

Why do Children Dropout? Perception of the Children, Parents and the Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Despite Various Programmes and Policies taken by the Government, the number of children outside the school is continuously increasing. It is expected that a child should continue his / her education at least up to the Elementary Level in the age group of (6-14) to lead a meaningful life. In this context, the paper is an attempt to understand the reasons for drop out among the children at Elementary Stage. It tries to identify the reasons for dropout for both girls & boys separately. Basically, the attempt is to understand the home related factors & school related factors responsible for the dropout at Elementary stage. The study tries to understand the perceptions of the students, parents and the teachers towards the issue of Dropout.

Key Words : Dropout, Elementary Education, Perceptions, Reasons for Dropout

INTRODUCTION

Education is the most important instrument for Human Resource Development and has a great significance in our daily life. One cannot imagine education without schools as it plays a major role in moulding the basic ideas, habits and attitudes of the children with a view to producing well balanced individuals. Schools not only provide education to the children for their educational career but also develop the personality of the child in accordance with the societal norms and cultural standards of the society. Education is the key that opens the door of life. It plays a pivotal role in social change and it brings perfections in human life, an upward mobility in social status, radical transformation in outlook and perception.

Conceptualising Dropout :

A “dropout” is any student who has withdrawn for any reason except death, or been expelled from school before completion of a program of studies and who has not enrolled in another educational institution or program.

The dropout rate is the percentage of students in school grades who stop attending school in a specific year. It is not class-specific. The word school dropout is defined as a child who enrolls in school but fails to complete the relevant level of the educational cycle. Therefore, dropping out of school is a situation when a child is not getting an education or he/she totally forfeits the journey of education in his or her life. In short, dropping out from school is simply an early exit from school. A dropout is a pupil who leaves school before the completion of a school stage or leaving at some intermediate or non-terminal point of a given level of education. Dropout takes place, when a student abandons his/her studies before completing the course successfully. Dropout takes places in two different phases (i) within the session and (ii) at the end of session. A student enrolled in a particular class may leave the school anytime before the annual examination. Such cases may be categorized as intra session Dropout. Then there are cases of students who failed to secure the minimum pass marks in the exam.

Student’s dropout is a serious issue for any country. Students Drop out means discontinuing schooling for

financial and practical reasons and disappointment with their social system and examination results. It is not necessary that student always dropped out, sometimes students stop attending their school by discharging registration. Student dropout means leaving school without completing their basic early education and secondary education.

Programmes and Policies:

Various Programmes and Policies were taken by both the Central and State Government to increase enrolment and reduce dropout. Some of the important initiatives taken by the government are as follows.

National Policy on education, 1968:

For the improvement of Indian educational system from elementary to higher level, in 1964 government of India appointed Indian Education Commission which submits its report in 1966 recommend that National Policy of Education (NPE) should be prepared which will provide guidance to the state governments and local authorities in preparing and implementing educational plans. Accordingly, the government of India issued National Policy on Education in 1968 which observes that "Strenuous efforts should be made for the early fulfilment of the directive principle under article 45 of the constitution seeking to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14. Suitable programmes should be developed to reduce the prevailing wastage and stagnation in schools and to ensure that every child who is enrolled in schools successfully completes the prescribed course.

National Policy on Education, 1986:

In 1986, government of India formulated and implements a new national policy of education keeping in view variety of new challenges and social needs. The new policy lay emphasis on to increase the enrolment as well as retention of children's till they complete their elementary education, increase the quality of education by making improvements in current syllabus, teachers appointments and examination system, introducing non-formal education for those children's which are not able to get elementary education in formal way, leave education due to some unavoidable reasons, children who lives far away from school, working children who are unable to attend the school during daytime and "Operation Blackboard" scheme to make improvement in the physical

facilities available in the school and to enhance the quality of education.

National Education policy, 1992:

The revised national policy on education, 1992 is a landmark in education. It emphasises on universalising elementary education by providing universal access and universal retention of children up to 14 years of age and a substantial improvement in the quality of education.

