

# Family Influence and Dropout Intention Among Secondary School Students in West Bengal: An Integrated Ecological and Theory of Planned Behavior Model

Luthfor Ali<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Ankhi Goon<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Education, Adamas University

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Education, Adamas University

## Abstract

School dropout at the secondary level remains a persistent challenge in India, with family-related conditions playing a critical yet complex role in shaping students' educational decisions. While existing studies have established the importance of family environments in influencing dropout behaviour, limited research has examined how family influence operates through students' psychological and behavioural processes leading to dropout intention. Grounded in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the present study investigates the direct and indirect effects of family influence on students' intention to drop out of secondary education in West Bengal.

Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 800 secondary school students selected from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Family influence (Module-3) was examined as a microsystem-level predictor of dropout intention (Module-9), with attitude toward dropout (M8), subjective norm (M10), and perceived behavioural control (M11) specified as mediators. Structural equation modelling (SEM) using a JAMM mediation framework was employed, complemented by item-wise linear regression analysis to capture the multidimensional nature of family influence.

The results indicate that family influence exerts a significant negative direct effect on dropout intention ( $\beta = -0.112, p < .001$ ). Significant indirect effects were observed through attitude toward dropout ( $\beta = -0.036, p < .001$ ) and perceived behavioural control ( $\beta = -0.120, p < .001$ ), while the indirect pathway through subjective norm was not statistically significant. The total effect of family influence on dropout intention was strong and negative ( $\beta = -0.264, p < .001$ ), demonstrating the protective role of supportive family environments. Item-level analysis further revealed that parental encouragement, emotional support, and sustained family involvement substantially reduced dropout intention, whereas family conflict, economic pressure, and expectations to contribute to household responsibilities increased students' likelihood of considering school discontinuation.

The findings highlight the dual role of family influence, functioning both as a protective and a risk-enhancing microsystem depending on the nature of family interactions. By integrating ecological and TPB perspectives, this study advances understanding of the mechanisms through which family environments shape dropout intention and underscores the importance of family-focused interventions, parental awareness programmes, and home-school partnerships to promote educational persistence among secondary school students in West Bengal.

**Keywords:** Family influence; Dropout intention; Secondary education; Ecological systems theory; Theory of Planned Behavior; Structural equation modelling; India.

## 1. Introduction

School dropout at the secondary level remains a persistent educational and social challenge in developing countries, particularly in India, where disparities related to socio-economic background, family context, and educational access continue to influence students' educational trajectories. Despite substantial policy efforts to improve enrolment and retention, a significant proportion of adolescents discontinue schooling before completing secondary education, resulting in long-term consequences for individual wellbeing, labour market participation, and social mobility (UNESCO, 2019; Government of India, 2020). Understanding the psychosocial and contextual factors that shape students' intentions to remain in or withdraw from school is therefore critical for developing effective dropout prevention strategies.

Among the multiple determinants of school dropout, **family influence** has consistently emerged as a key factor shaping students' educational engagement, motivation, and persistence. Families constitute the primary socialization context for children and adolescents, playing a crucial role in transmitting values, expectations, and support related to education (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Coleman, 1988). Parental involvement, emotional support, educational supervision, and family attitudes toward schooling have been shown to significantly affect students' academic outcomes and continuation decisions across diverse cultural contexts (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2012). Conversely, family dysfunction, economic stress, discriminatory practices, and low parental engagement can weaken students' attachment to school and increase their vulnerability to dropout (Jimerson et al., 2000; Rumberger, 2011).

In the Indian context, empirical studies provide strong evidence that family-level factors are central to understanding dropout patterns. Research based on large-scale national datasets has demonstrated that limited parental involvement, lack of academic supervision, and poor communication between parents and schools significantly elevate the risk of dropout during adolescence (Paul, Rashmi, & Srivastava, 2021). Similarly, longitudinal and cross-sectional studies have shown that gender-based discrimination within families, low parental education, and unsupportive parenting practices are associated with higher dropout rates, even after controlling for socio-economic status (Kumar et al., 2023). Case-based studies further reveal that family instability, paternal misunderstanding, and weak parental role modeling contribute to disengagement from schooling and early withdrawal (Kalsoom et al., 2024). These findings highlight the importance of examining family influence not merely as a background variable, but as an active determinant shaping students' educational decision-making.

