THE CONTRIBUTION OF FAMILY FACTORS TO DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL IN DISTRICT PURBA BURDWAN, WEST BENGAL, INDIA

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Abstract

The current study was aimed at addressing the problem of dropping out of school in the district Purba Burdwan West Bengal, India and at finding out the specific social-family factors that have a significant impact on students' decision to leave school early. Furthermore, the particular students' characteristics that potentially put them at risk and lead to their dropping out of school were drawn up through the present study. To that end, quantitative research through the use of a student questionnaire was carried out among one thousand five hundred twenty-eight (1528) students (799 boys and 729 girls) in various schools in the state . The research results showed the presence of certain family factors that contributed towards Secondary School dropping out, the major ones being parental professional encouragement, parental school help, parental support in low school performance, parental encouragement for optimal effort, parental knowledge of children's social life and the frequency of parents' visits to school and their corresponding informing by teachers.

Keywords
School, Dropping Out, Factors, Family.

1. Introduction

In most of the developing and under-developed countries, including India, educational backwardness continues to be a persistent phenomenon. There cannot be any denial that education is one of the few crucial factors responsible for the overall social development. Education also influences other related factors of development and can bring significant social transformation, especially in country like India where educational backwardness is one of the critical indicators of under development. To assure congenial environment for quality education is the collective responsibility of the family, society and state. This is a prerequisite for building the sustainable human resources and in turn sustainable development. Unfortunately in district Purba Burdwan, state West Bengal and many othe rdistricts in West Bengal a large number of children are out of school before completing their school education. Despite the claims of increase in school gross enrolment ratio under the impact of government initiatives for the last over six decades through various educational schemes, it has fallen short to keep pace with the gross completion. It is, generally, attributed to the big chunk of school dropouts. Regional educational inequalities and imbalances still exist. Chug Sunita (2011) pointed out that in India there are 20-40 percent school dropouts at 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. There are host of reasons, such as, financial constraints,

distance from school, school atmosphere, home environment etc., for school dropouts. According to Frances Hunt, (2008) children from better households are more likely to remain in school, whilst poorer are more likely never to have attended, or to drop out once they have enrolled .

2. Family Factors

Education is an important driving force in the process of socialization and the moulding of personality of the growing child. The socio-demographic characteristics of family have direct influence on the child and his/her development. Family is considered and recognised indispensable in the growth and development of any human organism. Family is the most significant in child's schooling and quality of education. The positive family environment may help to counter other negative factors. The social status and the inequalities created among the families, students come from, result in them also being unequal as far as their school performance is regarded. Families with low economic status have limited access to public and social benefits, including the benefit of education. Consequently, they are excluded both socially and educationally (Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2010; Rumberger, 2011). However, Coleman (1988) claimed that it is possible to have children who share the same family socioeconomic characteristics and, nevertheless, manifest differentiated school performance, a fact which is largely explained as being a result of the interaction of some other factors as well. Thus, there was a further distinction of family environment into three main constituents-family income, human capital (parents' education) and social capital (strong parent presence, parent-child quality time, their interpersonal relationship) (ibid., 1988, pp. 95-120).

3. Educational Background of Parents

All parents want their children to succeed. But many, especially those in poverty and living with a multitude of problems, are not able to attend to the child's growing and educational needs. Or they may not know the seriousness of the consequences of a failure to finish school. Or they may not know how to nurture the child's educational attainment. Schools and communities must therefore reach out to these families and provide them with opportunities to learn and to participate. It has been supported that a low literacy level leads to a vicious cycle of illiteracy (Chugh, 2011) and children coming from educated families are reported to show high academic achievement and educational attainment in all cognitive fields-writing, reading, Maths, to mention but a few, and tend to follow in the footsteps of their parents, resulting in being actively involved in their studies. etter educated parents are claimed to have higher educational aspirations for their children as compared to those with a poor academic background, motivate their children's willingness to learn, guide and counsel them on the best way to successfully perform at school and provide them with the necessary resources needed, thus making a huge contribution to their school outcomes.

4. Tools

For the purposes of the study under scrutiny, an anonymous student questionnaire was constructed in the bengali language. The questionnaire construction was based on the social-familial factors influencing a child's decision to drop out of school, drawn up from the relevant literature on the phenomenon of early school leaving.

More specifically, the student questionnaire consisted of eight (8) questions, providing their responses in each item on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 representing "strongly disagree" to 5 referring to "strongly agree", with intermediate points of 2 repressing "disagree", 3 "neither agree or disagree" and 4 "agree".

