

## Causes of Students' Dropout at Elementary Level in Southern Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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### Abstract

The purpose of the paper was to explore the causes of students' dropout at elementary level in the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. All the teachers working at elementary level in the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa constituted the population of the study. A sample of 171 teachers from 57 elementary schools was selected through two-stage sampling technique. The study was descriptive in nature and a self-developed questionnaire was used for data collection. For statistical analysis, descriptive statistics i.e., mean and standard deviation were used. The findings revealed that there are so many factors that contribute to dropout at elementary level. These factors are; ineffective curriculum; strict school's discipline and regulations; lack of proper physical and educational facilities; lack of parental educational support; poor parental socioeconomic status; domestic issues; parental illiteracy; unfavorable school environment; poor attendance; and Students' disruptive behaviour; lack of motivation and encouragement; teachers' discriminative and autocratic attitudes; frequent teachers' absenteeism; and students' company with unwanted children; poor health condition etc. based on findings, it was recommended that curriculum should be reviewed and redesigned in the light of emerging needs of students and society. Awareness regarding importance of education in society should be ensured through electronic as well as print media to reduce the dropout rate. An encouraging, friendly and facilitated environment may be provided inside the school for students.

**Keywords:** Causes; Dropout; Student Related Factors; School Related Factors; Teacher Related Factors; Family/Society Related Factors; Elementary Level

### Introduction

Dropout is a burning issue throughout the world. All the advanced and developing countries are stressed over the future of their country. Prosperity and advancement cannot be achieved and maintained without the educated manpower in the society. A state having illiterate and low qualified personnel cannot function properly. The dropout phenomenon is neither an issue of the past nor present but if it was ignored then it becomes a burning issue for future generations. This issue has not been originated today however it dates back to the historical background of education. The out of school and out of occupation individuals are distressing issue for society. It acts like dynamite for the socioeconomic stability of a state. In order to address this issue, it should be properly defined before moving towards its solution (Farooq, n. d). generally, a dropout alludes to any learner who leaves school before completing secondary high school certification (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2004; Tieben & Wolvers, 2010).

Extensive research work has been carried out on enrollment and dropout rates (Balfanz & West, 2008; Mehrota, 1998; Rumberger, 2011). Poor quality of education especially in public sector schools contribute to high dropout rates. The key causes of high dropout are; poor socioeconomic status of the country; lack of physical facilities in schools; lack of sufficient findings; expensive textbooks; lack of audio visual aids; unsatisfactory standards of nutrition and health; unsatisfactory condition of school building; lack of parental interest to send children to schools; harsh attitudes of teachers; unfavorable school environment; heavy weight of school bag; practice of compelling children to repeat classes; learning problems of children; over-crowded classes; scattered pattern of population in large parts of the country; long distances to schools; natural disasters in the mountainous areas; poor communication facilities; negligent management and poor administration; discouraging attitude of administrative and supervisory workforce towards teaching community; teachers' absenteeism; illegal political interference; ineffective curriculum; poor quality of education; rigid examination system; non-availability of textbooks on time, inflexible formal education system; understaffing; insufficient/improper housing facilities; low morale of teachers; high student-teacher ratio; and inadequate knowledge of child psychology (Ministry of Education, 2003).

Research revealed that students' dropout is caused by individual, social, family, and academic factors (Archambault, Bartholomew, & Mathwig, 2009). Students drop out when they experience low academic achievement. Due to unsatisfactory academic background, students fail to meet the academic expectations.