From a theoretical perspective, **Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory** provides a robust framework for situating family influence within the microsystem that directly interacts with students' daily experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). According to this model, proximal processes within the family—such as parental monitoring, emotional warmth, and educational expectations—play a decisive role in shaping developmental outcomes, including academic persistence. Ecological research has consistently emphasized that dropout is not a sudden event, but rather the outcome of cumulative interactions between individuals and their immediate social environments over time (Jimerson et al., 2000; Blöndal & Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2014).

While ecological theory explains **where** family influence operates, it offers limited insight into **how** family conditions translate into students' intentions and behaviors. To address this limitation, the **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)** (Ajzen, 1991) provides a complementary psychosocial framework for

understanding dropout intention as a deliberate and reasoned process. TPB posits that behavioral intention is shaped by attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Within this framework, family influence can be conceptualized as a critical source of subjective norms and perceived control, shaping students' beliefs about the value of education, expectations of significant others, and their perceived ability to continue schooling under challenging circumstances (Ajzen, 1991; Armitage & Conner, 2001).

Recent international studies increasingly support the integration of family factors into intention-based models of dropout. Longitudinal research from Europe and North America shows that positive parenting practices and supportive family environments reduce dropout risk indirectly by fostering school engagement, academic self-efficacy, and behavioral control (Blöndal & Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2014; Karhina et al., 2023). These studies suggest that family influence operates not only as a structural determinant but also through cognitive and motivational pathways that precede actual dropout behavior.

Despite this growing body of evidence, **significant gaps remain in the Indian literature**. First, most Indian studies focus on dropout as an observed outcome rather than examining **dropout intention**, which is a critical precursor to actual withdrawal. Second, family influence is often treated as a control or background variable, rather than being theoretically modeled as a central construct within a causal framework. Third, there is limited research integrating **ecological and psychosocial theories** to explain how family environments shape students' intentions through attitudinal, normative, and control-related mechanisms. Addressing these gaps is particularly important in the context of secondary education in West Bengal, where socio-economic diversity and family-level disparities remain pronounced.

Against this backdrop, the present study examines **family influence (Module-3)** as a key determinant of **dropout intention** among secondary school students in West Bengal by integrating **Ecological Systems Theory** and the **Theory of Planned Behavior** within a structural equation modelling framework. By focusing on intention rather than completed dropout and by modelling both direct and indirect pathways, this study seeks to extend existing research and provide a more nuanced understanding of how family dynamics shape students' educational decision-making. The findings are expected to offer theoretical advancement and practical insights for family-centered interventions and policy initiatives aimed at reducing dropout at the secondary level.

### 1.1 Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to examine the role of **family influence** in shaping **dropout intention** among secondary school students in West Bengal by integrating **Ecological Systems Theory** and the Theory of Planned Behavior. Specifically, the objectives of the study are:

1. To assess the level of family influence among secondary school students in West Bengal.
2. To examine the direct effect of family influence (Module-3) on students' intention to drop out of secondary education.
3. To investigate the influence of family factors on TPB components, namely:
  - o Attitude toward dropout (Module-8),
  - o Subjective norm (Module-10), and
  - o Perceived behavioral control (Module-11).
4. To examine the mediating role of TPB variables in the relationship between family influence and dropout intention.
5. To test an integrated structural model combining Ecological Systems Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior to explain dropout intention among secondary school students in West Bengal.

These objectives position family influence as a central explanatory construct, rather than a background variable, and extend existing dropout research by focusing on intention rather than actual dropout behavior.

### 1.2 Research Questions

Based on the objectives and theoretical framework, the study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the level of family influence among secondary school students in West Bengal?

RQ2: Does family influence significantly affect students' intention to drop out of secondary education?

RQ3: Does family influence significantly affect students' attitudes toward dropout, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control?

RQ4: Do attitude toward dropout, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control significantly predict dropout intention?

RQ5: Do TPB components mediate the relationship between family influence and dropout intention?

