

Family Etiology of School Dropouts: A Psychosocial Study

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Abstract

Family is the most influential agent among the different social factors that significantly influences the growth and development of any child. The family environment, economic status, socio-educational status of parents influences the different milestones of child development. Education is an important dimension of child's development and it's an important driving force in the process of socialization and the molding of personality. Creating an environment to have quality education is a moral responsibility of family and society as it's a crucial factor for empowerment and socio-economic development too. But unfortunately in India and many other developing countries a large number of children's are out of school before completing their primary and secondary education. Those countries have high rates of school dropouts significantly losses an elevated sustainable human resources. The present study is an analysis of family factors that contributes to the school dropouts. The study is conducted among the school dropped outs of Bilaspur city of Chhattisgarh. A total of 21 students and their families were assessed through structured in-depth interview; additional information was collected from the school authorities. The result shows that familial factors are significantly correlated with the school dropouts and these family factors have correlated the socio-economic aspects.

Keywords: Family, Etiology, School Drop Out, Family Environment

Introduction

Education is one among the few crucial factors that contributes to the positive social development. It is directly and indirectly influences many factors of development and can bring significant social change, especially country like India where educational backwardness is one of the critical indicators of under development. Creating an environment to have quality education is a moral responsibility of family, society and state for building the sustainable human resources. But unfortunately in India and many other developing countries a large number of children's are out of school before completing their primary and secondary education. The increase in school gross enrolment ratio didn't proceed with the gross completion, as it prevented by a large ratio of school dropout. Continues endeavours in the promotion of school enrolment and prevention of dropout has made considerable impacts in India during the last 60 years but regional and categorical imbalances are still vividly exists. Even with the existence of number of educational programs and policies, dropout is still being a social evil that leads to educational backwardness. India accounts 20-40 percent school dropout in elementary and primary levels in every year. Failure to complete high school not only produces negative outcome for the individuals, but also widens the existing social and economic inequalities (**Sunita Chug, 2011**). The reason for school dropouts are many, lack of interest of child or parents, financial constraints, distance to school, school atmosphere and home environment. **Silkdar and Mukhargee (2012)** listed out 20 reasons that contribute to school dropouts and they divided it into eight categories. The most general reasons are categorized under school centric and parent centric reasons. Both of these factors are crucial reasons for school dropouts.

As a problem having psycho-social and economic implication the remedial approach for school dropout should be focused on the root causes. The minimal results of the implemented preventive and promotional strategies of government has marked lack of inclusion of addressing such root causes, complexities and complications related to family is being a dominant cause, which hasn't addressed in policy level interventions. Family is the most influential agent among the different social factors that significantly influences the growth and development of any child. The family environment, economic status, socio-educational status of parents influences the different milestones of child development. Both statistical data and empirical research suggest that children from better households are more likely to remain in school, whilst those who are poorer are more likely never to have attended, or to drop out once they have enrolled (**Frances Hunt, 2008**). Education is an important dimension of child's development and it's an important driving force in the process of socialization and the moulding of personality. Different socio-demographic aspects of family are having direct influence on child and child development.

Family Environment and School Dropout

Along with a number of factors familial factor are most influential in child schooling and quality of education. The other factors can be overcome if there is a positive atmosphere exists in the family. Existing literatures and empirical evidences shows that school dropout have significant negative correlation with the family environment. **Akhter (1996)** and **Brown and Park, (2002)** have found that the type of the family, monthly income, parental education, education of mother large family size, caste affiliations, place of residence and educational infrastructure as determinants of enrolment and primary school dropouts. **Jayachandran (2006)** indicate that the major factor of dropout are child and parents are not interested in studies, unable to cope, work for wages, salary, participation in other economic activities, attend to domestic duties and financial constraints. **Rupon Basumatary (2012)** points that family's social and demographic circumstances are an important determinant of school dropout; the members who make up a family of the child, health of the family members, education attained by parents, the activities family members are engaged in, whether the family is single-parent or otherwise etc, influence dropout decision of children. Number of children in the family is important determinant of school dropout.

Educational status of the parents is very crucial factor that affects child's schooling and successful completion. Those parents who are educated enough or having awareness regarding the importance and needs of education is more successful in making environment for getting quality education to their children's. **Lloyd, Mete and Grant (2009)** found that particular a mother's education level often influences length of access for girl's education, girls whose mothers have some sort of formal schooling are less likely to dropout from school. **Samarrai and Peasgood (1998)** indicate that the father's education has a greater influence on boy's primary schooling; and the mother's on girls. Their study also shows that improvement of father's education raises the schooling of both sons and daughters but mother's education has significant impact only on daughter's schooling. Motivation and emotional support from family members especially from parents is important factor that creates interest on child to continue his/her study. The interest of child on school and studies are influenced by different factors like school environment, behaviour of teachers, distance to school etc. In the present scenario many of the above factors are positive and even though child doesn't show interest to go school. This dimension is much correlated to the family support and motivation system. **Aston and Melanahan (1991); Rumberger et al. (1990); Rumberger (1995); Liu (2004); Ainsworth et al. (2005)** reported that the parents monitor and regulate their activities, provide emotional support, encourage independent decision-making and are generally involved in their schooling are less likely to drop out of school.

Socioeconomic status of family is another factor of influence on school dropout. In the current situation, where a number of policies and programs on existence, families need not to spend financial resources for the schooling of children's and lack of this resources never leads to school dropouts. But children's are compelled to support for the household's works, engaging in any other earnings or taking care of the younger siblings. This happens just because the family's economic status is not good. **Birdsoll et al. (2005), Boyle et al. (2002) Brown and Park (2002), Bruneforth (2006), Cardoso and Verner (2007), Dachi and Garrett (2003), Hunter and May (2003)** showed that the high parental income makes it convenient to provide more resources to support children's education, including access to better quality schools, private tuitions and more support for learning within home are the significance causes of children dropping out of school.

Chug (2011) Found that risk factor being to add up even before students enroll in school that is poverty, low educational level of parents the weak family structure, pattern of schooling of sibling and preschool experiences, family background and domestic problems create an environment which negatively affects the value of education and responsible for children dropping out. Children's from unhealthy family environment are very prone to school dropout, alcoholism of parents and family schism are some of the negative factors.

Methods and Materials

The study was carried out among the school dropped outs of primary school in the city of **Bilaspur of Chhattisgarh state**. Simple random technique is used to select the samples from the sampling frame which was provided by the school authorities. Thirty four school dropouts were reported in the school during the academic year 2012-13 and 2013-14. A total of 21 families from the 38 were assessed and it constitutes around 60 percent of the population of this study. In-depth interview was conducted among the children's, teachers and their parents to investigate the precipitating factor and pattern of school dropout. Focused group discussion was conducted among teachers to understand the reasons, perception and possible strategies to deal school dropout. Different aspects related to Family environment were assessed including nature of employment, income, economic status, home atmosphere etc.

Results

The study area is largely populated by scheduled castes, especially Satnamai sects of Hinduism. The area is in suburban area of the Bilaspur city and the infrastructural facilities like water, electricity and drainage is least and not developed to the standard.

1. Socio-economic Status of the Family

Class of Dropout		Caste		Gender	
1 st	3	SC	14	Boys	11
3 rd	6	ST	2	Girls	10
4 th	7	OBC	5		
5 th	5				

Table – 01

As the table 01 indicates the maximum number of students are belongs to Scheduled Caste. The school dropout in the primary school of the study area shows an almost equal distribution from each class. Even from the first standard itself three students were dropped out. Large number of dropout is reported from 4th standard. The socioeconomic status of the families of dropped out children's is poor and all of the parents are engaged in occupation as daily wages. Eight families of the dropped out children's are seasonal migrants too. In particular seasons they migrate to other places/states for occupational purposes as they are unable to have livelihood over their present domicile. Automatically the children's also migrate with the family and compelled to terminate their studies as most of the migrated places school facility is not available or language barriers. Most of the families are living in nuclear family set up and except 5 families all of them are living in their own land which was allotted by the government authorities.

Almost all the respondents/parents are aware about free and compulsory education and all of the respondents opined that child schooling never made any financial responsibility but if the child doesn't go to school and help the family it will benefits the family.

2. Family Environment

As the table 02 projects a majority of the parents of dropped out children's are illiterate or not even completed their primary education. Both fathers and mothers of school dropped outs are equally backward in the ground of education. Only three among the parents are completed their secondary education. Around half of the children's responded they used to beaten by their father's once they drunk and opined alcoholism is one of the factor that made constrains for their studies. Family environment is being problematic and negative because of alcoholism. Except three children's no child has reported any type of illness or physical problem that prevented the attendance in school before the drop out.

Education of Parents			
Mother		Father	
Illiterate	15	Illiterate	15
Primary	5	Primary	4
Secondary	1	secondary	2
Total= 21			

Table- 02

3. Reasons

The empirical evidence shows that basic etiology of the school dropout is the lack of interest of child in the studies. Among the 21 cases studied 12 students left school just because they are not interested in schooling. The causative factor for remaining dropout is mainly students are engaged or compelled in their household matters. Most of them are taking care of their younger siblings and other household matters as their parents both mother and father engaged in daily labor. A few number of students left the school in the grounds of minor health problems and never shown interest to come back to school. A number of students are compelled to leave the school for supporting the family in financial grounds as their family members were sick or they are economically underprivileged.

The study shows that important reasons for school dropout lay down on the hands of family as they are unable to motivate and failed to take preventive measures for school dropout. More than eighty percent of the dropout in the study is directly or indirectly related to the child's interest in schooling. If the family or teachers have taken preventive measures many school dropout could be prevented.

4. Child's Motivation

A total 18 children's were interviewed and most of them don't have interest in studies and they told that they have been never motivated by their teachers in continuing education. But family members have motivated in certain extend but most of the times their attendance shortage was caused by household reasons and subsequently they developed a disinterest in school and engaged with peer group. After one or two hour of household activities children's are playing with their peer group and some of them are engaged in some earnings to support their family. Most of the children's doesn't like to re-join school.

5. Perception of Parents

All most all the parents want their child's to get educated but they are helpless to create that atmosphere for their child. More than half of the parents responded that they are ready to do maximum things as possible for their child on education but the child is not interested in studies and going to school. They are completely unaware what to do in such situation. Many of them took their children's to school in the initial days but subsequently the interest of child has shaded and they failed to make child to go school. None of the parents has taken any initiative to talk this matter with school authorities. Mothers of the school dropout students have shown more interest in regard with the re-admission of the children but again they are confused how to motivate their children's to go school.

6. Perception of Teachers

The focused group discussion among teachers shows that the crucial reason for school dropout is that students are not interested in studies. Almost all the students were infrequent in school before drop out. Teachers opined that a majority of children's dropped out for engaging in household affairs and migrated with parents for employment. School has tried to make the students to come back but no frequent follow up were done in this regard. As they opined that family members of the children's also have interest to make their students child to get education but they are not aware or unable to create an environment to motivate their children's for this. The interest of the children's on studies greatly depends on the family environment and motivation they are having from parents and siblings. Teachers opined that most of the children are who dropping out had been a poor family environment. Most of these parents are busy with their works and doesn't have time for looks after their children's, whether they are going to school or not. If the child doesn't want to go to school family members never compel and motivate the child, as in the initial days this compulsion/motivation or frequent care is essential for adjusting with the school environment.

Some of the teachers opined that lack of interest in studies is the result of learning disorders but it was undiagnosed and not given any type of intervention as it's not accessible or affordable to their parents.

Teachers indirectly accept the fact that school lacks those essential things that needs to be there to attract and motivate the students. Lack of funds and infrastructure and commitment of teacher's also contributing factor for rising school drop outs.

Discussion

The results of present study has significantly supports the previous studies and rejects certain traditional etiological factors of school dropouts especially in regard with the vulnerable populations. The study shows that a large number of school dropouts can be prevented by better family education, awareness and creating better livelihood conditions. The economic aspects of the family is not a direct factor for school dropouts as there is no financial implications or expenditure need to be spent for schooling but the economic situations of the family makes barriers to proper atmosphere for schooling. A number of students in this study dropped out from school to take care for their household matters and their younger siblings. This happened with the family's whose economic condition in unsound. But the empirical evidence of this study reveals that 90 percent of the child could continue their studies even with the financial circumstances of the families as it's not that worse. The major reason was the disinterest of child in studies and its etiology is laid down on the incapacity of family especially parents to motivate the child on continuation of their education. Almost all parents wants their child get educated but they are helpless in front of their disinterested child. There were no collaborated efforts were happened in between teachers and parents in this regard.

As the empirical evidences showed in the studies of **Lloyd, Mete and Grant (2009)** and **Samarrai and Peasgood (1998)** parents education is a crucial factor for school dropout in this study too. Most of the parents of school dropout have never completed their secondary education and it's having correlation with their child's education also. The type of family and number of members in the family, health status of the family members also negatively contributes to school dropouts. As **Silkdar and Mukhargee (2012)** shows the results of this study also implicate that school centric reason's too in the forefront of school dropout. Teachers put the overall responsibility of school dropout in the name of disinterest of children's and family environment. They are accepting the fact that they haven't made any interventions in this regard. The lethargic attitude of teachers also an important contributing factor that lead to the rise of school dropouts. Even with the existence of large number of educational promotional program still dropout is common and epidemic among vulnerable populations like scheduled castes and tribes.

Conclusion

The study implicates the family's foremost responsibility on child schooling and the lack of awareness and education of them have direct influence on their children's too. The data on educational status of parents and school dropouts of children's have significant correlation as most of the dropouts reported from educationally backward families. These dropouts again create an educationally backward class to the next generation too. Mere implementation of educational programs cannot bring any change, as per the needs and nature of population and problem government/other agencies have to initiate innovative program to prevent school dropouts. The policy level interventions should focus on integrated aspects of school education with the active partnership of family, community and school.

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