Students who encounter early academic problems are probably going to encounter academic retention which makes a developmental pathway for dropout early in their academic career (Hickman, Bartholomew, & Mathwig, 2008). Dropout is caused by pregnancy which forces a student to leave school before completing high school (Meeker, Bartholomew, & Mathwig, 2008; Renzuli & Park, 2002). Students at-risks contribute to dropout from high school (Suh, Suh, & Houston, 2007). Archambault, Bartholomew, & Mathwig (2009) found that students disruptive behaviour and anti-social peer associations were the explosive factors causing dropout. According to Bradshaw, O'Brennan & Mcneely (2008) students who were unable to control their emotions and behavior were likely to be influenced to disengage from school which later caused in their dropping out. Wells, Bechard, & Hambly (2001) concluded that family factors i.e., parental support, unwanted or unexpected parenthood, or other factors related to the home life of a student contribute to dropping out or remaining in school. They further expressed that community related factors also play a contributory role in dropout of student from school. Poverty is a community related factor that has a strong relationship with the possibility of dropping out. Similarly, Ginsberg and Miller-Cribbs (2000) found that communities in the southern and south-western part of the United States, as well as urban areas, produced more dropouts.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Due to low literacy rate in some districts of southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the dropout rate of the students at elementary level is higher than other Districts. So, the researcher made an attempt to explore the causes of dropout at elementary level in four districts of southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Therefore, the statement of problem was designed as "*Causes of Students' Dropout at Elementary Level in Southern Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*"

### **Significance of the study**

The study may have significance because it will provide basic and comprehensive information to teachers and educational authorities about the causes of dropout rate. Furthermore, it will provide foresightedness to the policy makers, curriculum planners, educationists and other concerns to minimize dropout at elementary level.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to explore the causes of students' dropout at elementary level in the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

### **Research Methodology**

#### ***Population***

All the teachers working at elementary level in southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa constituted the population of the study. There were total 659 elementary schools in southern districts in which 384 were boys and 275 were girls (EMIS, 2015).

#### ***Delimitation of the Study***

The scope of the study was delimited to only four districts of southern districts namely Hangu, Lakki Marwat, Tank and Bannu. The study was also delimited to boys' elementary schools due to culture barriers. Furthermore, the study was delimited to 33% (of the total) elementary schools from each district.

#### ***Sample and Sampling Technique***

Two-stage sampling technique was used for selecting sample. At first stage, 33% male elementary schools were selected through simple random sampling technique. In this way, 57 male elementary schools were taken as sample. At second stage, 171 elementary school teachers from 57 male schools through convenient sampling at the rate of three teachers from each school.

#### ***Research Design and Research Instrumentation***

The research design was descriptive in nature. Keeping in view the objectives of the study, a self-developed questionnaire was constructed on five point likert scale i.e., SA, A, UD, DA, and SDA. For the sake of better understanding, the questionnaire was translated in to Urdu language. The questionnaire was comprised of five main dimensions regarding students' dropout rate i.e., Student-Related Factors, Teacher-Related Factors, Family/Society-Related Factors, School-Related Factors.

#### ***Pilot Testing***

Pilot study was conducted in five elementary secondary schools which were not included in sample schools with the aim to make it more valid and authentic for achieving precise outcomes. Therefore, questionnaires were distributed among 15 teachers. Data was collected and modifications were made in the questionnaire where necessary in the light of suggestions given by the experts.

#### ***Validity and Reliability***

Validity and reliability of the questionnaire is the core requirement for the accurate and precise outcomes of a research study. The research instrument was validated through five specialists in the relevant field having

extraordinary knowledge and experiences. Reliability of the questionnaire was calculated by using Cronbach's Alpha (Internal Consistent Reliability Analysis) and found to be 0.84 which is considered reliable. The factors wise internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire is given as under in the following table:

**Table 01:**  
**Average Internal Consistency Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) of the Factors mentioned in the Questionnaire**

Items	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Student-Related Factors	11	0.842
Teacher-Related Factors	07	0.728
School-Related Factors	14	0.897
Family/Society-Related Factors	13	0.754
<b>Mean</b>	<b>11.25</b>	<b>0.840</b>

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Data collection process was started in the month of December 2016 and completed in April 2017 through personal visits as the researchers have the access to the respondents. Before distributing the questionnaires among the participants, difficult terms were explained and also the purpose of the study. Furthermore, they were asked to respond free of biasness for precise results. In this way data was collected. After collection of data, raw data was organized, tabulated and analyzed by using descriptive statistics i.e., mean, and standard deviation through SPSS.

**Results and Discussion**

The purpose of the paper was to explore the causes of students' dropout at elementary level in the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A sample of 171 teachers from 57 elementary schools was selected through two-stage sampling technique. The study was descriptive in nature and a self-developed questionnaire was used for data collection. For statistical analysis, descriptive statistics i.e., mean and standard deviation were used. The detail of the results and discussion as under:

**Table 02:**  
**Descriptive Analysis of the Responses of Teachers Regarding School-Related Factors Causing Students' Dropout**

Statements	Mean	SD	Remarks
The school has lack of proper Basic physical and educational facilities	3.29	0.82	Agreed
Free hostel facilities are not provided	3.52	0.68	Agreed
Free textbooks are not provided	2.29	1.09	Disagreed
Collecting too much money from the students contribute students' dropout.	2.32	1.12	Disagreed
Non-availability of playground leads to students' dropout.	2.42	1.26	Disagreed
Unfavorable classroom environment causes students' dropout.	3.67	0.85	Agreed
Lack of sufficient teaching staff	2.33	1.16	Disagreed
Strict discipline and regulations causes students' dropout.	3.84	0.78	Agreed
Students' dropout is caused by unfavorable school environment	3.76	0.82	Agreed
Long distance to school contributes to students' dropout.	3.28	0.77	Agreed
Ineffective curriculum compels a student to leave his studies before completion.	3.88	0.85	Agreed
Lack of counseling with students at schools causes students' dropout.	3.45	0.79	Agreed
Lack of choices in programmes, courses etc. is a contributory factor of students' dropout.	2.48	1.15	Disagreed
Students' dropout is also caused by overcrowded classroom.	3.24	0.68	Agreed
<b>Mean</b>	<b>3.13</b>	<b>0.92</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

**Agreement:** Mean value above 3.00

**Disagreement:** Mean value below 3.00

Table 2 indicates the responses of teachers about the school related factors of students' dropout at elementary level. The results revealed that school-related factors (mean=3.13, SD=0.92) are causative factors of students' dropout. The findings revealed that ineffective curriculum (mean=3.88, SD=0.85); strict school's discipline and regulations (mean=3.84, SD=0.78); unfavorable school environment (mean=3.76, SD=0.82); unfavorable classroom environment (mean=3.67, SD=0.85); no free hostel facilities (mean=3.52, SD=0.68); lack of counseling (mean=3.45, SD=0.79); lack of proper physical and educational facilities (mean=3.29, SD=0.82); long distance to school (mean=3.28, SD=0.77); and overcrowded classroom (mean=3.24; SD=0.92) are the school related factors that causes students' dropout at elementary level.

**Table 03:**  
**Descriptive Analysis of the Responses of Teachers Regarding Family/Society-Related Factors Causing Students' Dropout**

Statements	Mean	SD	Remarks
Discouraging attitude of society about education causes students' dropout.	3.28	0.76	Agreed
Parental divorced contributes to students' dropout.	3.63	0.88	Agreed
Lack of parental educational support makes a child to leave his studies before completion.	3.59	0.81	Agreed
Poor parental socioeconomic status causes students' dropout.	3.49	0.76	Agreed
Students leave school due to child labour.	3.72	0.66	Agreed
Lack of Parental awareness about the importance of education causes students' dropout.	3.17	0.76	Agreed
Lack of financial assistance to students compel them to leave the school.	3.23	1.10	Agreed
Parental illiteracy causes students' dropout.	3.26	0.68	Agreed
Too much of freedom given to the children is important reason of students' dropout.	3.38	0.90	Agreed
Strict behavior of parents contributes to students' dropout.	2.41	1.08	Disagreed
Domestic issues cause students' dropout.	3.78	0.77	Agreed
Students' dropout is caused by parental death	3.59	0.82	Agreed
Lack of parental attention on their children education causes students' dropout.	3.66	0.78	Agreed
<b>Mean</b>	<b>3.40</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