### 1.3 Research Hypotheses (Null Form)

In accordance with prior empirical findings and the integrated Ecological Systems Theory and Theory of Planned Behavior framework, the following null hypotheses are formulated for empirical test

**H<sub>0</sub>1: Family influence (Module-3) has no significant direct effect on students' intention to drop out of secondary education.**

**H<sub>0</sub>2: Family influence (Module-3) has no significant effect on students' attitude toward dropout (Module-8).**

**H<sub>0</sub>3: Family influence (Module-3) has no significant effect on subjective norm related to dropout (Module-10).**

**H<sub>0</sub>4: Family influence (Module-3) has no significant effect on perceived behavioral control related to continuing education (Module-11).**

#### Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) Path Null Hypotheses

H<sub>0</sub>5: Attitude toward dropout (Module-8) does not significantly predict students' dropout intention.

H<sub>0</sub>6: Subjective norm (Module-10) does not significantly predict students' dropout intention.

H<sub>0</sub>7: Perceived behavioral control (Module-11) does not significantly predict students' dropout intention.

#### Mediation Null Hypotheses

**H<sub>0</sub>8: Attitude toward dropout (Module-8) does not mediate the relationship between family influence (Module-3) and dropout intention.**

**H<sub>0</sub>9: Subjective norm (Module-10) does not mediate the relationship between family influence (Module-3) and dropout intention.**

**H<sub>0</sub>10: Perceived behavioral control (Module-11) does not mediate the relationship between family influence (Module-3) and dropout intention.**

## 2. Review of Literature and Research Gap

### 2.1 Family Influence and School Dropout: Conceptual Overview

School dropout is widely recognized as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by individual, familial, institutional, and socio-economic factors. Among these, family influence has consistently emerged as one of the most critical determinants of students' educational persistence, particularly at the secondary level. From an ecological perspective, the family constitutes a primary microsystem that directly shapes

students' values, motivation, emotional security, and access to educational resources (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Within this microsystem, parental involvement, emotional support, supervision, and educational expectations are known to play decisive roles in students' academic engagement and retention. Conversely, family conflict, neglect, economic pressure, and discriminatory practices may weaken students' attachment to school and increase the likelihood of disengagement and dropout. These family-level processes are especially salient in developing-country contexts, where household responsibilities and economic constraints often intersect with educational decision-making.

## 2.2 Review of Indian Studies on Family Influence and Dropout

Indian empirical literature provides substantial evidence supporting the role of family influence in shaping dropout outcomes. Using longitudinal panel data from the India Human Development Survey (IHDS), Paul, Rashmi, and Srivastava (2021) demonstrated that lack of parental involvement during early schooling—such as absence from PTA meetings, limited communication with teachers, and lack of homework supervision—significantly increased adolescents' risk of dropping out. Their findings emphasize that early parental engagement acts as a long-term protective factor against educational discontinuation.

Similarly, Kumar et al. (2023), using data from the UDAYA survey, highlighted the role of familial discrimination and parent-child interaction in dropout decisions among Indian adolescents. The study found that gender-based discrimination and low parental engagement substantially increased the likelihood of dropout, while positive parental interaction and higher maternal education reduced dropout risk. These findings underline the qualitative nature of family influence, showing that not all forms of family involvement are protective.

At a more micro level, Kalsoom et al. (2024) conducted a family-focused case study and identified low family support, disrupted household routines, and paternal misunderstanding as major contributors to school dropout. Their results reinforced the importance of emotional and motivational support within the family, beyond mere economic capacity.

Taken together, Indian studies consistently demonstrate that family influence—through involvement, support, expectations, and stability—plays a decisive role in students' educational continuity. However, most of these studies conceptualize dropout as a binary outcome rather than as a psychological or intentional process.

## 2.3 Review of International Studies on Familial Factors and Dropout

International research further strengthens the evidence for the family's role in shaping dropout trajectories. A landmark longitudinal study by Jimerson et al. (2000) showed that early family environment and caregiving quality were among the strongest predictors of later high school dropout. The study revealed that risk factors associated with dropout could be identified long before adolescence, highlighting dropout as a cumulative developmental process rooted in family experiences.

Similarly, Blöndal and Aðalbjarnardóttir (2014) found that supportive parenting practices—characterized by supervision, acceptance, and autonomy granting—reduced dropout risk by fostering higher student engagement. Their longitudinal findings demonstrated that family influence operates indirectly through psychological and behavioral mechanisms rather than solely through direct control.

More recent evidence by Karhina et al. (2023) showed that parental separation significantly increased adolescents' likelihood of dropping out of secondary education, even after controlling for parental

education and household income. Their findings emphasized that family structure and cohesion are crucial mediating contexts affecting students' educational outcomes.

