

Dropout Causes and the Assessment of its Consequences of Primary Students in the Northern Part of Bangladesh

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Abstract: This study investigated to identify the causes affecting school dropout and assess the consequences of dropouts applying descriptive statistical method. Two-stage cluster sampling technique was used for the collection of data. The sample was constituted of 60 dropout students (4th to 5th grade) obtained from 60 different categories of primary schools (government, private and ebte dayee madrasha) that were randomly selected from each of the 10 Upazilas under Rangpur Division, the northern part of Bangladesh with probability proportional to size (PPS). Data were obtained from one respective teacher involving in teaching at 5th-grade of each selected school, all dropout students and their father/mother. Information about the causes of school dropout was collected using a structured questionnaire and the collected information was arranged, organized and tabulated with percentages for the analysis of the data. The major findings of the study are parents' low level of education, parents' low level of income, students' lack of attention in study, uncertainty of employment, and teacher's misbehavior. The assessment of the consequences of dropouts: less qualified in the competitive job market, face a severe problem for possible lifetime earnings, increase the unemployment rate in a society, girls may have more possibility to get early marriage, may face severe health problems and their better medical treatment, may involve in criminal activities, depend on welfare and other government organizations, may not get the overall benefit of the modern technology in their daily life, depend on others for solving their own problems and also face some critical situations. Finally, the nation lost the productivity and earned less tax income. School dropout can be reduced by providing: new jobs/income generating activities, public awareness programs for realizing the value of education, motivation to the learners with their parents and the high-level of academic atmosphere both at home and school.

Keywords: Academic performance, academically at-risk, dropout, education and socio-economic status

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I. Introduction

Academically at-risk and school dropouts are closely related major concerning issues for the sustainable development of a country. "School dropout" means an early withdrawal from the school. The student who dropped out from a school was certainly academically at-risk in earlier stage. The meaning of an "at-risk" student is generally defined as the student who is likely to fail at school and seven sets of characteristics were used to recognize at-risk students: i) demographic characteristics; ii) family and personal characteristics; iii) parental involvement in academic activities; iv) academic history of the student; v) student behavioral factors; vi) teachers' perception about the student; and vii) school characteristics.¹ In Bangladesh, the number of enrollment students at the beginning of elementary school already has reached near universal level but the completion rate of full cycle of primary education still remains around 73.8% i.e. the dropout rate is about 26.2%.²

Poverty and disliking school were two main reasons of dropping out from school.³ Causes of school dropout were lack of learning materials, paying of school fees and employing private tutors.⁴ Parents' lower income was the reason of dropping out of students.⁵ Parents' lack of support to child's school work, parents' level of income, and parents' level of education expenditure, parental interest and engagement in children's school activities were the reasons of dropout.⁶ School-related reasons, family related reasons, and work related reasons were for school dropout.⁷ Poverty, school distance, bad quality of education, insufficient arrangements, overloaded classrooms, unfit languages of instruction, irregularity of teachers and insecurity in girls' school were common causes of dropping out of students.⁸ Poverty, illiteracy, unawareness of parents, unemployment of the educated people, educational system, lack of government attention to the problems of teachers, students and schools regarding facilities; not providing playground and peaceful environment, frequent transfer of teachers, teachers' harsh attitude toward the students, their corporal punishment, lack of professional and vocational

education, lack of proper curriculum, co-curricular activities, student's poor performance and too much homework were the possible factors of dropping out.⁹

School dropouts face some problems in their working life as the employment is limited; today the labor force requires increased literacy, technology skill and the ability to be a lifelong learner.¹⁰ The school dropouts are severely declining their lifetime earnings. The economic loss due to dropouts in US was estimated at \$122,000 for female and \$187,000 for male.¹¹ Dropouts have the less opportunity for getting and also for maintaining jobs paying for avoiding them from public assistance.¹² The unemployment rate of dropouts was 75 % in 1998 that was higher than that of high school graduates. Though they get a job, their amount of earning money is less than that of high school graduates. The nation lost the productivity and earned less tax income.¹³ Dropouts have more possibility to face the physical problems, involve in criminal activities, and become dependent on welfare and other government organizations than that of high school graduates.¹⁴ It becomes very much imperative to undertake the study to identify dropout causes and assess the consequences of dropouts for meeting up the Universal Primary Education (UPE) and sustainable development of the country.

