



# An Analysis of the Socio-economic Determinants Leading to School Dropouts in India

Sheeba Kamal

Women's Polytechnic, AMU, Aligarh

## Abstract

Education, a crucial determinant of personal and professional advancement, plays a pivotal role in shaping an individual's success or setbacks in life. However, in developing nations like India, the pursuit of education remains an elusive aspiration for many. The escalating rate of student dropouts in India adds to the urgency of addressing this learning crisis, which poses a significant challenge to both the nation's economy and the overall well-being of its citizens. This paper aims to investigate the impact of socio-economic backgrounds on students' access to education in India, shedding light on the multifaceted issues contributing to the alarming dropout rates, including socio-economic constraints, insufficient government commitment, student failures, gender bias, and cultural neglect.

**Keywords:** *Education, Dropout, Socio-economic factors, School, India.*

## Introduction

India, a nation in the throes of development, champions the democratic ideals enshrined in its Constitution, with the right to education standing tall as a fundamental pillar. However, this lofty principle encounters formidable challenges due to the pervasive socio-economic disparities plaguing a substantial segment of the population. Masthi et. al. (2010) highlight that 36% of Indian households grapple with a meager standard of living, where fulfilling basic needs like food, water, and shelter is a luxury, making education an elusive dream. This stark inequality in educational opportunities is further exacerbated by the clutches of poverty, as underscored by the strong interrelationship between socio-economic status and education, as elucidated by the United Nations Report on the World Social Situation (1997). Dropping out of school, as defined by the Hertzog Committee (1928), is tantamount to a premature withdrawal from the educational journey, leaving individuals bereft of fundamental skills crucial for a promising future. The socio-economic status (SES), a composite measure of an individual or family's social and economic standing, emerges as a pivotal factor influencing this trajectory, encompassing income, occupation, and educational qualifications. Compellingly, poverty coerces children from lower socio-

economic strata and marginalized communities into the grueling clutches of child labor. The disheartening reality unfolds with children as young as fourteen toiling in stores, tea points, or peddling goods on the streets. Soha Moitra of Child Rights and You Foundation (CRY) aptly observes, "When a family is not financially secure, prioritizing a child's education takes a backseat. You can see this validated in dropout rates as well, which rise sharply after fifth grade." In the face of unmet basic needs, education loses its paramount status as a human right. The disconcerting data on dropout rates across Indian states unveils troubling disparities, with district-level variations widening the chasm. Kurnool, a district in Andhra Pradesh, serves as a poignant example, where the secondary school dropout rate in 2013-14 stood at a staggering 45%, far exceeding the state-wide disparity of 26.8% in the same year. This calls for targeted, culture-specific interventions, attuned to local contexts. Identifying early indicators of dropping out, such as absenteeism and reduced class participation, demands urgent attention and intervention. As emphasized by Mr. Partha Rudra of Smile Foundation, "Ensuring social inclusiveness, sensitizing teachers, and convincing parents of first-generation students of the value of education always makes a big difference." This paper endeavors to unravel the intricate web of socio-economic constraints shaping dropout rates in India. Examining a myriad of factors, including poverty, gender, motivation, distance to school, instructor capability, transportation availability, and social context, the study unveils the significant impact of caste, household occupation, and religion on rural India's dropout landscape. Research underscores that students in the Scheduled Tribe (ST) category face the highest likelihood of quitting school, followed by the Scheduled Caste (SC) category. Agricultural workers and students from Buddhist and Muslim backgrounds exhibit the highest odds of dropout, signaling the urgent need for targeted interventions and policy measures.

## **Overview**

This delicate subject has received worldwide attention, and there are various studies accessible for global reference. Dropping out is defined by National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES) as leaving school without completing a high school education or an equivalent credential. Several young Indian boys and girls drop out of school despite the extensive efforts made by various government agencies, educational boards, and existing educational regulations. As a result, society is under increasing pressure to find solutions to either bring them back to school or help them finish their schooling on their own. Many young people still lack access to education in India, despite many attempts to include all segments of the population in the educational system (Sateesh & Sekher, 2014).

Kumar and Chahal conducted a study in 2016 to look into the dropout rates at the secondary school



level in the Sirsa district of Haryana in India, the socio-economic backgrounds of such students, to learn about the causes of dropouts, and to suggest solutions to overcome these issues. They collected the data of 40 dropout students across 5 schools in Sirsa. Their findings revealed the major reasons for students dropping out to be the illiteracy of the student's parents, low overall family income, poverty in general, and also the lack of transportation facilities. This study proved to be successful in understanding the major reasons related to the socio-economic status of dropouts at the secondary school level including the level of education and the size of their family. The strength of this study lies in the fact that it can be effectively utilized to eradicate the issue of school dropout by making the Indian educational system more effective.