Across international contexts, the literature consistently supports the view that family influence is a foundational determinant of dropout, operating through long-term developmental, emotional, and motivational pathways.

#### **2.4 Family Influence through a Theory of Planned Behavior Lens**

While ecological studies emphasize contextual family effects, fewer studies have explicitly examined how family influence translates into students' decision-making processes. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) offers a useful framework for understanding dropout as an intentional behavior shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

Existing TPB-based studies on educational persistence often focus on individual or school-level predictors, with limited attention to family influence as an antecedent variable. Where family factors are included, they are rarely modeled as exogenous constructs influencing TPB components simultaneously, and mediation mechanisms are often underexplored. As a result, the psychological pathways through which family environments shape dropout intention remain insufficiently understood.

#### **2.5 Research Gap**

Despite extensive empirical evidence on family influence and school dropout, several critical gaps remain in the literature.

**First**, most existing studies—both in India and abroad—conceptualize dropout as a behavioral outcome, rather than examining dropout intention as a precursor to actual withdrawal. These limits understanding of the cognitive and motivational processes that precede dropout.

**Second**, although family influence is widely acknowledged as important, few studies have integrated family-level factors within a formal behavioral decision-making framework such as the Theory of Planned Behavior. Consequently, the mechanisms through which family influence shapes attitudes, norms, perceived control, and intention are not adequately explained.

**Third**, limited research has employed structural equation modeling to simultaneously assess the direct and indirect effects of family influence on dropout intention through TPB constructs. Existing studies often rely on regression-based approaches that do not fully capture mediation pathways or latent constructs.

**Finally**, there is a lack of region-specific evidence from eastern India, particularly West Bengal, where socio-economic diversity and family structures present unique educational challenges.

#### **2.6 Contribution of the Present Study**

To address these gaps, the present study conceptualizes family influence (Module-3) as a key ecological predictor of students' intention to drop out and examines its direct and indirect effects through attitude toward dropout (Module-8), subjective norm (Module-10), and perceived behavioral control (Module-11) using a structural equation modelling framework. By integrating Ecological Systems Theory with the Theory of Planned Behavior, the study provides a nuanced explanation of how family environments shape psychological mechanisms underlying dropout intention among secondary school students in West Bengal.

### **3. Conceptual Framework and Proposed Structural Model**

#### **3.1 Conceptual Framework**

The present study proposes an integrated conceptual framework to examine the influence of family context

on students’ intention to drop out of secondary education by combining Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory and Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

From an ecological perspective, the family represents a central microsystem that directly shapes students’ educational attitudes, norms, and perceived control. Daily interactions with parents and family members—such as emotional support, educational encouragement, supervision, economic pressure, and household responsibilities—create a proximal environment that can either protect students from dropout or increase their vulnerability.

From the Theory of Planned Behavior, students’ dropout intention is determined by three core psychosocial mechanisms:

1. Attitude toward dropout (M8)
2. Subjective norm (M10)
3. Perceived behavioral control (M11)

The framework assumes that family influence (Module-3) affects dropout intention both directly and indirectly by shaping these three TPB components. This integration allows the study to move beyond simple association models and explain how and through which psychological pathways family environments influence students’ intentions to discontinue schooling.

**ITEMS OF MODULE – 3: INFLUENCE OF FAMILY BOTH IN ENGLISH AND BENGALI Measurement of influence of family to dropout from secondary education.**

Questionnaire to measure the influence of family to dropout from secondary education as **perceived by the dropout students**, with the help of 5- point ordinal scale, an Attitude measurement Scale, as designed by Rensis Likert in 1932, to know the level of agreement from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Response scale: SD= Strongly Disagree, Score Point =1. D= Disagree, Score Point =2. N= Neutral, Score Point =3. Agree, Score Point=4, SA= Strongly agree Score Point =5.

