

Factors influencing school dropouts at the primary level

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the factors influencing the school dropouts at the primary level in Jorhat district of Assam, India based on the responses of 120 dropouts selected through random sampling. The major factors influencing school dropouts were found to be household work, lack of parental guidance in studies, large family size, poor economic condition of the family, failure in examination, lack of time for study, punishment by teachers, lack of interest in studies, etc.

Keywords: Dropouts; economic condition; school; examination

INTRODUCTION

Education is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment (Pandya and Bora 1997). It is the catalytic factor which leads to human resource development comprising better health and nutrition, improved socio-economic opportunities and more congenial and beneficial natural environment for all (Chauhan 1997). Education is the means through which a society perpetuates and spreads its own culture. It is indispensable for understanding social problems and coping with social stresses and changes. It is also considered to be a means through

which the general productivity of the population is raised leading to better standard of living. The quality of life in terms of good health, general personality growth and better social living is also closely associated with the educational status of an individual. Education is the process of bringing out the potentialities of an individual and unfolds the natural abilities and interests before the society. It is thus the basic right of every human being and the government should provide the same (Harichandran 1992).

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Jorhat district of Assam. A sample of 120 children

who had dropped school at primary level was drawn for the study. For collection of the required data the tool used was an interview schedule which was prepared specially for the purpose. As per the direction of the leader of each area door-to-door visit was made to collect data of the school dropouts. The collected data were coded and the per cent values of each response were then calculated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results (Table 1) indicate that the most reported reason for dropping out of school was due to household work (88.33%). This observation is in conformity with the results obtained in a study conducted by NIEPA in 1987 in which it was found that more than 50 per cent and in some states even two-thirds or more students discontinued their studies because of household work. Lack of parental guidance was another reason reported by a major part of the respondents (86.66%). A majority of the respondents' parents were from the educational status that might have resulted in the parents' inability to guide their children properly. Bhat and Yasmeen (1994) reported that many of the dropouts had not got the much desired guidance at home in studies and in certain cases the parents were somewhat hostile to the very idea of schooling which contributed to students' poor performance in schools and finally leading to dropout. A large family was found to be another reason for dropping out

among a considerable percentage (82.50%) of the respondents. This is indicative of the fact that in order to support and help the parents to keep up the economy and daily routine of the household the children were compelled to leave school at an early age (Pandya and Bora 1997). Poor economic condition was found to be a dominant reason reported by a majority (80.83%) of the respondents. Some of the reasons identified were non-availability of educational aids like books, uniforms and delayed payment of fees. These results corroborate to a great extent the results obtained by Bhat and Yasmeen (1994). Panda et al (1992) reported economic backwardness of the family as one of the main reasons for dropping out among a considerable portion of the respondents (79.17%). Failure in examination was reported by Panda et al (1992) as one of the main reasons for dropping out of school. Parents engage their children in their work to supplement family labour rather than allowing them to attend classes for 4-5 hours a day. Therefore poverty-ridden parents pull out their children from schools on their first failure in a class. Thus the combination of poverty of parents and poor performance of children act as great stumbling blocks in the implementation of the strategies of retaining children in schools up to a certain level (Zaidi 1991). Lack of time for study was reported to be another reason for discontinuation of school among a considerable part of the respondents (67.50%). Most of the respondents had to

do the household work which resulted in lack of time for their studies. Lack of interest in studies was found to be a reason for dropping out of the schools among the respondents (53.33%). This can be supported by the study conducted by Visaria et al (1993) in which they found that lack of interest in education was an important reason for discontinuation of schooling. Lack of interest in studies was also reported as one of the reasons for dropping out by Panda et al (1992) and Pratinidhi et al (1992) also reported lack of interest in studies as one of the reasons for dropping out. Some of the respondents (53.33%) gave punishment by teachers as a reason for dropping out of school. The respondents reported that due to fear of punishment they dropped out of school. Punishment by teachers as a reason for

dropping out of school was reported by Pandya and Bora (1997). Lack of parental interest in continuation of studies was also given as a reason for dropping out of school by the respondents. Pandya and Bora (1997) reported lack of parental interest in continuation of studies as a contributing factor for dropping out. Another percentage (40%) of the respondents gave disliking for teachers as a reason for discontinuing school. This may be associated with the punishment inflicted by the teachers. The traumatic experiences might have made the child disliking the teachers and studies in general. Ill health of self was reported as a reason for dropping out by the respondents. The family's poverty might have resulted in the poor nutritional intake of the children, which limited their physical and mental growth and rendered them incapable of

Table 1. Reasons expressed by respondents for school dropouts at the primary level

Reasons	No of respondents	Percentage
Household work	106	88.33
Lack of parental guidance in studies	104	86.66
Large family size	99	82.50
Poor economic condition	97	80.83
Failure in examination	95	79.16
Lack of time for study	81	67.50
Punishment by teachers	64	53.33
Lack of interest in studies by the drop-out	64	53.33
Lack of parental interest in continuation of studies	53	44.16
Disliking for teachers	48	40.00
Ill health of self	22	18.33
Illiteracy of parents	16	13.33

coping with the school situation (Bhat and Yasmeen 1994). Illiteracy of parents was also found to be a reason for dropping out among the respondents (13.33%). Devi and Venkataramaiah (1997) also found illiteracy of parents as one of the contributing factors for school dropouts.

CONCLUSION

Most of the developing countries have rapidly increasing population with a high proportion of children. The adult population invariably is not able to provide universal education, training and other social amenities to all children which results in high dropout. Therefore more attempts or programmes should be brought forward to solve the problems of these children's education. It must be tackled at the parental level. A social awareness has to be created to induce parents to sustain their children's interest, attitude and level of aspiration to good jobs and higher education.

Household work, lack of parental guidance in studies, large family size, poor economic condition of the family, failure in examination, lack of time for study, punishment by teachers, lack of interest in studies, lack of parental interest in continuation of studies, dislike of teachers, ill-health and illiteracy of parents were found to be the major reasons for dropping out of students from the schools in this study.

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