school which is why such a law was passed. The Ministry of Human Resource And Development, Government of India collaborated with Ministry Of Electronics And Information Technology launched a National Scholarship Portal to provide students of India access to National and State level scholarships provided by various government authorities.

With the improving lifestyle and being progressive in the competitive world, each country is now viewing failure to complete education as a social problem.

National Education Association pointed out why school dropouts are a concern for everyone. At first it hurts the nation's competitive edge. Secondly dropouts earn less which implies that they pay fewer taxes to the economy. There are an increased number of criminal activities in the economy and they engage less in civic activities like voting. Incomplete education makes the dropouts dependent o welfare and public assistance. UNESCO report, 2000 states that about 130 million students are denied right to education through dropping out.

The number of dropouts has fallen as compared to the past but still there is a long way to go. Italy has experienced a fall in dropout rate from 20.8% to 13.8%. In china dropout rate from rural schools is 40%. The number of students leaving school is high in Bangladesh as in other developing countries.27 million students do not enter any school and seven million students do not get primary education (Haq R, 2013)

¹<https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-and-gender-equality>

The potential characteristics of school dropouts are- they belong to poor households, low socio-economic background, have a history of academic failure, have an illness or face some sort of disability, are not supported by parents and peers, are forced to work to support family (Ormrod, 2011)

Jeynes WH (2007) stated in his study that lack of interest of parents in child's education creates more possibilities for dropping out.

A lot of personal factors are also responsible for increased dropout rates. Bridgel and JM, Dilulio JJ, Morison KB (2006) and Agbenyega J, Klibthong S (2013) in their studies identified boring classes, time consuming work, lack of interest in studying, failing in classes were the main reasons for students dropping out of school. Substandard primary education system, deficiency of training in teaching staff and parent teacher relationship are the main reasons prevailing in Pakistan that motivate students to leave school at secondary level. The UNDP Millennium Development Goals report states that a large number of children stop going to school because of the presence of corporal punishments and physical punishments. Such harassments are considered beneficial in making children obedient.

The word gender is used since the 14th century as a grammatical term referring to classes of noun designated as masculine, feminine or neuter. Historically gender has been an issue in enrolling students in school and it has had a major effect on the deciding whether the child will attend school leave it after attaining a certain age. Earlier pregnancy, marriage were few issues which led more number of girls to focus on their priorities like their married life or their upcoming child whereas the reasons for boys to leave school were to find a suitable job to support their family. Also are twice as likely to drop out of school because of behavioral issues (leslie et al, 1998).

Adolescence is a period of acquiring new capabilities. It is a turbulent phase for children as they go through physical, psychological and emotional changes. Attending school at this age can help not only in attaining knowledge and education but also gives a better environment for adolescents to share their experiences with their peers. Teachers also play a vital role in development of a child. The relationship between a teacher and a child has a significant impact on the decision of continuing school. The availability of female teachers in school is also a factor that affects girls dropout rate from schools (Solo tar off et al.2007). Many researchers have examined that having female teachers in schools has a positive impact on female students' academic achievements (Carrell et al., 2010; Hoffman & Nixon, 2009; Rothstein, 1995; Robinson, 1999). Students who drop out of schools end up obtaining no certificate of graduation (Ajaja, 2012). There are individual costs associated to dropping out of school. Lower earnings, unemployment prospects, increased health problems (Thurton, 2006). Lack of diversity in the school curriculum predisposes students into dropping out (Machingambi, 2003). Girls often look out for facilities to be provided for them at school. Separate toilet for girls and boys is one of the most important facilities that act as a deciding factor for girls of to leave school after a certain age i.e when they enter adolescence. (Isld Birdthistle, Kelly Dickson, Matthew Freman, Leila Javidi, 2011). Poverty has been a pervasive factor in affecting the school attendance (Cardoso & Verner, 2007)

The difference between the number of dropouts between girls and boys is that some girls are forced to leave school as soon as their menstruation cycle starts. This was a thing in past but still today there are girls who are married by the time they reach adolescence. This is not a good sign because they are expected to have babies after their marriage which entirely removes the possibility of attending school (Eijk AM, Sivakami M, Thakkar MB, et al, 2016; Mason L, Nyothach, Alexander, Odhiambo, Eleveld, Vulule, et al,2013).

Some of the factors are present that affect the attendance at school for both girls and boys whereas some factors are particular only to girls. Although at present there are higher chances for girls to complete their graduation than boys but in the past there were factors pertinent in the society that restricted girls from attending school.

2. Method

The present study has used various online journal databases for extensive research. 60 articles were identified and chosen for studying. The articles gave insights on the reason behind dropout from schools. Some of the articles focused entirely on the factors which affect the decision to leave school for both boys and girls whereas some articles focused entirely on why girls dropout of school.

