

## The Dropout Phenomenon: An Overview

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### ABSTRACT

Education is the medium that helps us to gain techniques, skills, and confidence to know and understand our responsibilities towards society and the nation. Without education society becomes weak. The strength of every society depends on the extent of educated and scholarly people living in it. This review describes school dropouts with special attention to the reasons why children or youth leave school and issues faced by countries worldwide. 29 research papers are included in the present study. Dropping out of school is not only a concern of one individual or family but it is a problem of a society and ultimately of a nation. Several nations including India are finding innovative solutions, right from predictability to prevention by embracing technology and early warning systems to battle this problem.

**Keywords:** Education, Dropout, Individual, Family, Nation, Technology, Early Warning System, Predictability

Youth are an asset to every nation. They drive productivity when the transition from adolescence to adulthood is qualitative. For this, proper skills and knowledge have to be developed at the early stages of life. Education is the medium that helps gain techniques, skills, and confidence to understand our responsibilities towards society and the nation. Without education society becomes weak. The strength of every society depends on the extent of educated and scholarly people living in it. Education is the basic requirement for every human as employment opportunities and the progress of the nation depend on it. Farooqui, Z. (2022) poll done by the Indian government's National Statistical Office (NSO), one out of every eight students enrolled in a school or college drop out before completing their education. The right to education of the Indian Constitution sanctions every child to receive free primary education and many students are availing this benefit. While the Government is taking significant efforts for expanding the reach of education, this phenomenon remains a blot on the progress of education in India and it forms a formidable hurdle to achieving its goals of the New Education Policy of 100% Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) by 2030 and Viksit Bharat 2047.

Kara, B. (2006) defined dropout as “any student who leaves school for any reason before graduation or completion of a program of studies without transferring to another elementary

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## The Dropout Phenomenon: An Overview

or secondary school.” The General Education Department of the Ministry of Education defined a dropout student ‘as an individual who abandoned their school place and did not return or transfer to another establishment’ Tukundane, C. et al. (2015). This phenomenon exists in all schools all over the world and it is not possible for any country to avoid or get rid of this problem (Chung & Lee, 2018). Because this affects individuals as well as the societal and economic structure of that country. Apart from this problem, it leads to an increase in delinquency and assault rates.

In brief, dropout means discontinuing schooling for financial, social, or family reasons. It is a serious issue for any country. Keeping in view the above aspects, this review describes school dropouts with special attention to the reasons why children or youth leave school and recent efforts made to alleviate this problem.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Different factors are responsible for dropouts such as demographic, family, socioeconomic status, school, behavioral, and psychological. Negut, C.N. (2020) explained that the causes of dropout in primary or secondary schools are related to family, pedagogy, and socioeconomic status of the family. In tertiary education, these causes are quite similar but with a slight difference like the free will of the student and the influence of the external environment on the personality of the student. Till 18 years of age, the child is under the supervision of the parents, and decisions related to life are generally taken by parents or teachers. So, dropping out from school may happen due to rebellious acts or traumatic events or the intellectual capacity of the child. After 18 years child enters into the phase of early adulthood and can speak theoretically, and make decisions consciously.

The literature analysis highlights several factors that affect the number of school dropouts. The review shows that over the years, several attempts have been made not only in India but also in other nations to address this menace.

Gouda, S., & Sekher, T. (2014) found parental occupation and literacy, household size, number of children, lack of proper school infrastructure, inadequate teacher education and experience and early marriage impacted dropping-out. Contreras, D et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of nurturing positive and robust relationships among students and teachers to decrease the number of dropouts. Abedi, F. et al (2021) recognized the gender gap in literacy levels of girls and boys at secondary and primary levels. Other than poverty, non-availability of secondary schools in the villages, absence of sanitation and toilets, children expected to help in economic and domestic work, no vocational and educational guidance in schools, and distance from home result in dropouts.

Negut, C. N. (2020) categorized factors responsible for dropout into endogenous factors and exogenous factors. Endogenous factors include psychological factors related to the individual, and exogenous factors, which consider socio-economic, financial, and in some cases psychopedagogical. Thus, intelligence, cognition, motivation, personality types, self-esteem, coping with stress, maladaptation, or inability to integrate into the team are some of the reasons behind dropout.