District Primary Education Programme (DPEP):

In 1993, a new scheme District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was launched by central government with an effort to decentralize educational planning at the district level to fulfill the educational requirements and demands of the district concerned. The program was aimed at decreasing dropout rate, increasing achievement of students, reduce gender gap and differences lies between social groups, developing professional competency and prepares plan by involving district level administrative authorities, heads of school, teachers, parents and community members. Initially district projects were prepared in 44 districts in eight states: Assam, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Gradually it was followed in 273 districts spreading over access to all children of primary education.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan:

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was launched in 2001 to universalize and improve the quality of elementary education in India through community Participation in the Elementary Education. The Government of India launched an ambitious programme called Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan – an initiative for Universal Elementary Education. It is planned to initiate in low female literacy districts spread over fifteen states to achieve the goal of Universal Elementary Education. The priority of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan according to its frame work is the low female literacy districts and districts that do not have experience of programmes like District Primary Education Programme. Focus to be shifted from educationally backward states to educationally backward districts. Adoption of disaggregated approach with focus on preparation of District specific and population specific plans. Universal access to schooling facilities particularly to girls, disaggregated groups and out of school children.

Midday Meal Scheme:

The Midday Meal Scheme is a school meal programme in India designed to better the nutritional standing of school-age children nationwide. It was launched in the year 1995 by Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao. The programme supplies free lunches on working days for children in primary and upper primary classes in government, government aided, local body, Education Guarantee Scheme, and alternate innovative education centres, Madarsa and Maqtabs supported under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, and National Child Labour Project schools run by the ministry of labour. The name of the scheme has been changed to PM-POSHAN (Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman) Scheme, in September 2021, by the Ministry of Education, which is nodal ministry for the scheme.

Right to Education Act, 2009:

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act (RTE) is an Act of the parliament of India enacted on 4th august 2009, which describes the modalities of the importance of Free and Compulsory education for children between the age to 6 to 14 years in the Indian constitution. India became one of 135 countries to make education a fundamental right of every child when the act came into force on 1st April 2010. The title of the RTE Act incorporates the words 'free and compulsory'. 'Free education' means that no child, other than a child who has been admitted by his or her parents to a school which is not supported by the appropriate Government, shall be liable to pay any kind of free or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education. 'Compulsory education' casts an obligation on the appropriate Government and local authorities to provide and ensure admission, attendance and completion of elementary education by all children in the 6-14 age group. With this, India has moved forward to a rights based framework that casts a legal obligation on the central and state Government to implement this fundamental child right as enshrined in the Article 21A of the constitution, in accordance with the provision of the Right to Education Act.

New Education Policy 2020:

The National Education Policy of India 2020 (NEP 2020), Which was approved by the Union Cabinet of India on 29 July 2020, outlines the vision of new education system of India. The new policy replaces the previous National Policy on Education, 1986. The policy is a comprehensive framework for elementary education to higher education as well as vocational training in both rural and urban India. The policy aims to transform India's education system by 2040.

Shortly after the release of the policy, the government clarified that no one will be forced to study any particular language and that the medium of instruction will not be shifted from English to any regional language. The language Policy in NEP is a broad guideline and advisory in nature; and it is up to the states, institutions, and schools to decide on the implementation. Education in India is a Concurrent List subject.

Current Status:

Odisha has taken significant strides in bringing down school dropout rate, a critical measure of Social Development according to the State Economic Survey. School dropout rate has come down from 5.42 per cent in 2018-19 to 1.55 per cent in 2019-20 at the Primary level (Table A).

Gender disparity still prevails in education especially in the remote backward areas. Gender Parity Index (GPI) in education reflects the discrimination against girls in access to educational opportunities. Closer the GPI is to one, higher is the State to achieving gender equality. The GPI of primary education, upper primary education and secondary education are 0.94, 0.92 and 0.93 respectively during 2018-19. This is an encouraging sign considering that GPI at all levels is very close to 1. However, gender disparities still prevails in terms of enrolment and dropout rates for elementary education for which continuous efforts are being made by the government to improve the net in take of girls in schools and their retention. The Transition rate is the number of students admitted to the first grade of a higher level of education in a given year, expressed as a percentage of the number of students enrolled in the final grade of the lower level of education

Level/year	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-2020
Primary	1.63	2.82	4.20	5.81	5.42	1.55
Upper primary	4.21	3.87	5.15	5.45	6.93	4.56

Source: Directorate of Elementary Education and Director, OSEPA

in the previous year. The rate is 90.94 from primary to upper primary level. In order to make it 100 in the backward and aspirational districts, the teachers are instructed to ensure that the pass out students get admitted in the next higher schools. The results of such initiatives started coming.

