

Gender Related Risk Factors in Rural School Dropouts

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ABSTRACT The present research problem was undertaken to study the gender related risk factors in rural school dropouts. The study also aimed to identify the differences among dropouts and schoolgoers of the same age group. A sample of 100 children aged 10 and above was drawn from six randomly selected villages of Ludhiana district and were evenly distributed (50 boys, 50 girls) to form two groups i.e. dropouts and schoolgoers. 100 parents from both the groups, 15 teachers and 10 religious heads were also interviewed. Socio-economic status of the respondents was determined by using scale given by Parikh and Trivedi (1964). Draw-a-man test (Mishra, 1984) and Achievement Motivation Test and Inventory (Mehta, 1993 - revised) were administered to assess the intellectual and achievement motivation levels of respondents. Self structured interview schedules and questionnaires were used to collect relevant information from the families of respondents, religious heads of respective localities and concerned teachers.

The results revealed that the dropout phenomena becomes a major problem after children complete 12 years of age and this age coincides with completion of primary schooling. Accordingly, class 8th among girls and class 9th among boys were seen to have maximum dropouts. Dropouts and schoolgoers were at par in their intellectual level and socio-economic status but differences were statistically significant when their achievement motivation ($p < .05$) and social environment ($p < .01$) were compared. Parents and teachers had indifferent attitude towards education of children unlike the religious heads who were highly positive. In spite of unfavourable social backing, most of siblings of dropouts responded negatively to any sort of effect of their brother/sister having dropped out. Marriage related reasons and shouldering financial responsibilities of the family had made a large number of girls and boys respectively to discontinue their studies.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the key that opens the door of life. It plays a pivotal role in social change by bringing perfection in human life besides an upward mobility in social status, a radical transformation in outlook and perception. Hence, it is the principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparation for later professional training and in helping him to adjust normally to environment. All these help bring to light the importance and the need of educa-

tional institutions as schools and colleges. A school is the first formal institute where a child's attitude towards life is determined. It is a breeding place for all likes and dislikes, pleasures and displeasures, interests and prejudices, which direct a child's behaviour and conduct. Besides, it is a unique responsibility of all educational institutions established by the society to promote wholesome scholastic development of children. However, the task of encouraging the students, of restoring their sense of adequacy and optimism is not an easy one. Unfortunately, the school itself, at times, contributes to the child's sense of discouragement by setting perfectionistic standards and by making failure appear disgraceful and this prompts the student to discontinue his studies, making him a dropout.

Thus a 'drop-out' is defined as the one who after having enrolled into a primary school left it before completing the full term of seven years of primary education. A long absentee period during the previous year/years and not attending the current academic year and who also has not taken a transfer certificate from the school is a confirmed school leaver.

The school dropout phenomena is a nation wide problem and has cost our country tremendously. The studies conducted by National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) reveal the wastage incidence to be as high as 75 per cent in case of boys and 84 per cent in case of girls. On an average, the dropout rate of our country stands at 70%. Hence, to probe into the factors underlying this problem a study titled, "Gender Related Risk Factors in Rural School Dropouts" was conducted in the department of Human Development, College of Home Science, PAU, Ludhiana with the following objectives:

1. To identify the causes of dropout in rural areas in case of boys and girls aged 10 years and above and to study the rate of dropout among and within various socio-economic groups.

2. To identify the parental attitude of rural parents towards the completion of the study of their children.
3. To find out the effect on siblings.
4. To identify the most sensitive period(s) and subject(s) leading to dropout.
5. To frame the guidelines for the improvement of the education in rural areas and to affect an intervention programme to check the tendency of dropout in schools.

the completion of studies of the children.

Scoring for the tests was done as per the instructions given in the manual and for self-prepared questionnaires, it was on a 2 point, 3 point and 4 point scale.

The requisite information was collected by the investigator by visiting the respondents personally. The data of the present research study were analysed by using the statistical methods given below.