In 2012, Kishore and Shaji conducted a study to examine the space of reasons why students dropout of school in the Thrissur district in Kerala. They emphasized finding more than one reason for this issue. The results highlighted various reasons. The most common came out to be physical disorders (21.8%), followed by intellectual disability (20.9%), child labor (8.1%), and financial issues (13.6%). This study helped us learn about the various factors linked to dropping out of school. The contrast observed here is that in the district of Thrissur, financial constraints do not stand as the primary reason behind school dropouts. Rather physical disorders such as cerebral palsy and post-polio paralysis was the most common reason leading to dropout. This validates the fact that education and literacy hold a high value in the southern state of Kerala, leading to its literacy rate of 96.2% in 2023, as per The Global Statistics.

According to a study by Tabassum (2019), which aimed at finding the main reasons forcing Indian students out of education, the dropout rate is also influenced by ignorant and illiterate parents besides their economic conditions. Uninformed and illiterate parents, in contrast to educated parents, do not guarantee their children's school attendance. Nonetheless, the majority of illiterate parents have high expectations for their kids. Several of them continue to be accountable for school dropouts. This may be because they are ignorant of formal education, which they have never had. Participation of parents in academic matters at the school is very important. The likelihood of a youngster dropping out of school decreases as a parent's involvement in that child's education increases. The next significant reason, as highlighted in this study, is bullying. Bullying makes a child feel alone. Bullying can take



place due to a variety of causes, including racism, socioeconomic position, and fat shaming, to mention a few. Another crucial issue facing school dropouts is sexual abuse. Although both boys and girls experience issues at school, girls are more likely to be sexually abused, which is one of the main causes of girls dropping out. There are numerous more major issues that a female might face. Girls are compelled to get married young or to remain at home and perform household duties since they are seen as a liability.

Considering the fact that the nation's government has declared numerous programs to support women's education, numerous research studies have shown that girls are more likely than boys to drop out of school. So, in order to reduce the percentage of female dropouts, the government should implement some appropriate and robust measures (Melese, & Fenta, 2009). In their study, Laxmaiah and Gurmeet (2016) discovered that Adilabad's population is predominantly agrarian, causing parents to wed off their daughters at a young age. Although Adilabad school authorities' indifference makes it clear that parents begin making marriage plans for their daughters as soon as they begin school, education can help postpone child marriages. Moreover, migration appears to be the primary cause of school abandonment in Adilabad. The majority of female dropout professions are in housekeeping and child care. Telangana's state government isn't doing enough to address issues with dropout rates in schools, and the situation is becoming worse. The government should therefore rapidly minimize secondary school dropout rates and deal with the reasons that have been identified. India's human resource base must be protected, nurtured, and empowered by lowering secondary school dropout rates.

Many emerging economies have alarmingly high rates of primary school dropouts. The study by Sajjad et. al., (2012) discusses the socioeconomic factors that contribute to primary school dropout in South-East Delhi, which has a significant proportion of urban poor people who are vulnerable. The study's primary goal was to investigate the socioeconomic factors that affect primary school dropout rates. Four government primary schools in southeast Delhi were used as the source for a sample of 129 respondents. The results showed that the dropout rates are directly influenced by the type of household, income, occupation, and education of the parents. Therefore, the study urges proper educational programs and a decrease in widespread poverty.



Ahir (2015) did a study to better understand the dropout rates in the 10th grade for boys, girls, and students in the SC and ST categories separately. Also, an effort was made to pinpoint the root causes of the dropouts. Financial difficulties have been mentioned as a significant factor in dropouts across numerous research. Male and female dropouts have varied causes for leaving school. There are numerous policy measures in place currently, but it is crucial to pinpoint the students that are most prone to dropping out and implement the policies to prevent dropouts.

The importance of education cannot be overstated, as it affects all facets of human life. It is an essential investment for both economic and personal growth. A study was carried out by Latif Aet al. in 2015 to investigate the reasons behind student abandonment and its effects on the economy. This study identifies the causes of dropouts in Pakistan while also doing a comparative examination of the same reasons around the globe. The results of this study were derived from a thorough examination of the literature on student dropout in various nations. Students dropout of school for a variety of reasons, including financial difficulties, parents' lack of willingness, location and a lack of basic amenities, poor educational quality, an inadequate school atmosphere, and building, overcrowded classrooms, improper languages of instruction, carelessness on the part of teachers, and security issues in girls' schools. This report also identifies the effects of student dropouts on the economy and makes some recommendations for corrective action to lower student dropout rates. The study also offers some policy repercussions for decision-makers to address this issue, including a free education program, curriculum revision, workshops for instructors, and the supply of all amenities in schools.

