

DYNAMICS OF SCHOOL DROPOUTS IN RURAL PUNJAB

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ABSTRACT

The present study is an investigation aimed at understanding the gender related risk factors in rural school dropouts. A sample of 100 children, aged 10 and above was drawn randomly from 6 randomly selected villages of Ludhiana district (Punjab). Children were equally divided [50 boys, 50 girls] to form 2 groups i.e. dropouts and school-goers. 100 parents were also interviewed. Pareek and Trivedi's Socio Economic Status Scale, Mehta's Achievement, Values and Anxiety Inventory and Mishtra's Draw-a-Man test were used to assess socio economic status, achievement motivation and intelligence of the respondents. Two self-prepared questionnaires were also framed to study the attitude of parents towards education of their children and to study the social environment of the children with reference to their family, personality and school variables. No significant differences were seen among respondents with regards to their intelligence and socio economic status, but differences were evident as far as their achievement motivation was seen. Majority of parents held a neutral or negative attitude towards the education of their children. Marriage among girls and shouldering financial responsibilities with the family had made a large number of children discontinue their studies.

Key words : Achievement, Attitude, Dropout, Motivation, Personality

INDIAN education has since long been ploughed by the spreading menace of illiteracy. Though a small sub-continent, India has the world's largest illiterate population, which is 424 million in number. In each Five Year Plan, budgets are set aside, policies are made, targets are set but despite all this, just a marginal improvement has been seen in the sphere of education since independence of our country. Each year thousands of children dropout of schools and at present this dropout rate is as high as 70% on All India basis, 74.41% for girls and 68.41% for boys (Tripathi, 1997). Even incentives as free books, uniforms, mid-day meals, etc. have not helped much in this regard. The present study was conducted to probe into the reasons behind this grave problem. The present paper tries to explore into some of the specific areas and problems that have led to huge chunks of wastage and stagnation in our country, especially of children living in the rural areas of Punjab State.

The present investigation focuses the identification of the causes of dropouts in rural areas in case of boys and girls aged 10 years and above, and the attitude of rural parents towards completion of study of their children.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A sample of 100 children aged 10 and above was drawn from six randomly selected villages of Ludhiana district of Punjab. The villages were Punjab Bhanaur, Beermi, Baraich, Chakkalan, Lalton and Mansooran. The sample was evenly distributed ($n=50$) to form two major groups, one comprising the dropouts and the other was of those who were in the same age group and were continuing their studies. The respondents were equally divided on the basis of sex that is; 50 boys and 50 girls. An equal number of parents from both the groups were interviewed to find their view regarding the education of their children.

Separate interview schedules were framed to gather information from the respondents; the first one was administered on children to collect information regarding their social environment with reference to their personality, family and general school atmosphere. It had 39 statements. The second schedule comprising nine statements was framed to find the attitude of parents towards the education of their wards, eliciting the opinion of experts.

Pareek and Trivedi's Socio Economic Status Scale designed in 1964, was used to determine the socio economic status of the rural families. Mehta's Achievement, Values and Anxiety Inventory (1993) was used to measure the achievement motivation level of the children. Draw-a-man test designed by Mishra (1984), was used to measure the intelligence of children by study of their drawings.

For the purpose of collecting the requisite information, the investigator visited the selected villages personally. Interviews with dropouts, students and their parents were conducted using self structured questionnaires and by administering selected tests on the dropouts and school-goers to find out their intelligence level, their socio economic status and their motivation towards studies.

Scoring was done as per the instructions in the manuals of the chosen tests whereas for self-prepared interview schedules, scoring was done on basis of 2 point, 3 point and 4 point rating scale. The collected data were analyzed using the statistical techniques namely arithmetic mean, Chi-square test, percentage and correlations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows frequency distribution of dropouts and school-goers by personality and family variables.

It was found that the dropouts and school-goers did not differ in their socio economic status. However, a slight variation was found in case of girls. The parents' view on minimum sufficient level of education for children is influenced by the socio-economic profile of the parents. This is so because parents from low SES families want more earning hands and so tend to withdraw their children from schools at the first opportunity. Dropouts and school-goers differ as far as achievement motivation was concerned. The reason could be the

Table 1 : Distribution of dropouts and school-goers as influenced by family and personality variables

Sr. No.	Variables	Categories	Dropouts			School-goers		
			Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1.	Socio-economic status	Middle	15 (60.0)	12 (4.0)	27 (54.0)	15 (60.0)	11 (44.0)	26 (52.0)
		Low	10 (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 (39.0)	17 (68.0)	26 (52.0)	20 (80.0)	15 (60.0)	35 (70.0)

Figures in parentheses show percentages

positive attitude of school-goers towards education. Majority of dropouts belonged to low socio economic families where parents did not value education but wanted more earning hands. Dropouts and school-goers showed insignificant difference in intelligence 36% dropout boys, 80% school going ones, 68% dropout girls and 60% school going ones expressed the social environment to be unfavourable. This confirms gender bias where parents consider boys as potential breadwinners and encouraged them to go for education. School going boys were found to have unfavourable home environment because majority of them were coming to school despite protest by elderly in the family who wanted them to stop studying and start earning for the family.

Table 2 depicts the attitude of parents towards the education of their children. Majority of the respondents want their children to be educated till the stage, which they consider optimum. If parents finished 5th grade, they might consider class X as sufficient schooling for their wards. Rural parents are not aware of the benefits of education, thus exhibiting unfavourable attitude towards sending the children to school. Desetty *et al.* (1998) reported that the majority of slum children dropout from school at primary school level due to lack of parental awareness about the importance of education.

Table 2 : Attitude of parents towards education of their children

Sr. No.	Class	Score	No. of parents in each category	Percentage of parents in each category
1	Positive attitude	19-21	34	34
2	Neutral attitude	16-18	44	44
3	Negative attitude	13-15	22	22

Table 3 exhibits prominent reasons given by the respondents for dropping out. The results thus reveal that parents still believe in marrying off their daughters at the earliest possible not considering the importance of education for them. Likelihood of girls taking up jobs is lower as they tend to be absorbed in domestic work, be it before or after marriage. For the boys, expectations are high as they are expected to help parents financially irrespective of their personal choice for education. The rural elders are apprehensive about their sons who may not be useful for farming and related activities after they get educated because of the increasing trend of educated youth to seek jobs outside the village. In case of daughters going out of home beyond certain age even for education is considered unhealthy which is the direct consequence of lingering effects of strong patriarchal system in pockets of rural Punjab.

Table 3 : Home and school related reasons responsible for dropout

Sr. No.	Single and most important reason for dropping out	DROPOUTS		
		Boys	Girls	Total
1	Job	11 (44.0)	7 (28.0)	18 (36.0)
2	Family problems (economic and otherwise)	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)	-	9 (2.0)
6	Going abroad	1 (4.0)	-	1 (2.0)
7	Marriage	1 (4.0)	13 (52.0)	14 (28.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentages

Education is a basic need for a person to lead a fruitful human life as it moulds one's ideas, habits and attitudes. Hard work has to be put up by all the parents, the teachers, the administrators and the students to improve the quality of education because the higher dropout rates cause wastage and stagnation resulting in irreparable national loss.

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