<i>Aspects</i>	<i>Statistical Measures</i>
• Background information of the respondents.	Percentage
• Information of families and personality variables of the respondents.	Correlation, percentage
• Difference in 'dropouts' and 'schoolgoers' with reference to their socio-economic status, achievement motivation, intelligence and social environment	Chi square
• Attitude of parents and teachers regarding education of children	Percentage
• Class in which children 'dropout'	Percentage
• Home and school related reasons for 'dropping out'	Percentage
• Effect/no effect of 'dropping out' on siblings	Percentage
• Activities in which 'dropouts' are engaged.	Percentage

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Sample: Six randomly selected villages falling within the jurisdiction of Block I of Ludhiana district were chosen as locale for the study. 100 students aged ten and above (50 girls and 50 boys) comprised the two major groups *i.e.* 50 dropouts and 50 schoolgoers. An equal number of parents from both the groups, 15 teachers of the selected villages and 10 religious heads of the sample villages were also questioned to gather the relevant information.

Tools of Data Collection

1. Scale designed by Pareek and Trivedi (1964) was used to assess the socio-economic status of the respondents.
2. Mishra's Draw-a-man test (1984) was used to assess the respondents' intelligence level.
3. Achievement value and anxiety inventory by Mehta (1993) was used to find the level of motivation of students towards studies.

Self-structured interview schedules were framed to gather the background information of the children and their families. Separate questionnaires were also framed to find the attitude of parents, teachers and religious heads towards

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the background information of the respondents. It shows that 50 per cent of the respondents were boys and 50 per cent were girls. Equal ratio of dropouts and schoolgoers was maintained. The table further reveals that majority of the respondents fell in the age range of 13-15 years, sixty per cent of boys and 46 per cent of girls belonged to middle socio economic status and remaining were from low socio economic status category. Most of the respondents belonged to joint families with their parents engaged in agriculture as means of livelihood and had an income of Rs. 2000 per month. Fathers of 65 per cent respondents were illiterate. Maximum number of girls discontinued their studies in standard VIII whereas maximum number of boys dropped out in standard IX.

The results presented in table 2 show that an almost equal number of dropouts and schoolgoers belonged to the low socio-economic status. However, the parents' views on minimum sufficient level of education for children is influenced by the socio economic profile of the parents. This is so because families with low social status want more earning hands at the earliest

Table 1: Background information of the Respondents

S. No	Variables	Categories	Boys		Girls		Total	
			No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	Age of Respondents	10-12 yrs	11	22.0	13	26.0	24	24.0
		13-15 yrs	34	68.0	36	72.0	70	70.0
		16+ yrs	5	10.0	1	2.0	6	6.0
2.	Socio Economic status	Middle	30	60.0	23	46.0	53	53.0
		Low	20	40.0	27	54.0	47	47.0
3.	Type of Family	Joint	32	64.0	36	72.0	68	68.0
		Nuclear	18	36.0	14	28.0	32	32.0
4.	Occupation of Parents	Labour/Service	5	10.0	2	4.0	7	7.0
		Business	14	28.0	19	38.0	33	33.0
		Agri/Farming	31	62.0	29	58.0	60	60.0
5.	Family Income	Below 1500	3	6.0	2	4.0	5	5.0
		1500-2000	14	28.0	21	42.0	35	35.0
		Above 2000	33	66.0	27	54.0	60	60.0
6.	Fathers Education	Below Matric	31	62.0	34	68.0	65	65.0
		Matriculate	10	20.0	9	18.0	19	19.0
		Above Matric	9	18.0	7	14.0	16	16.0
7.	Mother's Education	Illiterate	36	72.0	34	68.0	70	70.0
		Primary Schooling	9	18.0	12	24.0	21	21.0
		Matriculate	5	10.0	4	8.0	9	9.0
8.	Stage of Dropping out		Boys (N=25)		Girls (N=25)		Total (N=50)	
		6th Standard	3	12.0	1	4.0	4	8.0
		7th Standard	7	28.0	6	24.0	13	26.0
		8th Standard	6	24.0	10	40.0	16	32.0
		9th Standard	9	36.0	8	32.0	17	34.0