The aim of the specific questionnaire was to examine the level of encouragement Greek students receive by their parents regarding their personal choice of a future profession and whether their parents enhearten them to pursue optimal performance at school by always doing their best in order to achieve their goals. Further, it was important to find out whether students were assisted in their schoolwork by their parents and supported in the event of low grades or/and a possible school failure. A critical research question was to find out the ways parents' interest in their children's progress is manifested. This could happen not only through frequent visits to school aiming at being informed about students' progress, but also through their awareness of their children's social life, either being negatively influenced by it or not.

5. Methodology

In the beginning, the researcher requested for permission to carry out the present study in the Districts of Purba Burdwan the questionnaires of the present study to the students of the corresponding schools. The schools were randomly selected based on a list provided by the dept of school of Education WB Govt, which was stratified based on gender and socioeconomic group (high, medium, low), in order to be representative of the demographic characteristics and status of the population. A parental consent was also required for the children to participate in the study.

Before the main data collection of the study, a pilot study was conducted to examine possible misunderstandings by the students. The researcher had to administer questionnaires to 20 students, who were randomly selected from various backgrounds—either personal or academic ones—and run a pilot study of the questionnaires, so as to be given the chance to make any alterations emerged as necessary.

After proceeding with any changes in the questionnaires based on the pilot study, the main research took place and the researcher entered the classrooms herself explaining the purpose of the study to the students willing to participate in it. The participants were given a time-span of ten (10') minutes to fill in the questionnaires. Any questions raised were answered by the researcher and, as a whole, the procedure was carried out as expected. The completion of the questionnaires was followed by the statistical analysis of the data as follows.

6. Statistical Analysis

Based on the purpose and the hypotheses of the study, univariate and multivariate statistical analyses were conducted to address the purposes of the present study. In order to examine the differences among the participants in the study based on their gender, nationality, school grade, and area of their school, a series of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were conducted. Follow-up univariate ANOVAs were performed on the subscales of significant MANOVA effects (Scheffe test). In addition, Bonferroni adjustment was applied to control for the inflation of Type I error (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2006).

7. Results

As far as the social-family factors are concerned, the results indicate that students are highly encouraged by their families to follow the profession they wish (M = 4.31, SD = 0.90), with a high percentage of them agreeing (32.7%) or strongly agreeing (52.3%) on the aforementioned issue, reaching a total rate of 85%. Moreover, students' answers, regarding the amount of encouragement they receive by their parents to do their best, reached a high percentage, by agreeing at a percentage of 20.8% and totally agreeing at a percentage of 73.3%. On the other hand, based on the students' answers, it seems that they are helped with their schoolwork by their families less (M = 3.23, SD = 1.19), and they are supported in the occasion of low grades in a similar way (M = 3.35, SD = 1.125). Further, parents are more than aware of the friends and acquaintances their children have, showing a high percentage on that (M = 4.07, SD = 1.02). Finally, judging from the answers of the students of our sample, the members of their families visit schools quite often, so as to be informed by their children's teachers about their academic progress (M = 3.86, SD = 1.06) (Table 1).

Social/Family Factors	Boys M (SD)	Girls M (SD)
Parental professional encouragement	4.25 (0.92)	4.38 (0.85)
Parental school help	3.21 (1.20)	3.25 (1.17)
Parental support in low school performance	3.34 (1.25)	3.37 (1.26)
Parental encouragement for optimal effort	4.61 (0.73)	4.68 (0.68)
Parental knowledge about friendly socializing	3.98 (1.05)	4.18 (0.97)
Visit-parents' informing by teachers about school progress	3.76 (1.09)	3.96 (1.00)

Table 1. means (μ) and standard deviations (sd) of the social-family factors in boys and girls in the total sample.

8. Conclusion

It can be concluded from the above findings and discussion that the family is intricately involved in upholding its duty for schooling of the child. The lack of parental awareness and low or no education have direct impact on their children' education and development. The dropouts persistently again add an educationally backward class to the future generation, too. The purpose of the present study was to outline a range of family factors which can potentially influence dropping out of school. It supports the fact that dropping out of school can rarely be put down to one event or one impact, but rather it is influenced by a range of interacting factors, which are specific to the individual contexts of each child. To this end, early school leaving is seen as a process rather than an event, with individual cases being difficult to replicate. Yet, through literature, patterns emerge which suggest that, in particular contexts, certain children are more prone to dropping out than others and specific measures taken might address some of the risks these children face.

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