Review of literature :

There are lots of studies have been conducted in the area of Sociology of Education to identify the factors responsible for the occurrence of dropout at the elementary level. Some studies tried to highlight the home related factors responsible towards it whereas some others tried to give more importance to the school related factors. In fact, there exists a kind of blame game between the home and the school where the teachers blame the parents and the parents blame the teachers for the poor quality of education being imparted in the school and the argument is that the teachers are not in a position to create interest and motivation among the students.

Bryk and Thum (1989) established a multi-factored model related to dropout rates. When Comparing demographics to dropout rates, sex Was the only factor that was significant; female Students tended to drop Out of school at a higher rate than expected. Low dropout rates were found in schools with a high concentration of students in academic Programs who were given More homework than the average school and Perceived to have a safe environment. High dropout Rates were Associated with schools that were socially diverse, had a variety of course Offerings, And where discipline was perceived as fair. A very low Correlation between school size and Dropout rate ($r = .14$) was found.

Parimala, S. (2007) conducted a study on motivating factors of Drop-outs in primary schools in Namakkal District with hundred samples. Children belonging to SC and ST Communities doing casual labour work, do not Have favourable attitude towards schooling and they become drop-out. Thus Found that community seems to be the major factor for withdrawal form schooling.

Bhagyalakshmi (2001) revealed that the major factors in drop-Outs are improper physical availability of school; access and facilities are less Than satisfactory, tangible and intangible costs of education, conditions of Household level, poverty, etc. The drop-out mostly belongs to families with low Socio-economic status, minimal family education and economic necessity for Wage earning to

support the family.

Desai (1970) also conducted a study to investigate into the cause Of wastage and stagnation. These studies revealed that at the elementary stage, Drop age is due to economic causes, parental indifference and repeated failures In examinations, social habits and early marriage.

To minimize the dropout rate certain measures have been put forth such as proper guidance of parents and Pupils, counselling programs for parents, remedial reading for slow learners and Under-achievers.

Wani (1994) attempted to study the relationship between socio-Metric status and drop-out incidence and found that they are negatively correlated with each other *i.e.* the higher the socio-metric status the lower the Drop-out incidence was traced. Further, she has pointed out that different socio-Metric categories, such as, popular, neglected, isolates and rejected differ significantly in their drop-out behaviour. The rejected category of children was, however, found correlating positively with the drop-out incidence.

Tiwari (1979) conducted a study on 200 families in two equal set of schools of primary school children of the Agra town. The school lists of the Drop-out and non-drop-out were drawn randomly. The study revealed that: (1) Average and large size family favour non-drop-outs significantly while small size favour drop-outs; (2) the least of education is available with the drop-out mothers. The drop-out parents are significantly less educated; and (3) the drop-outs Parents more significantly suffer from frustration.

Sane (1960) investigated into the conditions of primary Education In the educationally backward parts of the Poona Municipal Corporation. The Salient findings of the study were (1) Girls Education was neglected due to the Old beliefs and traditions, (2) Ignorance of the benefits of Education, (3) School Courses did not attract parents, (4) Teachers failed to create urge for Education; and (5) parents thought that curriculum was totally senseless.

From the above studies, it is quite clear that various studies have been conducted at different places at different times on the issue of dropout. It was found that there are some school related factors responsible for the issue of dropout and in some cases, there are home related factors responsible for the same phenomena. There is a perpetual conflict between the home and the school in general and the parents and the teachers in particular to address the issue of dropout among the students in the

school at the elementary stage.

Need for the study:

Primary education occupies a crucial significance in the educational discourse and developmental goals of any nation. Article 45 of the Indian Constitution states that free and compulsory education is to be provided to all the children in the age group of 6-14 but it is quite unfortunate that the number of children outside the school is continuously increasing. Primary education in India is characterised by Low enrolment rate, high dropout rate and poor quality of education. In this context, the present study is an attempt to address the issue of dropouts at the elementary stage. It tries to identify the factors responsible for the issue of dropout for boys and girls separately. Further, the attempt is also to highlight the home related and school related factors responsible for the issue of dropout.

Research Questions:

The study tries to address the following research questions

- What is Dropout?
- What are the factors responsible for the dropout among the boys and girls at elementary level?
- Are there any discrepancy of opinion of the students, parents and the teachers towards the reasons for dropout?
- What are the school related factors and home related factors responsible for the issue of dropout for both boys and girls?