Gouda M. and Sekher (2014) tried to understand the differentials and factors associated with school dropouts in India. According to data from the National Family Health Survey, 14% of children never went to school, and 11% left school for a variety of reasons. It was shown that children from Muslim, Scheduled Caste, and Scheduled Tribe backgrounds had a higher dropout rate than other groups. The way that parents raise their children has a big impact on how well they do in school. Kids of illiterate parents had dropout rates that were four times greater than those of literate parents. Also, it was shown that children were more likely to drop out of school if their parents were not employed. The research suggests that India will continue to have significant difficulties in reaching the aim of universalizing schooling unless and until there is a significant improvement in family financial conditions and a shift in parents' social attitudes.

The secret to creating skilled workers is to give the proper type of education to the right individuals at the right time. Dropout is defined as the percentage of students who stop attending school. The study by Koka (2019), with a focus on the Pulwama area, investigates the numerous factors that contribute to middle school dropouts in Jammu and Kashmir. The study's sole source of information is primary data that was gathered from 240 respondents by stratified random sampling. According to the study, there are three different categories of causes: ones that are personal, family-related, and school-related. When it comes to issues with schools, inadequate housing is the biggest contributor. The parents' perception that girls should only be used for domestic tasks is the most significant factor in the area of reasons related to families. Personal causes make up the third group. The parents' resistance is the main factor in this category.

The study by Kumar et al., (2023) aims to investigate the factors that influence adolescent school dropout and to pinpoint the causes of school dropout among poor Indian adolescents. Teenagers aged 10 to 19 were the target of surveys in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Adolescent school dropout rates and risk factors were observed using descriptive statistics, as well as bivariate and multivariate analyses. According to the findings, married girls aged 15 to 19 had the greatest percentage of school dropouts (84%), followed by unmarried girls (46%), and boys (38%) in the same age range. Adolescents' chances of dropping out of school are reduced as household wealth increases. Teenagers with educated mothers were substantially less likely to drop out of school than those with uneducated mothers. It is essential to raise socioeconomic status, postpone girls' marriageable ages, increase federal subsidies for education, give females legitimate jobs when they graduate from high school, and raise awareness.

After carefully analyzing past literature, these are some commonly identified socio-economic reasons behind children dropping out of schools in India:

### **Widespread Poverty**

India has a high dropout rate as a result of financial issues and expenditures (Jingrong, 2004). Children from families living below the poverty line are more likely to stay at home and work to take care of their families. Child laborers are widespread in India as a result of this. Children are employed, which can often be dangerous. They are forced to labor in hazardous environments, such as mining



sites and chemical plants, endangering their health. Parents who are illiterate, poor, making little money, and living in substandard conditions are forced to pull their children out of school and employ them in a variety of jobs to help support the family (Rao, 2000).

### **Lack of Interest**

In every group of students, there are a couple who refuse to pay any attention to the topics being discussed. Their inattention to what is being taught is the root of their lack of interest. Not that these children don't strive; far from it. They do make an effort when compelled to and put under pressure. So, these students prefer taking the other route. They decide upon leaving their school as they've definitively decided that the lessons there barely interest them. So they make a decision that suits them. To pique these kids' interest, the school setting and the instructors should be encouraging and kind.

### **Recurrent Academic Failure**

Some children consistently perform poorly on exams or in school. They lack confidence since they keep failing. The lack of confidence grows if and when the failure continues. An attitude of being careless and unbothered that is more fatal than the previous one appears in its place. When a person no longer feels concerned about the consequences, they act on what they believe to be best. They end up believing themselves to be failures not just academically but also in life. This acts like a self-fulfilling prophecy later on in their lives in areas such as work or even family.

The present study was aimed at understanding how socio-economic constraints are related to the problem of school dropouts. The literature reviewed supported the understanding that dropouts in India are linked to socio-economic constraints. The dropout problem is widespread across the Indian education system. Many students who enroll in school fail to finish their education, and there are many reasons why students leave school. Before students ever start attending school, there are various risk factors to consider, such as poverty, the parents' low educational status, the fragile family structure, the siblings' education patterns, and a lack of experiences in preschool. Family circumstances and domestic issues foster a setting that undermines the value of schooling (Chug, 2011).

The review of past literature enables us to learn about the factors that contribute to the issue of dropping out in India has helped me learn about the ways to deal with the problem. Interventions need to be made to bring adequate awareness about the value of education among parents. Moreover, non-formal education should be an alternative path for students who drop out, and those students who may not be able to attend school full-time. Facilities for both primary and secondary education should be provided within a distance from the home of every child. Free textbooks, uniforms, mid-day-meal, and scholarships can be provided to children belonging to lower socio-economic strata.