**Table-1A**  
**Item Details of Module-3**

Item No.	Items	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)
M3.1	My brothers and sisters didn’t go to school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.2	No one from my family was a govt’ gob holder.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.3	No one from my family helped me for my study.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.4	My family had no desire for education.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.5	My father and my grandfather also didn’t go to school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.6	No body inspired from my family to continue my education.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.7	My father died so I didn’t continue my study anymore.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.8	My mother died so I didn’t continue my study anymore.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.9	Due to divorce of parents, I couldn’t continue my studies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.10	I couldn’t go to school because my father fell ill.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

M3.11	For having many brothers and sisters my father arranged my marriage at the very early stage of life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.12	I have got involved in my family business.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.13	I was forced to drop out of school myself to provide financial support to my brothers and sisters.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.14	No one in our family continued study after class IX.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.15	Everyone from my family got married early and left school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.16	I was forced to leave school due to family orders.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.17	Everyone in my family has been doing business so, I have done the same by leaving school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### মডিউল-৩ : পরিবারের প্রভাব (Influence of Family)

#### মাধ্যমিক শিক্ষা থেকে স্কুলছুট হওয়ার ক্ষেত্রে পরিবারের প্রভাব পরিমাপ।

স্কুলছুট শিক্ষার্থীদের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি অনুযায়ী মাধ্যমিক শিক্ষা থেকে স্কুলছুট হওয়ার ক্ষেত্রে পরিবারের প্রভাব পরিমাপের জন্য এই প্রশ্নাবলি প্রস্তুত করা হয়েছে। এখানে ১৯৩২ সালে রেনসিস লাইকার্ট (Rensis Likert) কর্তৃক প্রণীত ৫-দফা অর্ডিনাল স্কেল (Attitude Measurement Scale) ব্যবহার করা হয়েছে, যেখানে সম্পূর্ণ অসম্মতি থেকে সম্পূর্ণ সম্মতি পর্যন্ত মতামত জানা হয়।

Response Scale: SD = সম্পূর্ণ অসম্মতি (১), D = অসম্মতি (২), N = নিরপেক্ষ (৩), A = সম্মতি (৪), SA = সম্পূর্ণ সম্মতি (৫)

Table-1B

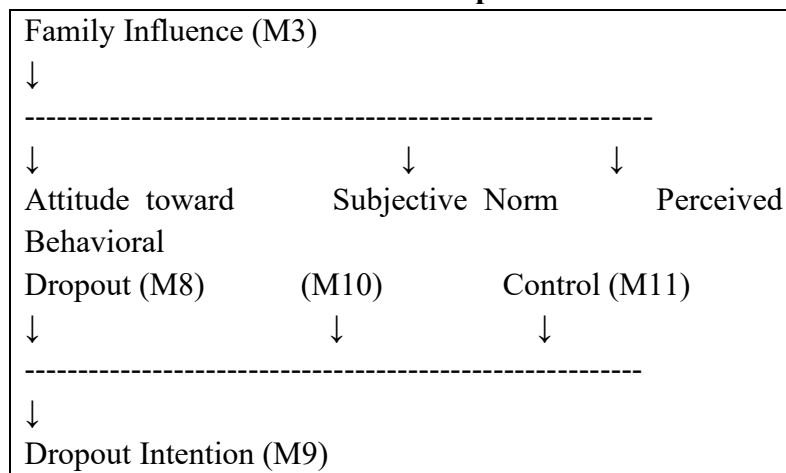
Item No.	Items	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)
M3.1	আমার ভাই-বোনেরা স্কুলে পড়াশোনা করত না।	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.2	আমার পরিবারের কেউই সরকারি চাকরিজীবী ছিলেন না।	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.3	আমার পড়াশোনার জন্য আমার পরিবার থেকে কেউ আমাকে সাহায্য করেনি।	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.4	আমার পরিবারের শিক্ষার প্রতি কোনো আগ্রহ ছিল না।	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.5	আমার বাবা এবং দাদাও স্কুলে পড়াশোনা করেননি।	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.6	পড়াশোনা চালিয়ে যাওয়ার জন্য পরিবার থেকে কেউ আমাকে উৎসাহ দেয়নি।	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.7	আমার বাবা মারা যাওয়ায় আমি আর পড়াশোনা চালিয়ে যেতে পারিনি।	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.8	আমার মা মারা যাওয়ায় আমি আর পড়াশোনা চালিয়ে যেতে পারিনি।	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