Monga, OP et al. (2016) stated that the family of a child is very important in molding the personality of a growing child. A positive family environment helps in motivating children to acquire an education. They found that parents of dropout children were either illiterate or had low education background hence were unable to give proper guidance and motivation to

## The Dropout Phenomenon: An Overview

complete their education. Some research suggests that children who experience trauma in their early developmental years are more prone to dropping out of school. Duke, N. (2020), the higher the number of traumatic incidences, the more the adverse effect on educational outcomes. Children who had experienced trauma before or during elementary school fail to get good grades, they have behavioral issues and low attendance. Children with traumas in their past exhibited "school refusal behaviors," anxiety, and depression.

Rani, B.S., (2013) investigated factors influencing dropouts among primary school students. They selected 120 dropouts and found out that lack of parental guidance and low family income are major reasons behind the dropout of children from school. Due to poor economic conditions, parents have to work hard for a longer period which affects their enthusiasm to guide children in their studies. Due to poverty parents are not able to give books, uniforms, and fees to the school leading to the withdrawal of the children from school. Children are busy more with household work so they do not get time for studies. This led to failure in examinations and finally dropping out of school. Similarly, Nixon, N and Rao, V. (2022) found that social and economic factors such as low interest in education, taking care of siblings, fear of anti-social elements, priority given to brother's education, ill-health of parents, and poor amenities in school were found some of the factors responsible for girl-child dropout from secondary schools in rural areas of Visakhapatnam districts.

Kumar, P., et al. (2023) conducted a longitudinal study to determine the reasons for adolescent school dropouts in India through a sample size of 11,864 girls and 4,428 boys from the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The Highest prevalence was found in lower economic and social strata. Interaction with parents, education of the mother, sports participation and having a role model decreased risks of school dropouts. Substance abuse in boys, lack of interest in studies, gender discrimination, family problems and engaging in paid work are factors leading to dropout.

According to Stewart, K. (2021) homeless, foster care youth, and juvenile justice youth face adverse outcomes of education. These are often labeled inappropriately and judged by their school staff and peers which ends up in dropping out. Homeless students feel unsafe outside school and uncomfortable in school. Teachers are not aware of the severity of their situations and are also not trained in assessing their student's emotional needs to meet educational goals. Homeless students feel shame and guilt and withdraw themselves from social and educational settings. Foster youth face different problems in school. They often lag academically but have high graduation rates compared to homeless students. Gross, J., et al., (2017).

School dropout among girls is a serious issue in developing countries. Though national, international, and regional initiatives are being taken, Tanzania is facing the problem of girls dropping out of school. With the help of semi-structured interviews, it was found that sociocultural factors such as early marriage, female genital mutilation, social attitude against girls' education, and low level of parent's education are the main reasons behind girls' dropout from school Msafiri, M. (2022).

Cultural characteristics play an important role in education. In any culture, people promote or disregard some activities. Also, some norms might be irrelevant in another culture. Therefore, absorbing different cultures is a challenging task for individuals. Those who deviate from the cultural norms are perceived to be inadequate. Devi, S.P. (2020) stated that dropout can be seen through cultural perspectives. The Independent model of self represents autonomous entities, separate from others, and can make their own choices based on their preferences. On

## The Dropout Phenomenon: An Overview

the other hand, the interdependent model of self is more impelled toward social goals, responsive, and connected with others Stephens, N.M. et al. (2012). Students who follow the independent model of self, get a sense of belongingness to the institution on the contrary, those who practice the interdependent model of self, get a sense of discomfort and they experience their college differently. In college independent model of self is more prevalent, although students from the first generation follow an interdependent model of self. So, students from the first generation are more likely to drop out because of the cultural differences they experience in their education.

Rosada and Lestari (2022) found that dropped-out adolescents have low motivation toward learning, are introverted and less able to control themselves. Students who experience anxiety tend to give up easily. Their parents were less responsible and had low educational aspirations. Other factors responsible were student-teacher conflict, low involvement of teachers in the school, bad influence of peers, and bullying. All these factors badly affect the psychological condition of adolescents and their social relations which make them vulnerable to dropping out of school.

El Fadely A., et al (2024) analysed dropping out nursing students and found that students select courses without reflecting on their choice or consideration of their professional interests. They tend to select a course, just to get the certificate, even though it was not their first choice. Very soon they start experiencing a gap between their expectations and reality. They realise that this is not the profession they had dreamed of, which results in dropping out of the program.