## **Conclusion**

The annual rise in early high school dropout rates poses a substantial threat to both social and economic development, contributing to a decline in the nation's literacy levels and fostering an environment devoid of innovation. The dropout issue, particularly prevalent in India, is a focal point of concern and exploration in this study. The primary objective was to analyze the influence of socio-economic constraints on dropout rates in India. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, the study identified the profound impact of various socio-economic factors, such as poverty, gender disparities, and lack of motivation, on the prevalent dropout rates. Additionally, it became apparent that factors beyond socio-economic conditions also play a significant role in steering students away from educational pursuits. These insights serve as valuable tools for policymakers and government authorities, empowering them to devise targeted interventions aimed at addressing and mitigating the challenge of school dropout rates.

## **References**

[1] Ahir , D. K. V. (2015). *Dropouts in school Education In India: Magnitude and reasons*.

Retrieved from

[https://www.worldwidejournals.com/paripex/recent\\_issues\\_pdf/2015/May/May\\_2015\\_14\\_31776966\\_118.pdf](https://www.worldwidejournals.com/paripex/recent_issues_pdf/2015/May/May_2015_14_31776966_118.pdf)

[2] Jomon Mathew. *Why do children dropout of the schools?* Retrieved from

<https://www.mes.ac.in/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Reasons-for-School-Dropouts-Survey-Report-by-Jomon.pdf>

[3] Jstrustcharity, J. S. T. (2022, December 29). *Poverty induced dropouts in India*. J.S. Trust.





Retrieved from <https://jstrust.in/2020/09/14/poverty-induced-dropouts-in-india-2/amp/>

[4] Kishore, A. N., & Shaji, K. S. (2012). *School dropouts: Examining the space of reasons*. Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine, 34(4), 318–323. [https://doi.org/10.4103/0253-](https://doi.org/10.4103/0253-7176.1082)

[7176.1082](https://doi.org/10.4103/0253-7176.1082)

[5] Koka, A. A. (2019, April 25). *Causes of school dropouts in Jammu and Kashmir with special reference to district Pulwama*. SSRN. Retrieved from

[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3323794](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3323794)

[6] Kumar, R., & Chahal, D. (2016). *Socio-economic status of dropouts at secondary school level: A study of Sirsa district*. Educational Quest- An International Journal of Education and Applied Social Sciences, 7(3), 285. <https://doi.org/10.5958/2230-7311.2016.00049.0>

[7] Kumar, P., Patel, S. K., Debbarma, S., & Saggurti, N. (2023). *Determinants of school dropouts among adolescents: Evidence from a longitudinal study in India*. PLOS ONE. Retrieved from <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0282468>

[8] Latif A (2015). *Economic effects of student dropouts: A comparative study*. Retrieved from <https://www.hilarispublisher.com/open-access/economic-effects-of-student-dropouts-a-comparative-study-2375-4389-1000137.pdf>

[9] Laxmaiah B. And Gurmeet Singh Kachoorra (2016). *Student Attrition in Adilabad District Telangana: Incidence, Influential Factors and Preventive Strategies*. Elk Asia Pacific Journal of Social Sciences, Volume 2 Issue 2 (2016).

[10] Literacy rate in India 2023: Kerala & Bihar Literacy Rate 2023. The Global Statistics. (2023, January 17). Retrieved March 20, 2023, from <https://www.theglobalstatistics.com/literacy-rate-in-india/>

[11] M., S. G. (2014). *Factors leading to school dropouts in India: An analysis of national family health survey* Retrieved March 21, 2023, from

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269932850\\_Factors\\_Leading\\_to\\_School\\_Dropouts\\_in\\_India\\_An\\_Analysis\\_of\\_National\\_Family\\_Health\\_Survey-3\\_Data](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269932850_Factors_Leading_to_School_Dropouts_in_India_An_Analysis_of_National_Family_Health_Survey-3_Data)

[12] Ramesh Masthi, N. R., Gangaboraiah, & Kulkarni, P. (2013, January). *An exploratory study on socio-economic status scales in a rural and urban setting*. Journal of family medicine and primary care.



- [13] Sajjad, H. (2012). *Socio-economic determinants of primary school dropout: Evidence from South East Delhi, India* Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266262739\\_Socio-Economic\\_Determinants\\_of\\_Primary\\_School\\_Dropout\\_Evidence\\_from\\_South\\_East\\_Delhi\\_India](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266262739_Socio-Economic_Determinants_of_Primary_School_Dropout_Evidence_from_South_East_Delhi_India)
- [14] Syed Rooquiyya Tabassum (2019). *A Study of School Dropouts in India: Sensitivity at Display*. Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research. Retrieved from, <http://www.jallr.com/index.php/JALLR/article/download/992/pdf992>
- [15] Concerns mount as school dropouts rates exceeds national average in multiple states, Sanjay Sharma, Times Of India, June 12 2023