Table 2: Frequency distribution of dropouts and schoolgoers as influenced by family and personality variables

S. No	Variables	Categories	Dropouts (n=50)			School goers (n=50)		
			Boys (n=25)	Girls (n=25)	Total	Boys (n=25)	Girls (n=25)	Total
1.	Socio Economic Status	Middle	15 (60.0)	12 (48.0)	27 (54.0)	15 (60.0)	11 (44.0)	26 (52.0)
		Low	12 (40.0)	13 (52.0)	23 (46.0)	10 (40.0)	14 (56.0)	24 (48.0)
2.	Achievement Motivation	Middle	2 (8.0)	4 (16.0)	6 (12.0)	11 (44.0)	9 (36.0)	20 (40.0)
		Low	23 (92.0)	21 (84.0)	44 (88.0)	14 (56.0)	16 (64.0)	30 (60.0)
3.	Intelligence Quotient	High	17 (68.0)	17 (68.0)	34 (68.0)	18 (72.0)	17 (68.0)	35 (70.0)
		Low	8 (32.0)	8 (32.0)	16 (32.0)	7 (28.0)	8 (32.0)	15 (30.0)
4.	Social Environment	Favourable	16 (64.0)	8 (32.0)	24 (48.0)	5 (20.0)	10 (40.0)	15 (30.0)
		Unfavourable	9 (36.0)	17 (68.0)	26 (52.0)	20 (80.0)	15 (60.0)	35 (70.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentages

and so tend to withdraw their children from schools at the first opportunity.

Clear cut differences were seen among dropouts and schoolgoers as far as their achievement motivation towards school and studies was con-

cerned as just 12 per cent dropouts were found to be highly motivated as compared to their counterparts. Probably the congenial home atmosphere provided an asset to schoolgoers and motivated them to study. Dropouts also had low

socio economic status and parents did not value education and hence the motivation of their children was at its lowest.

It is worth highlighting that dropouts and schoolgoers were found to be equal in intelligence. Being ruralities, both dropouts and schoolgoers are exposed to similar kind of situations making them at par with respect to their intelligence.

A rather unusual situation was found regarding the social environment of the respondents as among dropouts, an almost equal percentage talked of having favourable and unfavourable home environment provided to them which is in contrast to schoolgoers where just 30 per cent responded of favourable home environment provided to them. In case of girls, favourable social environment was seen for 32% of the dropouts and 40% of schoolgoers whereas for boys this percentage stood as high as 64% among dropouts and 20% among schoolgoers.

Parents see the boys as potential bread winners and hence encouraged them to study whereas the girls are still expected to be seen in the traditional roles of housewives. Girls are also kept insufficiently educated because they are thought to take the benefits of their education to the husband's family. The parents also feel that a low level of education, say, elementary education, is sufficient for their daughter. In his study, Sutherland (1991) reported that when education was free and compulsory, families tried to provide education for boys rather than for girls, as an educated male helps and supports his family whereas a female takes the benefit of her education to her husband's family.

The results of this study were also confirmed by Rana's study (1997) who found that in traditional Indian families, girls were kept insuffi-

ciently educated.

From the results as presented in table 3, it is evident that job among boys (44 %) and marriage among girls (52%) are the prominent reasons besides family problems, failure in class, disinterest in studies on part of students, examination fever and going abroad that made children discontinue their studies. It is evident that parents even today believe in marrying off their daughters at the earliest possible not considering the importance of education for them. In case of boys, the expectations are pretty high as they are expected to help parents make both ends meet irrespective of their personal choice to continue their studies. The elders also seem to think that more education would not only spoil the thinking of children but also the marriage prospects of their daughters. Similar results were reported by Majumdar (1988) who found that those children who had studied up to 7th standard were reluctant to do menial jobs in which their parents were engaged. Mishra (1991) also reported that 85 per cent girls dropped out by the time they reached class 8th because in India, educating girls is considered as a loss of time and earning to the family.