II. Objectives

The study was conducted in three different categories of primary schools: Government Primary school, Kindergarten and Ebtedayee Madrasha. The objectives are:

- (i) to identify the causes of dropouts of students from primary level of education and
- (ii) to highlight the assessments of the consequences of dropouts

III. Materials And Methods

Study location:

Rangpur Division, the northern part of Bangladesh, has been considered as the study area. This study has been conducted on dropout students with their father/mother and teachers of Public Primary School, Kindergarten and Ebtedayee Madrasha.

Research design:

Data collection method: The population of this research includes dropout students, dropout student's parents and teachers of selected schools. For this study, a dropout student is defined as the student who left the school (dropped out) after completion of grade-4. A two-stage cluster sampling technique was applied for selecting the students from different types of primary schools. In the first stage, 10 upazilas were selected randomly from the list of all upazilas of 8 districts in Rangpur division, the northern part of Bangladesh and in the second stage; a representative number of schools was selected from each selected upazila with probability proportional to size (PPS). Total number of primary schools selected in the sample was 60 and a teacher teaching in Grade-5 was selected for interview from each selected school. The total number of dropout students obtained from the sample schools was 60.

Data collection instrument: Data had been collected through direct interview of the dropout students, dropout students' parents and teachers using pre-tested structured questionnaire designed for both open and close ended questions. Three types of questionnaires: i) Dropout Student Questionnaire having 15 questions, ii) Dropout Student's Parent Questionnaire constituting 12 questions (either father or mother who was available during the survey) and iii) Teacher Questionnaire made of 21 questions of the respective primary schools had been used to collect the data. All dropout related questions are made of 'YES/NO' type answer to identify the causes of dropout.

Data analysis technique: Descriptive statistics had been employed to explore the causes of dropout. Percentage of responses was used to identify the causes of dropout and Fisher's χ^2 statistic had been used to test the significance of pair-wise relationship between a factor and its impact on the dropout student.

Hypothesis and test statistic:

The dropout of students might be due to a number of factors as perceived by the students, parents and teachers. It was thought that such factors causing dropouts might be interrelated. Fisher's exact χ^2 - statistic was used to test the pair-wise relationship between a factor and its impact on the dropout students.

The null and alternative hypotheses:

H₀: There is no relationship between a factor and its impact on the dropout students

H₁: There exists a relationship between a factor and its impact on the dropout students

IV. Results And Discussions

Socio-economic status perceived by parents' responses

Table 1: Education level of parents of dropout students

		Mother's education		
		Illiterate	Primary	Total
Father's education	Illiterate	21 (35%)	10(17%)	31(52%)
	Primary	7 (12%)	18(30%)	25(42%)
	S.S.C.	2 (3%)	2(3%)	4(7%)
Total		30 (50%)	30(50%)	60(100%)

Of the families of dropout students more than fifty percent (52%) of fathers were illiterate, 42% have completed their primary level of education and only 7% have their Secondary School Certificate (SSC). On the other hand, 50% of their mothers have no education and rest of the 50% mothers have completed only the primary level of education. It was found that 35% of dropout students come from families where both father and mother are illiterate and 30% of dropout students come from families where parents (both father and mother) have completed only the primary level of education. Results revealed that literacy of father and mother is an important factor for dropping out of students at primary level of education.

Table 2: Occupation of parents of dropout students

		Mother's occupation								Total
		Farmer	Labor	Teachers	Job	Business	Older/Retired	Housewife	other	
Father's occupation	Farmer	3(5%)	0	0	0	0	0	25(42%)	0	28(47%)
	Labor/Driver	0	6(10%)	0	0	0	0	19(32%)	0	25(42%)
	Teacher	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Job	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Business	0	0	0	0	0	0	5(8%)	0	5(8%)
	Older/Retired	0	0	0	0	0	0	1(2%)	0	1(2%)
	other	0	0	0	0	0	0	1(2%)	0	1(2%)
Total		3(5%)	6(10%)	0	0	0	0	51(85%)	0	60(100%)

Table 2 indicated that farming is the major occupation of the fathers of dropout students (47%) followed by labors/drivers (42%) and 8% dropout students belonged to families where father's occupation was business. 85% of mothers were housewife and only 5% were involved in farming and 10% were labors.

Table 3: Monthly income and expenditure of parents of dropout students

		Total monthly family expenditure		
		≤ 5000	5000+	Total
Total monthly family income	≤ 5000	33(55%)	0	33(55%)
	5000+	4(7%)	23(38%)	27(45%)
	Total	37(62%)	23(38%)	60(100%)

Table 3 showed that 55% families of dropout students had their monthly family income less than or equal to Tk. 5,000 and the rest 45% of parents reported that their monthly income was greater than Tk. 5,000. On the other hand, per month family expenditure is less than or equal to Tk. 5,000 reported by 62% families of dropout students and it was more than Tk. 5000 for 38% families.