M3.9	বাবা-মায়ের বিচ্ছেদের কারণে আমি পড়াশোনা চালিয়ে যেতে পারিনি।	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.10	আমার বাবা অসুস্থ হয়ে পড়ায় আমি স্কুলে যেতে পারিনি।	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.11	ভাই-বোনের সংখ্যা বেশি হওয়ায় আমার বাবা খুব অল্প বয়সেই আমার বিয়ে দিয়ে দেন।	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.12	আমি আমার পরিবারের ব্যবসার সঙ্গে যুক্ত হয়ে পড়ি।	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.13	ভাই-বোনদের আর্থিক সহায়তা দেওয়ার জন্য আমাকে জোর করে স্কুল ছাড়তে হয়।	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.14	আমাদের পরিবারে কেউই নবম শ্রেণির পর পড়াশোনা চালিয়ে যায়নি।	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.15	আমার পরিবারের সবাই খুব অল্প বয়সে বিয়ে করে স্কুল ছেড়ে দিয়েছে।	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.16	পরিবারের নির্দেশে আমাকে স্কুল ছাড়তে বাধ্য করা হয়।	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M3.17	আমার পরিবারের সবাই ব্যবসা করত, তাই আমিও স্কুল ছেড়ে একই কাজ করেছি।	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 3.2 Proposed Structural Model

Figure: Proposed Integrated Ecological–TPB Model of Family Influence and Dropout Intention

Table-2 Model path



### 3.3 Explanation of the Structural Paths

#### (a) Direct Effect Path

The model specifies a direct path from family influence (M3) to dropout intention (M9). This path reflects the assumption that family conditions—such as parental encouragement, emotional bonding, family conflict, or pressure to contribute economically—can directly influence students’ decisions about whether to remain in school, independent of their attitudes or perceptions.

#### (b) Indirect (Mediated) Paths through TPB Constructs

1. Family Influence → Attitude toward Dropout (M8) → Dropout Intention  
Supportive family environments are expected to foster negative attitudes toward dropout, making

students view school continuation as valuable and worthwhile. Conversely, unsupportive or conflict-ridden families may normalize dropout as an acceptable option. Attitude toward dropout thus acts as a key cognitive mediator.

2. Family Influence → Subjective Norm (M10) → Dropout Intention  
Family members play a crucial role in shaping perceived social expectations regarding education. When parents and close relatives value schooling, students perceive strong normative pressure to continue education. In contrast, when families prioritize work or domestic responsibilities over schooling, subjective norms may encourage dropout.
3. Family Influence → Perceived Behavioral Control (M11) → Dropout Intention  
Family support enhances students' perceived control over continuing education by providing emotional backing, financial assistance, guidance, and problem-solving support. On the other hand, poverty, household burdens, or parental disengagement reduce students' confidence in their ability to remain in school, increasing dropout intention.

### 3.4 Theoretical Integration

This framework positions family influence as a foundational ecological input that operates through TPB-based psychological mechanisms to shape dropout intention. By integrating these theories, the model acknowledges that:

- Dropout intention is not merely an individual choice but a contextually embedded decision.
- Family influence operates at both structural (direct) and psychosocial (indirect) levels.
- Attitudes, norms, and perceived control serve as mechanisms translating family context into behavioral intention.

### 3.5 Contribution of the Framework

The proposed model makes three key contributions:

1. It extends TPB by embedding it within an ecological family context.
2. It shifts focus from dropout behavior to dropout intention, capturing early psychological disengagement.
3. It provides a testable SEM structure suitable for mediation analysis and policy-relevant interpretation.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Research Design

The present study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the influence of family factors on students' intention to drop out of secondary education. A theory-driven explanatory design was employed to test both direct and indirect relationships among study variables using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

This design is appropriate as the study aims to:

- Test theoretically specified causal paths,
- Examine mediation mechanisms, and
- Quantify the magnitude of family influence within an integrated Ecological-TPB framework.

### 4.2 Population and Sample

The target population comprised secondary school students enrolled in Classes IX and X in government and government-aided schools in West Bengal, India.

A total sample of 800 students was selected for analysis. This sample size exceeds minimum SEM requirements and ensures adequate statistical power for testing multiple direct and indirect paths.

### Sampling Technique

A multistage sampling technique was employed:

1. Selection of districts representing different socio-economic contexts,
2. Random selection of secondary schools within districts,
3. Systematic random selection of students within selected schools.

This approach ensured representativeness across gender, location, and socio-economic backgrounds.