**Agreement:** Mean value above 3.00

**Disagreement:** Mean value below 3.00

Table 3 portrays the responses of teachers about the family/society related factors of students' dropout at elementary level. The descriptive analysis depicts that family/society-related factors (mean=3.40, SD=0.83) are the significant factors of students' dropout. The findings show that discouraging attitude of society about education (mean=3.28, SD=0.76); parental divorced (mean=3.63, SD=0.88); lack of parental educational support (mean=3.59, SD=0.81); poor parental socioeconomic status (mean=3.49, SD=0.76); child labour (mean=3.72, SD=0.66); lack of parental awareness about the importance of education (mean=3.17, SD=0.76); lack of financial assistance to students (mean=3.23, SD=1.10); parental illiteracy (mean=3.26, SD=0.68); too much of freedom to the children (mean=3.38, SD=0.90); domestic issues (mean=3.78, SD=0.77); parental death (mean=3.59, SD=0.82); and lack of parental attention on their children education (mean=3.66, SD=0.78) are the family/society related factors that causes students' dropout at elementary level.

**Table 04:**  
**Descriptive Analysis of the Responses of Teachers Regarding Teacher-Related Factors Causing Students' Dropout**

Statements	Mean	SD	Remarks
Lack of motivation and encouragement to continue schooling plays an important role in students' dropout.	3.28	0.79	Agreed
Teachers' discriminative and autocratic attitudes compel a student to leave school.	3.51	0.86	Agreed
Frequent teachers' absenteeism causes students' dropout.	3.16	1.02	Agreed
Extracting too much of other works from the students by teachers contribute to students' dropout.	3.21	0.68	Agreed
Misuse of students for personal reasons during regular working hours causes students' dropout.	3.42	0.83	Agreed
Students' dropout is caused by severe corporal punishment.	3.78	0.79	Agreed
Teachers' incompetency also causes students' dropout.	3.39	0.77	Agreed
<b>Mean</b>	<b>3.39</b>	<b>0.82</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

**Agreement:** Mean value above 3.00

**Disagreement:** Mean value below 3.00

Table 4 depicts the responses of teachers about the teacher related factors of students' dropout at elementary level. The descriptive analysis reveals that teacher-related factors (mean=3.39, SD=0.82) are contributory factors of students' dropout. The findings revealed that lack of motivation and encouragement (mean=3.28, SD=0.79); teachers' discriminative and autocratic attitudes (mean=3.51, SD=0.86); Frequent teachers' absenteeism (mean=3.16, SD=1.02); extracting too much of other works from the students (mean=3.21, SD=0.68); misuse of students for personal reasons during regular working hours (mean=3.42, SD=0.83); severe corporal punishment (mean=3.78, SD=0.79); and teachers' incompetency (mean=3.39, SD=0.77) are the teacher related factors that causes students' dropout at elementary level.

**Table 05:**  
**Descriptive Analysis of the Responses of Teachers Regarding Student-Related Factors Causing Students' Dropout**

Statements	Mean	SD	Remarks
Lack of students' understanding of subjects taught contribute to students' dropout.	3.20	0.83	Agreed
Students' inability to get admission in good schools also causes students' dropout.	2.39	1.12	Disagreed
Children pay more interest to earn rather to learn which makes them to leave school.	3.38	0.74	Agreed
Students' dropout is caused by the students' company with unwanted children.	3.82	0.79	Agreed
Poor health condition causes students' dropout.	3.27	0.86	Agreed
Get married/plan to marry in early age contribute to students' dropout.	3.72	0.67	Agreed
Use illegal drugs during school contribute to students' dropout.	3.61	0.83	Agreed
Non-compliance of school's rules by students also causes students' dropout.	3.51	0.77	Agreed
No preparation for class tests or assignments causes students' dropout.	3.31	0.69	Agreed
Students' dropout is caused by students' poor attendance	3.28	0.76	Agreed
Students' disruptive behaviour contribute students' dropout.	3.70	0.84	Agreed
<b>Mean</b>	<b>3.38</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