Major Findings of the Study were:

1. Achievement motivation of children plays a vital role in a child's decision to continue/discontinue his studies. This is more so in case of boys.
2. Intellectual capabilities of dropouts and schoolgoers be they be boys or girls were found to be equal.
3. Socio economic differences were not significant amongst dropouts and schoolgoers.
4. Astonishingly, dropouts had a better social environment and especially so in case of boys.

Table 3: Home and school related reasons responsible for dropouts

S. No	Prominent Reasons	Boys		Girls		Total	
		No	%	No.	%	No	%
1.	Job	11	44.0	7	28.0	18	36.0
2.	Family problems	9	36.0	5	20.0	14	28.0
3.	Failure in class	1	4.0	-	-	1	2.0
4.	Not interested in studies	1	4.0	-	-	1	2.0
5.	Examination fever	1	4.0	-	-	1	2.0
6.	Going abroad	1	4.0	-	-	1	2.0
7.	Marriage	1	4.0	13	52.0	14	28.0
Total		25		25		50	

Probably they were earning money for the family and were equally viable which made them demand a healthy social environment.

5. Majority of the parents and teachers held negative attitude towards education of their children.
6. Class VIII among girls and class IX among boys were seen as most vulnerable ones with regards to dropping out of children.
7. Majority of siblings responded negative to any effect of their brother/sister having dropped out.
8. Dropout boys were engaged in earning money and dropout girls were busy in domestic chores and these were also the main reasons given by dropout that made them discontinue their studies. Family problems, examination fever, not interested in studies and going abroad were also some of the other reasons why children became drop outs.

CONCLUSION

Hence, the study helps to throw light on constellation of causes that make a schoolgoer to be potential dropout and discontinue his studies. Socio economic status, achievement motivation social environment, gender biasness and economic hardships, etc that the children are facing are posing a big problem resulting in raising our country's position in list of illiterate countries.

Education is the basic need for a person to lead a worthy human life as it moulds one's ideas, habits and attitudes. The government has been working hard in this sphere and the number of schools and enrolment rates have gone up over the years but most of the credit for this is eroded by the simultaneous increase in the dropout rate. It is therefore the moral duty of the parents, teachers and all concerned who have to join hands so as to combat the menace of dropout which causes wastage and stagnation in the field of education and above all an irreparable national loss. Hence, on the basis of the study, certain recommendations are given below:

1. The parents especially those who are below poverty line should be compensated to the extent of earnings foregone by them by sending their children to schools.
2. Many people in rural areas are not aware of provisions available for their children in field

of education. Proper education should be given to such parents and an attempt should be made to make them understand the value and importance of education.

3. Vocational education should be provided in schools so that children can earn their living by being independent after they have completed their studies.
4. Every school needs to have facilities for the coaching of poor performers after the school timings. Special care and attention should be paid towards academically weak children.
5. Home work practises should be abolished at primary level and should be minimised at secondary level. According to a report, textbooks should be a property of schools and students need not bring school bags.
6. All the facilities mentioned under 'Operation Blackboard' in National Policy on Education -1986 must be provided to all schools.
7. Seminars, workshops, conferences should be organised to update the teachers with better teaching methods and techniques which would help them to develop favourable attitude of the children towards schools.
8. Special incentives can be given in forms of awards or scholarships to students so that they are motivated to do well in studies.
9. The medium of instruction at the primary level must be mother tongue. Only those teachers who know local language should be appointed.
10. Mobile schools should be started. Also special provisions should be made for scheduled castes/tribes and backward class children.
11. Night schools or evening classes can be arranged so those children who cannot attend schools in the daytime can attend classes in evenings.
12. Efforts should be made to enroll all the children in pre-nursery school before attending the formal school. This not only reduces dropout rate and thus wastage and stagnation but also results in better adjustment of child and his favourable attitude towards school.
13. Guidance and counselling to potential dropouts ought to be provided so as to help them improve their feelings of accomplishment and at the same time elevate their staff

images. These could help us to bring down the dropout rates at least to some extent.

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