In this research study each article was carefully reviewed and a list of factors was compiled. In order to analyze and produce a list of critical success from the extensive research, content analysis method was used. It is an approach to the quantification of qualitative data (Holsti, 1969). It is considered to be a flexible method for analyzing text data (Cavanagh, 1997). This approach is a widely used qualitative research technique.

All the articles were read thoroughly in order to perform frequency analysis. Different factors identified were grouped under sub categories like onset of menstrual cycle, childhood marriage, teenage pregnancy, effect of cultural traditions, socially disadvantaged groups were all classified under socio-cultural factors. Also various factors which had the same meaning were clubbed under a single category like all kinds of diseases and medical conditions came under "diseases and disabilities".

The frequency analysis was performed by counting the number of times each factor occurred in different articles. The numbers and percentages of occurrences of each factor was then transferred and tabulated in the frequency distribution table. At the end analysis and discussion was performed regarding the factors that were found critical in the literature.

3. Results

Dropout Reasons for Girls from School

SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS	ONSET OF MENSTRUAL CYCLE	Eijk AM, Sivakami M, Thakkar MB, et al, 2016; Mason L, Nyothach, Alexander, Odhiambo, Eleveld, Vulule, et al,2013; Ten V,2007; Mc Mahon SA, Winch, Obure , Ogutu, Ochari et al, 2011; Sommer M, 2010; Montgomery P, Ryus CS, Dolan, Dopson, Scott, 2012; Gautam O, 2010; Mahon D, Fernandes M,2010;Lee JS,2009; Llyod CB, Mensch, 2013; Crichton J, Okal, Kabiru, Ali, rizvi; Crofts and Fisher 2012; Juyal R, Kandpal SD, Semwal J, 2017; Oster E, Thornton R., 2011, Leridon ,Van de Walle & Renne, 2002; Prakash et al, 2017;	15	37.5%
	EARLY CHILDHOOD MARRIAGES	Holcamp 2009; Mansory 2007, Lloyd et al., 2000, Shahidul 2012; <u>Hallfors et al., 2011</u> , <u>Raj, 2010</u> ; Sekine K, Hodgkin ME, 2017; Omoeva C, Hatch R, Sylla , 2014; Wodon., Nguyen, & Tsimpo, 2015; Field E, Ambrus, 2008;Hyson 2000	11	27.5%
	TEENAGE PREGNANCY	Ormrod, 2011; Lloyd, C., Mensch, B., & Mensch, B. (2008).Baird et al., 2012, Duflo et al., 2014; Patton et al., 2016; Prakash et al, 2017	5	12.5%
	EFFECT OF CULTURAL TRADITIONS	Atayi 2008; Sawada and Lokshin 2009; UNESCO 2010; Wagachira, 2015; Lugonzo et al, 2017; Yadav et al, 2018; Amadi et al, 2013; Fabre et al, 2015; UNICEF, 2013; Chaponda, 2016; Rana and Rani, 2015; Gouda and Sekhar, 2014; UNICEF, 2016; UNICEF, 2015; Liebowitz, 2018; Sharma et al, 2017; Miirio et al, 2018; Faso and Niger, 2013; Aslan and UNICEF, 2011; Shahidul and Karim, 2015; Creative associates INC, 2011; Khan et al, 2011; Peguero et al, 2016	23	57.5%
	SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED GROUPS	Sedwal & Kamat, 2008; Suh & Suh, 2007; Prakash et al, 2017	4	10%
FAMILY RELATED FACTORS	BIASED PARENTAL INVESTMENT	Leung and Zhang, 2008; Alika and Egbochuku, 2009; Batbaatar et al, 2006; <u>UNESCO, 2017</u> ; <u>Government of India, 2015</u> ; Shah, 2011	6	15%
	EDUCATION OF PARENTS	Freundenberg and Ruglls, 2007; Prakash et al, 2017;	2	5%
PERSONAL FACTORS	LACK OF MOTIVATION	Apostu O., Fartusnic C., 2012; Caprara et al., 2008	2	5%
	DISABILITIES AND DISEASES	Obeng, 2007; Ormrod 2011; Suh & Suh, 2007; Pridmore, 2007	4	10%
	POOR ACADEMIC RESULTS	Balfanz, Herzog, & Mac Iver, 2007; Apostu O., Fartusnic C., 2012	2	5%
SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT	NO FACILITIES AVAILABLE FOR FEMALES.	UNICEF 2009; Piper-Pillitteri S,2011; Ali TS Rizvi SN, 2010; Oster E Thornton R,2011; Dipali N, Seema A, RUpali G,2009; Goldschmidt and Wang; Montgomery et al. 2012; Birdthistle, I., Dickson, K., Freeman, M. and Javid, L., 2011; Azzam 2007; Prakash et al, 2017; Jacqueline et al. 2012; Jonathan Ohiorenuan 2008; Hewett, 2010; Azzam 2007; Prakash et al, 2017;	14	35%
	DISTANCE OF SCHOOL	Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012; Alika and Egbochuku 2009;	2	5%
	ATTITUDE OF TEACHERS	Ghuman & Lloyd, 2007;; Rumberger, 2011; Allensworth et al., 2009; Dillon, 2010; Chenowith, 2009; Ferguson et al., 2009; e Ladd, 2009	7	17.5%
ECONOMIC FACTORS	FINANCIAL PROBLEMS	Rani, 2011; Ormrod 2011; Alika and Egbochuku 2009; <u>Sabates et al., 2013</u> ; <u>UNESCO & United Nations Girls Education Initiative, 2015</u> ; <u>United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2014</u> ;	6	15%
	COST OF SCHOOLING	Susmita & Sengupta, 2012; Freundenberg and Ruglls, 2007	2	5%