Table 4: Family size and ownership of home area of parents of dropout students

		Type of ownership of home area				Total
		Own land	Rented-in	Khas land	Others land	
Size of the family	3-5	20(33%)	0(0%)	3(5%)	4(7%)	27(45%)
	6-7	24(40%)	0(0%)	3(5%)	3(5%)	30(50%)
	8+	2(3%)	0(0%)	1(2%)	0(0%)	3(5%)
Total		46(76%)	0(0%)	7(12%)	7(12%)	60(100%)

Size of 50% of the families of the dropout students is 6-7 followed by family size of 3-5 members (45%). Most of the families (76%) of dropout students live on their own land and the rest (24%) on khas and other's land.

Dropout causes: Evidence indicates that there is no single reason for dropping out.

Table 5: Dropout causes perceived by the parents of dropout students

Assumed Dropout Causes	% of parents of dropout students
1. Lack of attention in study	63
2. Help in family work	82
3. Earning money for family	58
4. Unable to provide education related items	50
5. Lack of proper academic atmosphere at school	0
6. Lack of teachers' well behavior	3
7. Physical punishment by teachers	3
8. Teacher's lack of communication to parents	8
9. Unemployment problem	73
10. Physically the child is always sick	18
11. Not proper study at home	48
12. Parents cannot help the child about study at home	90

The parents identified a number of reasons for dropping out of their children from the school of which the major reasons reported by more than 60% parents were (1) inability of the parents to help their children regarding study at home ⁶ (2) the children had to help the parents in family work ^{5,6,7} (3) fear of unemployment after getting education ^{9,10} and (4) lack of attention in study.

Each respondent indicated a number of reasons for dropouts. Highest proportion of parents (90%) reported dropping out of their children from the school was due to their inability to help their children regarding their study at home. ^{6,9} This appears to be a reality as most of the parents were illiterate or had inadequate education which probably affected their children's performance in the class. About 82% of the parents opined that their children should be involved in family work for earning money for the family instead of going to school as their socio-economic condition is poor ^{3,4,5,6,8,9} and they speculate (73%) that their children may not get any job after getting education. ⁹ Other important factors identified as the causes of dropouts were lack of attention of the children in study (reported by 63% parents) and lack of proper study at home (reported by 48% parents).

Table 6: Dropout causes perceived by the dropout students

Dropout Causes	% of dropout students
1. Teachers always rebuke in the classroom	5
2. Teachers always punish physically	2
3. Cannot play at school	5
4. Lack of transport facility	9
5. Parents cannot help regarding study	90
6. Cannot get good scores in the exam	28
7. Parents cannot provide good clothes	15
8. Don't get interest in the classroom	12
9. Cannot remember the Class lesson	47
10. Long distance from the school	18
11. What will be benefit of studying because no job	43
12. Classmates don't behave well	8
13. Helping parents for family work	55
14. Earning money for family	48
15. Physically always sick	27

From Table 6, it appeared that the most important cause identified by the dropout students was that their parents could not assist them to complete their home work (reported by 90% of dropout students). ^{6,9} Similar opinion was also made by the parents of dropout students. Another two important reasons of dropout were that the children had to work with their parents (reported by 55% students) and they had to be involved in other activities to earn money for their family, quite similar to the opinion of their parents. ^{3,4,5,6,8,9} It was found that 47% of dropout students could not remember the lessons taught in the classes which made it difficult for them to prepare their lessons timely and properly. Consequently, they did not get interest in the classroom ⁹ and could not do well in the examination ⁹ and finally, became dropouts. Moreover 40% of dropout students opined that continuing study would not bring any benefit to them as they speculated that there would be almost no scope of job for them, a similar response as their parents.

Table 7: Dropout causes perceived by the teachers of dropout students

Dropout Causes	% of teachers
1. Parents' poverty	98
2. Parents' unawareness	90
3. Parents' low level education	87
4. Parents' poor eagerness about education	82
5. Parents' poor involvement at school	73
6. Lack of academic atmosphere at home	83
7. Too much homework	15
8. Frequently teacher transfer	8
9. Lack of teachers' good behavior	5
10. Teachers' punishment	5
11. Students' poor performance	47
12. Teachers' low interest regarding students' problems	17
13. Students' lack of attention in study	75
14. Crowded classes	10
15. Classes not attractive	20
16. Lack of peaceful school environment	13
17. Distance of school from home	32
18. No play-ground	17
19. Traditional teaching method	32
20. Unemployment problem	70
21. Lack of co-curricular activities	23

Table 7 revealed that a major cause of dropout as reported by 90 % teachers was probably due to the fact that the parents were not conscious about the education of their children.^{6,9} As a result, they could not make the congenial academic atmosphere for their children at home (reported by 83% teachers)⁷ and that they did not realize that they should communicate to the school authority on a regular basis (reported by 73% teachers)⁶ regarding performance of their children.