Objectives of the Study:

- To study the Programme and Policies taken by the government to reduce Dropout and to analyse status of Dropout students in primary schools in Odisha.
- To understand the socio-economic background of the dropout students in the study area.
- To analyse the perception of students, parents and teachers towards reasons for dropout in Nuapadhi Village.

Data Sources:

The available data on school dropout of children aged 6-14 years were analyzed to find out the extent of school dropout, stages of school dropout, household and parental characteristics of children who dropped out and the reported reasons for discontinuing the school education.

The school dropout in this article is defined as the children dropping out of the school from first standard to Tenth standard at any time and discontinuing their education.

The data have been collected both from primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected in the form of the opinions of the dropout students, parents of the dropout students and the Head teacher of the school through interview schedule, observation and case study method. On the other hand, the secondary data were collected and used in the form of existing legislative Provisions regarding prevention of accidents and occupational health hazards, different books, journals, Government and non-government reports published by government and relevant websites. The study follows both quantitative and qualitative research techniques for the purpose of the study. The study undertakes both descriptive and exploratory research design for the purpose of the study. The attempt of the study was to explore the socio-economic factors responsible for the occurrence of dropout and other associated factors responsible towards it. For the purpose of present study data was collected through both primary (Field data) and secondary sources (Documentary sources). The researcher made use of qualitative as well as quantitative methods of research while collecting data from primary sources.

Interview scheduled for Dropout children

Interview scheduled for head teacher

Interview scheduled for Dropout children parents

For the purpose of the study, 10 dropout students have been selected from the School register of Nuapadhi village. It also includes four parents of the dropout students and one head teacher of the school. The justification of the sample is based on the availability of the parents during the time of data collection and the list of the dropout was available in the school register.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was carried out in Balasore district of Odisha. A survey was conducted for each household (n= 350) in a tribal village that was selected randomly from Remuna block of Balasore. Data regarding the educational status of the villagers were collected by using Interview schedule. Subsequently, a qualitative case study approach has been employed, and 10 dropout adolescent children aged between 9 and 16 were selected purposively in terms of schooling profile (stay-ins and dropouts along

with who left their study after primary education) and household occupation for an intensive study. These children and adolescents were interviewed to ascertain the cause of school dropout, low enrolment or stay-ins. Also, teachers' perceptions (n=6) were recorded to analyze the cause of school dropout, low enrolment and absenteeism. Analyses of data were done by using SPSS-20 and Microsoft Excel software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study was conducted on "Why do children Dropout? Perception of the children, Parents and the Teachers". It was held in Nuapadhi village area of Balasore District of Odisha. 10 dropout students as respondents, one Head teacher, and four parents of the dropout students were selected for the purpose of the study.

Socio-economic Background of the Parents :

It was observed that the socioeconomic background of the parents of the dropout children in terms of

education, occupation and income have a direct link with the performance of the children in the school. For instance, if both the parents are illiterate then the chances of dropout is high and simultaneously if both the parents are working as labourers, then also the chances of dropout is high (Table 1).

Reasons for dropout in terms of boys and girls were analysed. It was found that majority of the students were not interested towards studies which signify either the parents or the teachers are not in a position to create interest among the students towards studies. It also implies that the performance of the child in the school is dependent on the socioeconomic background of the child from which he/she has come from. As both the parents are illiterate, they somehow lack socio-cultural capital in motivating the child. Apart from this, other reasons for dropout were also identified such as cost of education, involved in household activities and so on. However, both the home and school related factors responsible for the dropout in terms of boys and girls were identified (Table 2).

Table 1: Percentage of School Dropouts by Selected Parental Characteristics

Factors	Categories	Percentage of dropout	
Education of Parents	Both are illiterates	17.1	
	Both are literate	4.6	
	Mother is illiterate	12.1	
Father is illiterate		12.5	
	Mother's Education	No education	14.4
	Primary	9.6	14.265
Secondary		3.3	21.968
	Higher	0.7	3.137
	Father's Education	No education	16.5
Primary		13.9	16.343
	Secondary	6.6	38.402
	Higher	1.5	7.939
Working status of Parents	Father is working	8.5	
	Mother is working	19.7	51.5
	Both are working	13.2	41.802
Both are not working		17.5	76.3
	Father's Occupation	Not working	18.5
	Agriculture work	12.7	30.666
Non-agriculture work		9.1	57.122
	Mother's Occupation	Housewife	8.1
	Agricultural work	12.8	29.008
Non-agriculture work		12.5	16.455
	Total	13.2	89.33

Source: Data collected from the Primary Source

Table 2: Main Reasons for School Dropout by Sex of the Children

Reasons	Boys	Girls	Total
Not interested in studies	37.2	22.3	29.8
Costs too much	18.9	18.6	18.8
Required for household work	7.8	16.1	11.9
Required for outside work for payment in cash/kind	9.2	3.4	6.3
Repeated failures	6.3	5.7	6
Required for work on farm/family business	7.6	3.3	5.4
School too far away	1.2	5.9	3.5
Further education not considered necessary	2.8	4	3.4
Got married	0.2	5.6	2.9
Did not get admission	2.1	2.2	2.1
Not safe to send girls	0.2	2.7	1.4
No proper school facilities for girls	0.2	1.9	1.1
Transport not available	0.3	1.6	1
Required for care of siblings	0.2	0.7	0.5
No female teacher	0.1	0.3	0.2
Other	5.2	5	5.1
Don't know	0.5	0.5	0.5

Source: Data collected from the Primary Source

Data related to reasons for dropout is categorised as related to child, related to household, related to school

were identified. Interestingly, it was observed that household factor is more predominant in comparison to the reasons related to the child.

Table 3: School Dropouts by Reasons Categorized as four groups and sex of Children

Reasons	Boys	Girls	Total
Reasons related to child	43.7	33.6	38.6
Reasons related to household	46.5	46.2	46.4
Reasons related to school	4.1	14.7	9.4
Other Reasons	5.7	5.5	5.6

Source: Data collected from the Primary Source

Perception:

Perception of dropout plays an important role in understanding the process of dropout. In order to understand the phenomena of dropout the perception of the students and the perception of the parents were analysed to have a detailed understanding about the phenomena.

Table 4: Perception of the Dropout students towards Reasons for Dropout

Reasons for Dropout	Boys	Girls	Total
Parents are not Alive	Nil	1(10%)	1(10%)
Child Marriage	Nil	1(10%)	1(10%)
Financial Problem	1(10%)	3(30%)	4(40%)
First generation learner	3(30%)	Nil	3(30%)
Lack of Interest	Nil	1(10%)	1(10%)
Total	4(40%)	6(60%)	10(100%)

Source: Data collected from the Primary Source

It was found that the dropout students perceived that they were the first generation learners for which they could not receive any kind of academic as well as financial support from their parents. It was also learnt that they were only attending the school to have a meal in the school particularly the day in which egg was given to them in the school. What they also viewed that “Most of the time after the lunch, they came back from the school”.

Interestingly, the same phenomena of dropout were perceived by the parents of the dropout children from a different perspective. Some of them did mention about the fact that the poor quality of education being imparted in the government schools as most of them have not mastered the basic competency skills one is expected to learn especially at the elementary level. Apart from this, various other reasons like Alcoholism, lack of interest,

Table 5: Parents’ perception towards Reasons for Dropout

Parents’ point of View
Lack of Quality teachers
Children are not interested to study
Alcoholism
No job guarantee after education
Caring of siblings
Child labour
Parental death
Child marriage
Financial problem

Source: Data collected from the Primary Source

child labour and child marriage were also responsible for the occurrence of dropout at elementary level.

Policy Implication:

The development of society depends on quality education and it can only be measured by assessing the socio-economic indicators that extend educational inequality prevalent in society. Many factors contribute to unequal distribution of education among urban and rural India. The government had ensured to reach the goal of achieving basic education for all by 2010 utilizing Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Right to Education initiatives.

Concluding Remark:

Home and School do not operate in vacuum rather than they are related with each other. Both are important for the all round development of the child’s personality. The performance of the child in the school is dependent on the socio-economic condition and the social and cultural capital available for the child. Despite various efforts by the government, the social distance between the rich and poor in terms of education is continuously increasing.

Summary and conclusion:

Although various programmes and policies were taken by the government to universalise elementary education but still the absolute number of children outside the school is continuously increasing. There exists a huge difference between theory and practice in terms of Policies related to schooling and actually the students attending the school and performing in the school. School institutionalises inequality as the social distance between the educated and the uneducated is perpetuating.

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