**Agreement:** Mean value above 3.00

**Disagreement:** Mean value below 3.00

Table 5 indicates the responses of teachers about the student-related factors of students' dropout at elementary level. The descriptive analysis indicates that student-related factors (mean=3.38, SD=0.81) are the influential factors of students' dropout. The findings revealed that lack of students' understanding of subjects (mean=3.20, SD=0.83), children pay more interest to earn rather to learn (mean=3.38, SD=0.74); students' company with unwanted children (mean=3.82, SD=0.79); poor health condition (mean=3.27, SD=0.86) get married/plan to marry in early age (mean=3.72, SD=0.67); use illegal drugs during school (mean= 3.61, SD=0.83); non-compliance of school's rules by students (mean=3.51, SD=0.77); no preparation for class tests or assignment (mean= 3.31, SD=0.69); students' poor attendance (mean=3.28, SD=0.76); and Students' disruptive behaviour (mean=3.70, SD=0.84) are the student related factors that causes students' dropout at elementary level.

### Conclusions

Based on results and discussion, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Firstly, school-related factors i.e., ineffective curriculum; strict school's discipline and regulations; unfavorable school environment; unfavorable classroom environment; no free hostel facilities; lack of counseling; lack of proper physical and educational facilities; long distance to school; and overcrowded classroom cause students' dropout.
2. Secondly, family/society-related factors i.e., discouraging attitude of society about education; parental divorced; lack of parental educational support; poor parental socioeconomic status; child labour; lack of parental awareness about the importance of education; lack of financial assistance to students; parental illiteracy; too much of freedom to the children; domestic issues; parental death; and lack of parental attention on their children education cause students' dropout.
3. Thirdly, teacher-related factors i.e., lack of motivation and encouragement; teachers' discriminative and autocratic attitudes; Frequent teachers' absenteeism; extracting too much of other works from the students; misuse of students for personal reasons during regular working hours; severe corporal punishment; and teachers' incompetency are the factors that cause students' dropout.
4. Fourthly, student-related factors i.e., lack of students' understanding of subjects; children pay more interest to earn rather to learn; students' company with unwanted children; poor health condition; get married/plan to marry in early age; use illegal drugs during school; non-compliance of school's rules by students; no preparation for class tests or assignment; students' poor attendance; and Students' disruptive behaviour are the student related factors that cause students' dropout.

### Recommendations

Based on findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were made:

1. Parents are advised to ensure a favorable home environment for their children and pay proper attention on the educational and financial needs of their children. Further, they should monitor their activities effectively and also keep their eyes on the peer group of their children.
2. Students belong to poor socioeconomic status may be provided scholarships to continue education. Child labour should be banned by the government through necessary measures.

3. Awareness regarding importance of education in society should be ensured through electronic as well as print media to reduce the dropout rate.
4. Curriculum should be reviewed and redesigned in the light of emerging needs of students and society.
5. School principals and teachers are advised to ensure an encouraging, friendly and facilitated environment inside the school for their students. Further, they should properly correspond and communicate with parents of students on their activities and performance. Teachers should treat the students as their own children. Teachers might be trained in identifying the causes of dropout at school to reduce it.
6. Peer counseling should be developed in schools to minimize dropout caused by school factors. As peer counselors can understand their colleagues very well, therefore, they may be properly trained to enable them to minimize their colleagues' dropout rate.
7. Divorce, separation, re-marriage and combined family system are the major factors contributing to dropout. Majority of the students from such home environment get stressed and sometimes lose meaning to life. Therefore, it is recommended that peaceful and favorable environment in home might be ensured. Father and mother relationship should be friendly and pleasant.
8. Competent and qualified teaching staff should be appointed purely on merit basis through transparent competitive examination. Teachers should be given attractive and handsome salary packages.
9. It is recommended that this type of study should be conducted in other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at primary, higher secondary and tertiary level.

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