Results (Table 7) showed that one of the vital reasons of dropouts at primary level was due to illiteracy (reported by 88% teachers) and low level of education (reported by 87% teachers) of the parents.^{6,9} Most of the teachers (98%) identified very low income of the parents as a cause of dropout which made them unable to afford the education related materials.^{3,4,5,6} The socio-economic status of the parents may be thought of as a background factor of some causes of dropout.^{3,4,5,6,8,9} These were (i) parents were not interested in the academic activities of their children (reported by 82% teachers), (ii) parents might not be interested in sending their children to the school as the number of jobs as they speculated are quite scanty for educated persons (reported by 70% teachers).^{6,9,10} Accordingly, their children become less attentive in their lessons (mentioned by 75% teachers) and they showed lack of willingness in their studies (mentioned by 67% teachers) due to lack of confidence in their ability (reported by 72% teachers) and finally they acquire poor grades in their examinations opined by 47% of teachers.⁹ Consequently, these students drop out from the school.

The teachers also reported some probable reasons of dropout from school resulting from lack of attentiveness in the class or lessons taught in the class. Some worth mentionable reasons are: (i) the students did not feel comfortable in the class because of having so many learners (ii) the classes are not well decorated i.e., unattractive, (iii) the learners feel insecure within their school environment and teachers use the traditional methods of teaching in the classes that are not attractive and effective to the learners, (iv) teachers do not assist the students in solving their problems (v) teachers assign much homework to their students (vi) long distance of schools from the residence, especially for girl students who live in the remote areas and (vii) absence of co-curricular activities and play ground.^{7,8,9}

Table 8: Common causes of dropout perceived by the dropout students, their parents and teachers

Dropout causes	% of parents	% of students	% of teachers
1. Parents' low level of education	90	90	87
2. Parents' low level of income	82	55	98
3. Students' lack of attention in study	63	47	75
4. Uncertainty of employment	73	43	70
5. Punishment by teachers	3	2	5
6. Teachers' misbehavior	3	5	5

Common dropout causes of primary school students perceived by all respondents are identified as below:

Parents' low level of education: the parents cannot assist their children regarding their study at home as they are unable to explain the subject matter due to little or no education.

Parents' low level of income: students are to assist the parents on their family work to earn money for their family meaning that income level of the parents is very low and they cannot provide the education related materials to their children.

Students' lack of attention in study: the students are less attentive in their study as a result; they cannot remember the subject matter and finally acquire poor scores in the examinations.

Uncertainty of employment: parents think that the number of job in the country is limited and hence are reluctant to send their children to the school rather they prefer their children to help them in family work instead of sending their children to the school.

Punishment by teachers: it is generally thought that some primary students may leave the school due to physical punishment but this is insignificant reason for dropout.

Teachers' misbehavior: it is well known that the foundation of students' behavioral attitude and ideal character especially in the age of elementary level of school mostly depends on the teachers' behavior. The proportion of dropout students due to teacher's misbehavior is very small meaning that teacher's misbehavior cannot be that as a reason for dropout.

Testing Hypothesis:

Table 9: Test of independence of a factor assumed to be a cause for dropout and its impact on the dropout students

Factor assumed to be a cause for dropout	Impact on dropout student	Corrected Fisher's χ^2
1. Father's education	Preparation of homework	0.12 ^{NS}
2. Mother's education	Preparation of homework	0.19 ^{NS}
3. Students memory level	Students' scores in the exam	14.22 ^{**}
4. Students' interest in the class	Students' scores in the exam	16.25 ^{**}
5. Behavior of classmates	Students' interest in the class	32.48 ^{**}
6. Teachers often rebuke the students	Students' scores in the exam	4.20 [*]
7. Teachers often beat the students	Students' scores in the exam	0.24 ^{NS}
8. Students' sickness from time to time	Students' scores in the exam	0.0005 ^{NS}
9. Student's involvement in earning money	Students' scores in the exam	2.43 ^{NS}
10. Student's involvement in family work	Students' scores in the exam	0.24 ^{NS}
11. Student's concentration in study	Students' scores in the exam	7.97 ^{**}
12. Assisting students at home to prepare class lesson	Student's learning at home	4.27 [*]

NS: Not significant at 5% level, *: Significant at 5% level, **: Significant at 1% level

Student's homework preparation and parents' (father or mother) education level are independent meaning that parents' education level does not have any impact on the preparation of homework. It is to be noted that most of the parents interviewed were illiterate or had primary level education.