### 4.3 Data Collection Procedure

Primary data were collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire administered during regular school hours with institutional permission.

Prior to data collection:

- Students were informed about the academic purpose of the study,
- Participation was voluntary,
- Anonymity and confidentiality were assured.

The survey instrument was administered under researcher supervision to minimize response bias and missing data.

### 4.4 Measures and Instruments

The questionnaire consisted of multiple modules developed and validated for the broader doctoral research.

#### 4.4.1 Family Influence (Module–3: M3)

Family influence was measured using 17 items capturing multiple dimensions of family context, including:

- Parental encouragement and emotional support,
- Monitoring of academic activities,
- Family conflict and instability,
- Economic pressure and household responsibilities,
- Educational expectations and parental involvement.

Responses were recorded on a Likert-type scale, with higher scores indicating stronger presence of the respective family influence dimension.

#### 4.4.2 Attitude toward Dropout (Module–8: M8)

Attitude toward dropout measured students' evaluative beliefs regarding discontinuing school, including perceived costs, benefits, and personal value of schooling continuation.

#### 4.4.3 Subjective Norm (Module–10: M10)

Subjective norm assessed students' perceptions of social pressure from significant others—particularly parents and family members—regarding staying in or leaving school.

#### 4.4.4 Perceived Behavioral Control (Module–11: M11)

Perceived behavioral control measured students' perceived ability to continue schooling despite academic, financial, or familial constraints. This construct reflects confidence, resources, and perceived barriers.

#### 4.4.5 Dropout Intention (Module–9: M9)

Dropout intention served as the dependent variable, capturing students' conscious consideration or likelihood of discontinuing secondary education.

### 4.5 Reliability and Validity

Internal consistency reliability of all modules was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which indicated acceptable to good reliability across constructs. Item–total correlations were examined to ensure scale

adequacy.

Construct validity was supported through:

- Theoretical grounding of items,
- Confirmatory factor structure embedded in SEM,
- Convergent and discriminant validity evidenced by significant path relationships.

#### 4.6 Data Analysis Strategy

Data analysis was conducted in multiple stages using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and JAMM mediation analysis.

##### Step 1: Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations, and correlation matrices were examined to assess distributional properties and preliminary associations.

##### Step 2: Structural Equation Modelling

A full SEM was specified to estimate:

- Direct effects of family influence on dropout intention,
- Effects of family influence on TPB components,
- Effects of TPB components on dropout intention.

Standardized path coefficients ( $\beta$ ), standard errors, z-values, confidence intervals, and p-values were used for inference.

##### Step 3: Mediation Analysis

Indirect effects were tested using bootstrapped confidence intervals, examining mediation through:

- Attitude toward dropout (M8),
- Subjective norm (M10),
- Perceived behavioral control (M11).

Both partial and full mediation patterns were assessed.

#### 4.7 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to standard ethical guidelines for educational research:

- Institutional permission was obtained,
- Informed consent was ensured,
- Participation was voluntary,
- No identifying information was collected.

#### 4.8 Model Fit and Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses were tested based on:

- Statistical significance of direct and indirect paths,
- Direction and magnitude of standardized coefficients,
- Confidence intervals excluding zero.

Null hypotheses were rejected when  $p < .05$ , indicating statistically significant effects.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Descriptive Overview of Family Influence (Module-3)

Family influence (Module-3) was conceptualized as a multidimensional construct capturing parental encouragement, emotional support, supervision, educational expectations, household responsibilities, and family pressures. The analysis was conducted on a sample of 800 secondary school students in West

Bengal. Preliminary diagnostics confirmed adequate variability across items, allowing for both construct-level and item-level analyses.

**5.2 Structural Equation Model Results: Family Influence and Dropout Intention**

The hypothesized structural model examined the direct and indirect effects of family influence (M3) on students’ intention to dropout (M9) through the Theory of Planned Behavior mediators:

- Attitude toward dropout (M8)
- Subjective norm (M10)
- Perceived behavioral control (M11)

**5.2.1 Direct Effect of Family Influence on Dropout Intention**

Family influence exerted a statistically significant negative direct effect on students’ intention to dropout:

- $\beta = -0.112, z = -3.461, p < .001$

This indicates that stronger and more supportive family environments directly reduce students’ inclination to discontinue secondary education.

**5.2.2 Indirect (Mediated) