

Research Paper



A study on causes and pattern of school drop out in a slum area of Kolkata, India in 2024

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: School drop outs are very common in children, especially in developing countries, and may occur due to many causes. Social causes and other diseases like infections and other are important causes of drop out in school life across the world.

Materials and Methods: We assessed various causes of school drop out by clinic-based study.

Results: We have also recorded here similar findings. Poverty was leading cause of school drop out followed by other social causes and health issues.

Conclusion: The important social as well as medical causes of school drop out should be looked into and efforts should be made to mitigate these contributing factors, in order to foster education of children.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Developed countries like the United States of America and several other countries are now seeing a huge school dropout problem. As per estimates, 25% of students entering the public high school in the autumn or spring of 2000 could not fetch a diploma 4 years afterwards. In many schools and groups of people, up to 50% of all new ninth grade students are unsuccessful in graduating [1].

Due to their failure in completing High School, drop outs face a plethora of negative results or outcomes. Compared to high school graduates, drop outs face a higher problem of being unemployed, lesser earning, worse health and higher levels of mortality. These negative outcomes of school dropout usually add to huge social costs. [1] According to the United National Development Programme's (UNDP's) Global Human Development Index report of the year 2021, which was even cited in the economic survey of 2022-23, the mean years of schooling in India stands at a dismal figure of 6.7 years. On the contrary, the average number of years of schooling in other countries of the world like China and Brazil are 7.6 and 8.1 years, respectively. In other words, while the average Indian has about 6.5 years only of proper formal education, their compatriots in China and Brazil usually enjoy between a year and a year-and-a-half more. India was placed 132nd, after both China (79th) and Brazil (87th) out of the 191 countries ranked in this regard. [2] The education system in India is, however, one of the largest in the world, with approximately 1.5 million (15 lakh) schools for more than 265 million (26.5 crore) children from pre-primary to senior secondary levels across different socio-economic backgrounds*. In spite of this staggering figure, India has got a projected literacy rate of a mere 77.7%** (Literacy here is defined as literate people aged 7 or older).

2. RELATED WORK

According to a survey carried out by Indian Government's National statistical office (NSO), one out of every eight students admitted in any given school or college in India drops out without completing their formal education. School dropout constitutes nearly 62 % of all drop outs. High school dropout makes up 62.9% of all drop outs. [2] The UDIDE+ data of 2021-22 shows that the overall school dropout rate of students between primary and secondary levels is only 1.5%. However, when we ponder specifically at the dropout rate of secondary school, it stands much higher at 12.6% [3]. School dropout has not traditionally been contemplated as a public health issue. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Public Health Association have advised such reframing, because good health is determined by good education, and health disparities can be preceded by disparities in education. Education can strongly predict health outcomes including mortality, because less education positively correlates with health risk behaviour [4]. School health Unit of Urban health centre Chetla of our institute, is working tirelessly for the overall betterment of school children of Chetla in an organized manner. Beside health appraisal & school health clinics, school health unit also conducts various health related programmes in schools & health centres. Most of the schools in the area are either Government or Government sponsored school. [4] As school dropout is related directly to public health outcomes, hence we decided to undertake the study with the following objectives.

2.1 Our Objectives Were

1. To estimate the number & percentage of class-wise drop out in schools of a slum area of Chetla.
2. To estimate the number& percentage of different causes of drop out in schools of slum area of Chetla.

3. METHODOLOGY

Ours was a clinic-based study. Area surveyed was Chetla area. A total of 41 schools of KMC Ward numbers 74, 82 & 81 and 4 Schools from adjacent area are under the care of School Health unit of UHU & TC (Urban Health Unit and Training Centre). Total number of children enrolled in School health unit were more than 15000 in 45 schools. Facility based and outreach comprehensive health care services are

provided to the students here. The services include Health promotion through counselling and repeated behavioural change communication in schools [4].

We have collected the data by interviewing drop-out students from the OPD. This is a slum area and the average family income is 2,000 to 10,000 per month [5].

- Inclusion criteria: Class I to class XII Students who had dropped out of school in the last 5 years.
- Sampling: We did a clinic based convenient sampling. The sampling period was for three months from April to June 2024. We interviewed all those drop-out students who attended the clinic during the period.
- Sample size: A total of 68 students was included in this survey.
- Sampling unit: Drop out students of the field practice area of the UHU & TC Chetla.

3.1 Study Type

- We did a clinic-based mixed type of study, both quantitative (Cross sectional) and qualitative.
- We did Secondary data analysis of a representative schools of the area to find out class-wise percentage of drop out.

3.2 Questionnaire

- Subjects were surveyed in the adolescent clinics which they attend regularly.
- Semi structured questionnaire was used for the quantitative part of this study and in-depth interview used for the qualitative part of the study.
- Secondary data was analyzed from the register available in the school and by interviewing school teachers.

Analysis: Data was entered and analysed in Microsoft Excel.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Quantitative Analysis

4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics

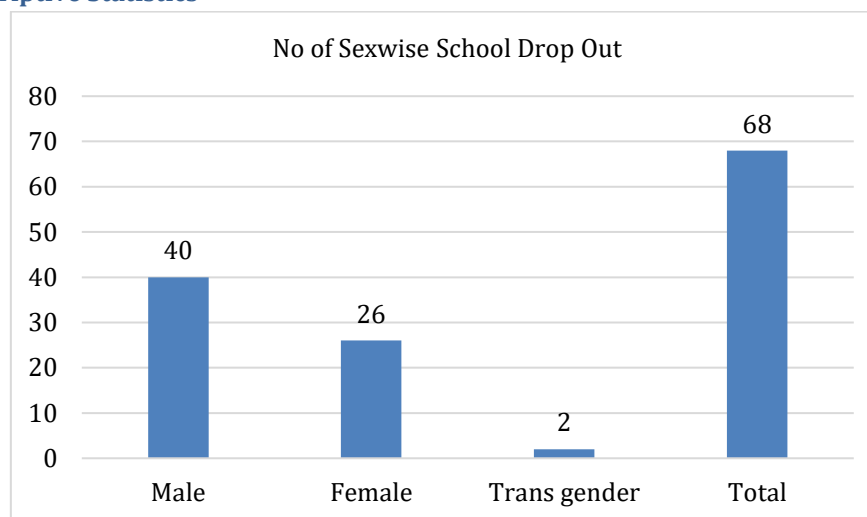


Figure 1. School Drops Out in the Field Practice Area of UHU & TC Chetla

There were 68 students. Out of that 40(59%) were male, 26(38%) was female and 2 (3%) transgenders. The mean age of school dropout was 14.7 years with a standard error of 0.22. The standard deviation was 1.8.

Both the median and mode of distribution is 15 years. The largest age was 18 years and smallest age is 9 years.

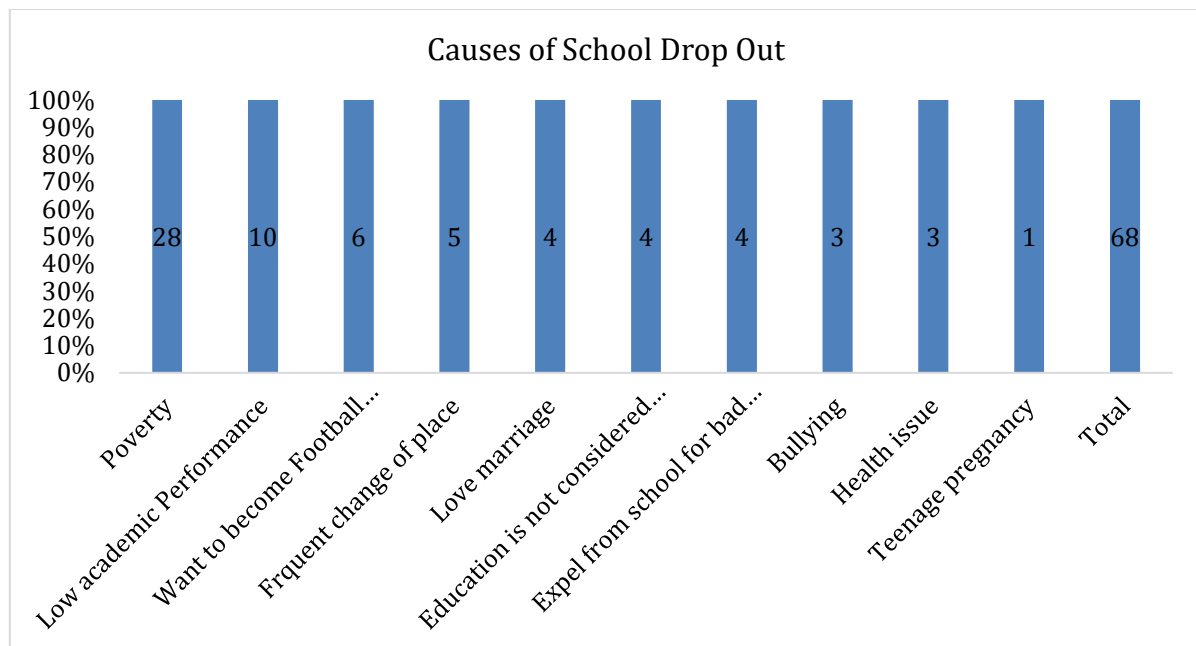


Figure 2. Causes of School Drop Out in the Field Practice Area of UHU & TC Chetla

Poverty was found to be the major cause of school dropout (28 students, 41%). It is followed by low performance in school (10, 15%). Six students want to become footballers or follow other pursuits, and hence left.

Five students dropped out due to frequent change of schools. Four students do not consider education is important. Three students left the school due to bullying. Two of them were transgender. Even one girl left the school due to teenage pregnancy.

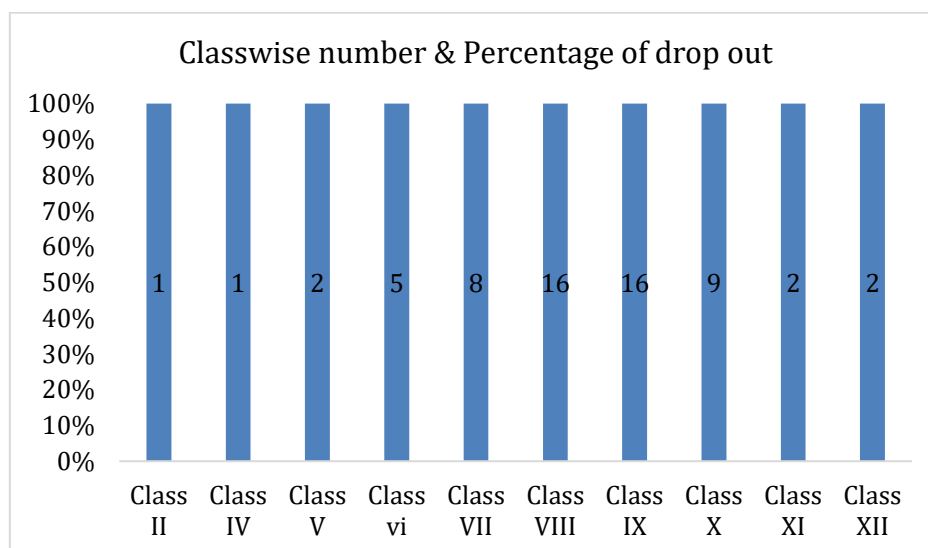


Figure 3. Class wise Number & Percentage of School Drop out in the Field Practice Area of UHU & TC, Chetla

Drop out percentage was highest in Class VIII and Class IX, followed by Class X & then Class VII. Drop out number steadily increase from Class II. It peaks at class VII & IX and then steadily declines up to class XII. It forms a bell-shaped curve.

4.2 Secondary Data Analysis

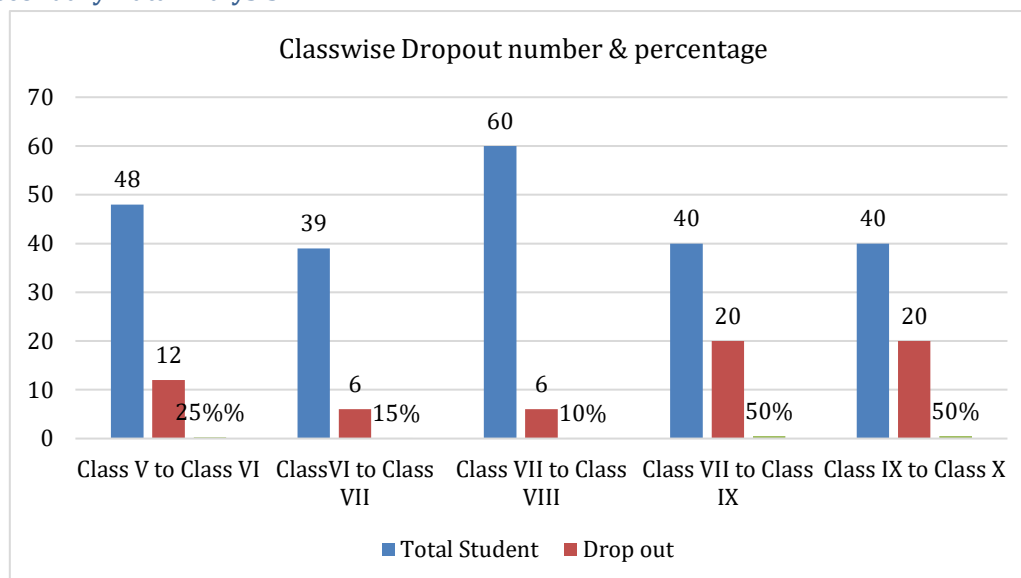


Figure 4. Class wise Drop out Number & Percentage from a School from the Field Practice Area of UHU & TC Chetla

Fifty percent drop out has been observed from class VIII class IX and from class IX to X. A spike in class IV is observed. It may be due to small number of respondents. Total drop out number from class V to Class X was 64. Total number of students from class V to Class X was 227. Total dropout rate is 28.19%.

4.3 Qualitative Analysis

- Twenty-eight students dropped out of the school due to family poverty. The major cause of poverty is either death of one or both parents.
- Ten students left school due to low academic performance. They felt excessive academic pressure and could not understand Mathematics & English.
- Six students wanted to become footballers for money and fame. So, their interest was totally different from academic performance.
- Five students dropped due to frequent change of schools. Their parents changed the schools due to proximity of their workplaces.
- Four students had been expelled from school due to misbehaviour with friends and teachers. They also picked up habits of smoking and alcoholism.
- Three students left the school for bullying. Out of three, two were transgender students. They were prevented from using bathroom either for male or female apart from uttering nonsensical comments.
- Among health issues, one left due to breast tumour and related shaming, another fever and third due to stammering with infections.

Most of the families residing in this ward are joint (70%), and 30% of the families were nuclear. This shows that the households have dense occupation. The percentage of all children attending school was high. About 80% of the children had been enrolled in schools. Only 20% of the children had not been admitted in schools due to certain causes like financial crunch and eagerness to support the family by working and earning. The primary survey shows that 91% of the children attend schools run by the government. Only a meagre 9% of children read in private schools. It seems that the children of slums could not afford private schools [5]. Nearly 50% of drop outs were from Class VII to class X.

School dropout rate is highest in class IX and class X. It is nearly 50%. There was a total of 68 students. Out of those, 40(59%) were male, 26 were female and 2 (3%) were transgender. Among males, dropout rate was much higher than female, though we found the difference to be insignificant statistically. Mohana Basu in her paper mentions that in their study, the numerical figure of males discontinuing education was much more than the figure in females. This might be because of the fact that men have been

forced to follow various occupations so as to fulfil the family expenses. Most of the respondents have continued education till 8th standard (class VIIth) level of education. With increasing level of education, the number of persons dropping out of school shows a steady declining pattern [5].

The most prominent observed cause of school dropout was poverty. It contributed nearly 41% causes. The major reason of poverty was death of parents. Due to insufficient income, the children were forced to leave education at school and earn money. So, this situation forced the child to become a child labour. Mr. Zainab Farooqi also stresses that the very first reason of children dropping out of schools in India is poverty. Most Indian parents in families do not have the level of income which can sustain their children's education. The Government has done some good work by providing free education in Government schools, where apart from education, free meals and uniforms are also provided to the pupils. Generally, most of the girls abandon their studies to tend to domestic chores, while boys leave schools to supplement household income. [6] Ten students left the school due to low academic performance due to failure in examinations. They felt overburdened by academic pressure and also could not understand Mathematics and English. Mahatma Education society also opine that such persistent failure creates lack of self confidence in students. As and when such failure persists, the self-confidence vanishes. In its place emerges a feeling of being least bothered, which is more detrimental as compared to the earlier [7].

Six students wanted to pursue other interests like becoming footballers for garnering quick money and fame. So, their interests were totally different from academics.

As per Mr. Zainab Farooqi, it was found that about 30% of children show a lack of interest in studies. They preferred to drop out because whatever was taught in schools failed to attract them or grab their attention. In his personal opinion, completion of education till secondary or senior secondary level should be emphasized and encouraged; only after that in whatever field the child wants to go, he or she should be motivated for that [6]. Five (5) students dropped due to frequent change of schools. Their parents changed the schools due to proximity to their workplace. Mahatma Education society documents that some students adapt themselves pretty effortlessly, irrespective of the number of schools they change. Some students are not able to cope up well, even after a single change of school. Not everyone is able to adjust equally to different environments. Frequent changes in schools hence may cause adjustment problems in children, which leads to disinterest in academics and resultant drop-out of the schools [7].

Three students left the school due to bullying. Out of these 3, 2 were transgender students. They were prevented from using washrooms meant either for male or female, apart from utterance of nonsensical comments. Mahatma Education society mentions that constant fear of being judged and laughed at holds them back from coming to limelight. They then start making excuses for not going to school. It is here that parents need to step in and take firm remedial action [7].

National estimates show that each high school dropout costs the United States' economy at least \$250,000 over the course of his or her lifetime because of greater dependence on welfare and medical aid, more probability of engaging in criminal activity, poorer health status, and lower tax contributions. [8] The situation may be quite similar in our country. We observed that health issues were a minor cause of dropout. However, it may become an important reason with time. Infections are a substantial contributor in drop outs arising from health issues. On the other hand, youth who drop out of high school are at a much higher risk for developing public health issues such as smoking, obesity, and having lower levels of physical activity. Early termination of education can also culminate in poorer health and shorter lifespans; it also puts increased stress and burden on the welfare and healthcare systems [9].

Thus, school dropout can occur due to health issues and these can later predispose to developing many health conditions. These are of major public health implications.

5. CONCLUSION

Drop out from school is really an important social issue in all countries. Such problems and reasons of dropouts can only be cured by spreading awareness on a one-to-one basis so that such parents and families can gain adequate knowledge of the need of formal education.

As poverty is the principal cause of drop out, so the Government has to take steps in income generation scheme. Hence, we append here the following Recommendations:

- Vocational training activities for students from class VIII has to be initiated. Appointment of a carrier counsellor is needed for a group of schools in that area. Awareness regarding gender acceptance in schools and arrangement of toilet for transgenders with infrastructure development of the schools also needs to be done.
- Creation of income opportunity at family level by Government needs also to be done.

5.1 Limitation

Our study findings can only be applied in the slum area of Chetla. As we have done convenient sampling and the sample size is also less, hence external validity of the study finding is somehow compromised.

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Author Contributions Statement

Name of Author	C	M	So	Va	Fo	I	R	D	O	E	Vi	Su	P	Fu
Dr. Amitabha Dan	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			
Dr. Achchhe Lal Pasi	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓			✓			
Dr. Sayan Bhattacharyya		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Dr. Maitreyee Guha Purkait	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓					✓	

C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

Fo : Formal analysis

I : Investigation

R : Resources

D : Data Curation

O : Writing - Original Draft

E : Writing - Review & Editing

Vi : Visualization

Su : Supervision

P : Project administration

Fu : Funding acquisition

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Informed Consent

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their voluntary consent was obtained prior to data collection.

Ethical Approval

Not Applicable.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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