Student's performance is related to his memory level. The students who cannot remember the class lessons are likely to get poor scores in the exam.

The students who get interest in the class usually get good scores in the exam.

A student finds interest in the class activities if his classmates behave well with him which in turn helps the student to achieve good scores in the exam.

If a student is rebuked by the teacher often and on in the class for his class performance, he probably feels insulted and becomes less interested to take part in class activities resulting a low score in the examination. High concentration and attentiveness of the students in study leads to good result in the examination.

In many a case, if a student is not assisted by someone in preparing his lesson he may not be able to learn properly at home to prepare his class lessons. Such students are likely to be less interested in going to school, often rebuked by the teacher for his bad class performance, get low score to promote to the higher class and ultimately have high probability to drop out.

Factors like often beaten by teachers, sickness from time to time, involvement in earning money and involvement in family work do not appear to have significant impact on student's performance.

Assessment of the Consequences of Dropout

Dropouts are less educated that means less qualified in the competitive job market. As a result, they have less opportunity for getting a job and though some of them get jobs in that case they receive less amount of money as their salary.¹²

In some cases, it is very difficult to select the right person for any career because the number of applicants is limited. As the dropout pool expands, the employment is limited because today the labor force requires increased literacy, technologically skilled and the ability to be a lifelong learner.¹⁰

Dropouts face a severe problem for possible lifetime earnings. This loss was estimated at \$122,000 for female and \$187,000 for male. The major concern for the national policy maker should be to reduce the number of dropouts because they cost the nation's money.¹¹

Dropouts increase the unemployment rate in a society. U.S. Department of Education in 2000 mentioned the unemployment rate of dropouts was 75 % in 1998 that was higher than that of high school graduates. Though they get a job, their amount of earning money is less than that of high school graduates and the nation lost the productivity and earned less tax income.¹³

Dropouts, especially girls may have more possibility to get early marriage, become early father or mother and finally form unplanned family. As a result, they may face severe health problems and also may not be able to support financially for their better medical treatment due to lack or less amount of earnings.

Dropouts may lose their moral values, have addiction to drugs, and often break the law & order situation in a country. They have more possibility to face the physical problems, involve in criminal activities, and depend on welfare and other government organizations than those of high school graduates.¹⁴

Dropouts have possibility to depend on others for solving their own problems and also sometimes face some critical situations.

V. Conclusion

Parents cannot help their children for preparing their homework due to low level of or no education.

Students assist their parents for earning money of their family and the parents cannot provide the education related materials to their children as their level of income is very low.

Students cannot remember the subject matter due to lack of attention in the study. Consequently, they earn poor academic scores and don't get well-behaved by their teachers and also classmates. Finally, they don't get interest in the classroom.

Parents are reluctant to send their children to the school rather they prefer their children to help them in family work because they think there is uncertainty of employment to the educated people.

Someone thought that physical punishment by teachers is the reason for school dropout but this reason was found to be insignificant.

VI. Recommendations

The school authority, government and/or other organizations should come forward to broadcast different attractive educational awareness programs extensively especially for low socio-economic background families through the print and the electronic media so that parents and school going children can realize the value of education and inspire them with hope.

Parents, teachers and school authority should motivate the learners for building up their confidence especially for self-educational expectation, prior achievement, total learning time, and total required time to complete their homework. Parents should always involve and monitor the academic activities of their children properly ensuring the high-level of their home academic atmosphere.

The school authority, local government and policy makers should take a comprehensive approach to overcome the problems of the risk factors such as child living with single-parent, child living with others except parents, parent's low level of income, and students frequently absent at school of academically at-risk students.

The Government should provide income generating activities to the poor parents, especially for distressed people and the amount of financial support (Upobritti) should be increased in such a level that can meet up the educational expenditure of the students.

For minimizing the student's performance gap, the school authority must ensure the standard level of: the number of quality teachers, teacher's belief, teacher-parents involvement, classroom-academic activity, class-size, student-teacher ratio, co-curricular activities and school academic atmosphere.

Teachers' behavior should be polite, friendly minded and co-operative to their students.

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