Samašonok, K., et al (2023), connected the complex nature of this phenomenon to the extrinsic and intrinsic motivation of students. No encouragement to have active engagement in the study process, the study content is outdated and not meeting the needs of the current labour market, the lack of skills and knowledge gained during the course relevant to prepare for professional work, as well as the non-existence of opportunities for obtaining valuable experience are reasons for dropouts.

While looking at dropout rates, one cannot ignore the students who have mental health issues and have no access to diagnose their problems. School staff and peers often misunderstand students with such problems. Emotionally Disturbed children need to be evaluated and provided special education. Mitchell, B. et al. (2018) found that students with Emotional Disturbance are at higher risk of social and behavioral problems and academic problems. These children require Individual Education Plans (IEP) and accommodations, but their teachers do not change their teaching styles as well expectations from the children as they are not able to understand how to adjust to such children. Such students experience bullying and are likely to be suspended or expelled from school because this behavior is misunderstood as a disciplinary issue.

Martín-Arbós, S., et. al. (2024), found that academic help-seeking and sexual orientation predict dropout intentions. Students should feel safe and supported in their school. A positive school climate needs to be fostered for the good academic performance of the students. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) students often face hostile and challenging school climate because of school practices and policies. School curricula are mainly focused on heteronormative structures Cardinal, H. (2021). LGTBQ students experience physical abuse, verbal harassment, and isolation. Insecure and unsupported feelings at school affect the mental well-being and academic performance of these students.

## The Dropout Phenomenon: An Overview

Due to marginalization and low motivation for learning LGBTQ students are at a higher risk of dropout (Steck and Perry, 2018).

Garg, MK, et al. (2023) provided evidence that school dropout is an enduring issue in India affecting the progress in educational attainment. Factors like caste division, financial constraints type of institution, distance from the institute, unable to cope with studies, and quality of education are major reasons which elevate the risk of dropout from school in India.

Johansson, B. (2021) through a sample of 155 pertinent studies identified that School dropouts are depicted by many social, behavioural, and emotional characteristics of *externalising* problems (acting out, aggression, non-performance) and *internalising* problems (depression, anxiety and social withdrawal). Boudjehem, R. et al. (2024), designed an “early warning system” to identify students at risk of dropout in e-learning environments. Such students are then provided help anonymously to overcome difficulties and prevent them from dropping out. Sihare, S., (2024), the Government of Andhra Pradesh used technology to identify key trends for student dropouts such as inadequate furniture and poor toilets, low learning outcomes, and transition problems. This resulted in the active pursuit, tackling problems and counselling of students to prevent dropout.

### *Objectives*

Every year, a large number of students drop out of schools or colleges worldwide which hampers their economic and social well-being. It also reduces the literacy rate of that country. A dropout from school is referred to as any person who leaves school or college without completion of formal education. There are different reasons behind dropping out of school e.g., social, economic, cultural, psychological, and behavioral. Some students drop out of school voluntarily whereas others are forced to leave their schools. The study is conducted to give an idea about the major issue faced by countries worldwide and the different reasons behind Dropout as well as highlight recent initiatives taken to alleviate this problem.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The present study is based on secondary data collected from different journals, research articles, and reports. The research papers from 2006 to 2024 were added for data collection. Data presented in this study was downloaded from ResearchGate, Science Direct, and other authentic websites to get an accurate picture of the problem in this study. Studies conducted in India and other countries are taken into consideration.

**Inclusion criteria:** The scholarly articles concerning Dropout published in English in journals listed in Scopus and Peer-reviewed journals were included in this review.

**Exclusion criteria:** The scholarly articles regarding Dropouts published in languages other than English were not included. Duplication of the content was removed.

This study filtered out 50 research articles among which 29 research papers are included in the present study. Table No. 1 presents the articles reviewed for the present study.

## The Dropout Phenomenon: An Overview

**Table No. 1 The research articles included in the present study**

Sr. No.	Author/s	Name of the Journal/Proceedings	Year of Publication	DOI/Website downloaded from
1	Kara, B.	The report presented to North Carolina Education Research Data Center, Center for Child and Family Policy	2006	<a href="https://www.purdue.edu/hhs/hdfs/fii/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/s_ncfis04c03.pdf">https://www.purdue.edu/hhs/hdfs/fii/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/s_ncfis04c03.pdf</a>
2	Stephens et al.	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	2012	<a href="https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0027143">https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0027143</a>
3	Rani & Goswami	International Journal of Farm Sciences	2013	<a href="https://www.indianjournals.com/ijor.aspx?target=ijor:ijfs&amp;volume=3&amp;issue=1&amp;article=023">https://www.indianjournals.com/ijor.aspx?target=ijor:ijfs&amp;volume=3&amp;issue=1&amp;article=023</a>
4	Gouda, & Sekher	IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)	2014	<a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.9790/7388-04637583">http://dx.doi.org/10.9790/7388-04637583</a>
5	Tukundane et al.	Children and Youth Services Review	2015	<a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2015.02.011">http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2015.02.011</a>
6	Monga et al.	American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences	2016	<a href="https://www.researchgate.net/publication/297379676_Family_and_School_Dropouts_A_Socio-psychological_Observation">https://www.researchgate.net/publication/297379676_Family_and_School_Dropouts_A_Socio-psychological_Observation</a>
7	Gross, J., et al.	Communiqué	2017	<a href="https://eric.ed.gov/?q=homeless&amp;ff1=pubJournal+Articles&amp;ff2=subMental+Health&amp;id=EJ1193614">https://eric.ed.gov/?q=homeless&amp;ff1=pubJournal+Articles&amp;ff2=subMental+Health&amp;id=EJ1193614</a>
8	Chung, J.Y. & Lee, S.	Children and Youth Services Review.	2018	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.11.030">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.11.030</a>
9	Steck & Perry	Journal of School Violence	2018	<a href="http://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2017.1308255">http://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2017.1308255</a>
10	Mitchell et al.	Behavioural Disorders	2019	doi:10.1177/0198742918816518
11	Duke, N.	Journal of School Health	2020	doi:10.1111/josh.12910
12	Negut, C. N.	New Trends in Psychology	2020	<a href="https://dj.univ-danubius.ro/index.php/NTP/article/download/681/1156">https://dj.univ-danubius.ro/index.php/NTP/article/download/681/1156</a>
13	Devi, S.P.	The International Journal of Indian Psychology	2020	DOI: 10.25215/0801.022
14	Abedi, F et al.		2021	<a href="https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349678733_Educational_Exclusion_of_Women_Challenges_and_Opportunities">https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349678733_Educational_Exclusion_of_Women_Challenges_and_Opportunities</a>
15	Cardinal, H.	BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education	2021	<a href="https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1304398">https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1304398</a>
16	Johansson, B.		2021	<a href="https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353821087_DROPPING_OUT_OF_SCHOOL_-_a_systematic_and_integrative_research_review_on_risk_factors_and_interventions">https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353821087_DROPPING_OUT_OF_SCHOOL_-_a_systematic_and_integrative_research_review_on_risk_factors_and_interventions</a>
17	Stewart, K.	Master's Thesis	2021	<a href="https://doi.org/10.33015/dominican.edu/2021.CP.02">https://doi.org/10.33015/dominican.edu/2021.CP.02</a>
18	Contreras, D. et al.	International Journal of Educational Development	2022	doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2022.102576">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2022.102576</a>
19	Farooqui, Z.	Journal of Modern Management & Entrepreneurship (JMME)	2022	<a href="https://www.inspirajournals.com/issue/downloadfile/2/Volumne-">https://www.inspirajournals.com/issue/downloadfile/2/Volumne-</a>

## The Dropout Phenomenon: An Overview

Sr. No.	Author/s	Name of the Journal/Proceedings	Year of Publication	DOI/Website downloaded from
				Pages/zbeDNM94vnaK4P0yk8jR
20	Msafiri & Lianyu	Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies	2022	DOI:10.9734/ajess/2022/v33i4711
21	Rosada & Lestari	Indigenous: Journal Ilmiah Psikologi	2022	<a href="https://doi.org/10.23917/indigenous.v7i3.19573">https://doi.org/10.23917/indigenous.v7i3.19573</a>
22	Nixon & Rao	International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research	2022	<a href="http://ijmer.in.doi./2022/11.05.59">http://ijmer.in.doi./2022/11.05.59</a>
23	Garg et al.	Journal of Social and Economic Development	2023	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/s40847-023-00249-w">https://doi.org/10.1007/s40847-023-00249-w</a>
24	Kumar, P. et al.	PLOS ONE	2023	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0282468">https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0282468</a>
25	Samašonok, K. et al.	Entrepreneurship And Sustainability Issues	2023	<a href="http://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2023.10.3(11)">http://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2023.10.3(11)</a>
26	Boudjehem, R. et al.	Education and Information Technology	2024	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-024-12498-1">https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-024-12498-1</a>
27	El Fadely A, et al.	Nursing Practice Today.	2024	DOI: 10.18502/npt.v11i1.14945
28	Martín-Arbós, S. et al.	Social Psychology of Education	2024	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-024-09903-5">https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-024-09903-5</a>
29	Sihare, S.R.	SN Computer Science	2024	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/s42979-023-02458-w">https://doi.org/10.1007/s42979-023-02458-w</a>

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dropping out of school is not only a concern of one individual or family but it is a problem of society and ultimately of a nation. A new UNESCO report (2022) shows that 244 million children and youth between the age range of 6 and 18 years are still out of school worldwide. Students who drop out of school find it hard to get good jobs and a comfortable life. In today's highly skilled labour force, dropouts face challenges surviving economically in society. A higher dropout rate lowers the productivity of that nation Wangmo, S and Tshewang, S., (2021). Dropout students are found to be engaged in anti-social activities like drugs, burglary, alcoholism, etc. Thus, the dropout problem does not remain on the individual level but it has a significant effect on the country's economic prosperity.

Globally, reasons for school dropout are categorized under four domains; family, job, school, and community Patrick, A. (2012). Friendenberg and Ruglls (2007) classified reasons for dropouts into the categories; twenty-four family-related factors, community-related three factors, and school-related twelve factors responsible for dropout from schools. Family-related factors include; the socioeconomic status of a family, racial and ethnic groups, gender, family support, educational background of parents, demography, low social conformity, behavioral misconduct, poor academic achievement, attitude and liking for the school, etc. In community-related peer pressure, low educational aspiration, and having dropped out siblings or friends are included. In school-related problems, socioeconomic status of schools, discrimination of students based on ethnicity or race, school safety, student-teacher ratio, lack of programs, etc. are included. In job-related problems, students who have to work and study at the same time, have to do the job for survival and those who got the job are included. Therefore, grade retention, socioeconomic position, early marriages, school mobility, gender, and ethnicity are the major causes suggested by scholars for dropouts all over the world.

## The Dropout Phenomenon: An Overview

Sihare, S. (2024), assessed the impact of student dropout in higher education and whether artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) can help the student continue their education. He found that AI and ML were effective in averting dropouts worldwide, including in India. In 2015, the Government of Andhra Pradesh, India developed an AI technology app using Microsoft's Azure machine learning platform, for forecasting school dropouts. It identified 60 + patterns by effectively tracking dropouts. In the academic year 2018-2019, it tracked 19,500 probable dropouts in the district of Vishakhapatnam and offered counselling support to address their problems and prevent dropouts. Currently, they are using the Vidyarthi Nestham mobile application which permits 4 to 5 predictions of school dropouts for each teacher in every school. These teachers, equipped with the reasons for the student dropping out received from the app, start mentoring them.

There is a growing emphasis on designing “early warning systems” for school dropouts worldwide and in India. The Uttar Pradesh government prepared a framework to apply the “early warning system” implemented by Netherlands to re-enroll students from 6-14 years of age who have dropped out. This has been implemented in the Gonda, Bahraich, Balrampur, and Shravasti districts of Uttar Pradesh. The attendance of each child is closely monitored. In case a student is absent for more than 40 days, educational authorities proactively intervene to ensure continued education by supporting students who are on the verge of leaving education.

### CONCLUSION

Every year, a large number of students drop out of school globally. There are many reasons for school or college dropouts. A few of them are academic difficulties, poverty, early marriage, lack of interest in academics, commutation difficulties, fear of going to school, and social pressure. Dropping out of school has a negative impact on a child's future. This hinders not only the economic and social well-being of students but also the literacy rate of that country and creates a non-innovative environment. As this problem is complex, solutions for this also require different kinds of programs. These programs need to be preventive and rehabilitative. This review focuses on the factors that affect school dropouts. The study tried to identify the research from both developing and developed countries. Twenty-nine articles fitting the criteria were included in this study. It was concluded that the issue of school dropout is universal and challenges faced by all countries are the same varying in scope and depth of the problem.

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## The Dropout Phenomenon: An Overview

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## The Dropout Phenomenon: An Overview

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