4. Conclusion

Dropping out of school not just an issue for an individual, it impacts the entire society, community and the education system. The findings from this study have shown that there are issues in schools, communities and at personal level which have directly influenced the rate of student dropout. Failure to complete schooling is still very common in India. States like Jharkhand have children from the tribal population. The state has the maximum amount of students leaving school, only 30 out of 100 finish their schooling. Gender disparity has reduced over the years and students from both sex leave school because of various reasons identified in the study. Only 70 students on an average finish their school in India. A survey in 2014 recorded that at primary level the average dropout rate is 4.13%. According to the HRD ministry the dropout rate for boys is 4.36% and for girls is 3.88%. This is quite evident now that the discrimination faced in the earlier years by girls has been reduced. A lot of results from surveys have shown that the presence of "No Detention Policy" till ninth class had a major effect on the attendance in schools. Lack of knowledge and promotions to next classes without proper evaluation has been a contributor to students not being able to perform from ninth class onwards. Various initiatives by the newly elected government towards creation of separate toilet facility for girls have increased their chances of attending school. Although a lot of efforts are being made in this area to give girls basic amenities for their school days, yet this has not been implemented completely. Continuous efforts are being made to help the society get over various taboos like living separately during menstruation days or marrying girls just after their menstruation cycle starts. Such beliefs have been rooted in the minds of people and adopting the western culture is slowly paying off as such convictions are slowly and gradually evading. There are villages and small towns where people are reluctant to send their daughters to school because of their value systems. Till 2014

the dropout rate was 10.89% in Arunachal Pradesh, 12.96 in Mizoram, 18% in Manipur. These figures have improved over the years, yet the scenario is not much favorable for the country's future.

School engagement is one major indicator which affects the students will attend school. It is defined as having both behavioral component i.e. participation and an emotional component termed as identification (Finn & Voekl, 1993). The indicators of school engagement include participation in school related activities, achievement of high grades, time spent on homework and rate of homework completion. Factor like misbehaving, delinquency are also a part of school engagement. The more students are engaged in school the lesser of chances of their leaving.

Bonding with school also affects the number of students attending school. School bonding basically focuses on the closeness or attachment with teachers. The more students feel connected with the teachers the more they attend school. The influence of teachers on attending school can effectively reduce the dropout rate. Personal factors like motivation for attending school is directed by the environment in a student lives. When they have surroundings where the competition is too high and there support from their families, it is then difficult for students to not attend school. The societal beliefs also affect a student's motivation. When a girl is guided since birth that their main aim in life is to get married and take care of their child and husband then it is quite obvious that they will not be motivated to continue their education. It becomes hard for them to break the rules and the standards set by the society and do something different.

The quality of education students receives influences their behavior. Indulging in crime and bad behavior affects their entire future. Even after being in school students don't learn. Such a quality of education is not helpful. The society wants educated people who can help in growth of the nation. Moving step forward towards development is possible only when numerous age old beliefs leave our value system. Despite of a lot of poverty, there are initiatives taken by the government to help all students grow as knowledgeable individuals who contribute I the success of the nation. The vicious cycle of unemployment can be broken only when there is a good education system in place which not only provides education but also helps in taking the country out of the poverty circle.

There will always be need for breaking the socio-cultural beliefs. To get out of these long set traditions should be the most important step towards reducing the number of dropouts from school. A lot of personal beliefs of students can be broken with the help of efforts from school and their households. Gender discrimination has reduced to a great limit and there is still a long way to go. Leaving all the stereotypes behind and moving towards a better education system can be beneficial for the future of the education sector.

The above study will be able to bring out the current status of girl's education and the major factors affecting the early dropout. This will benefit the society and organization both, since gender equality contributes in the success of the organization as well as in the overall welfare of the nation

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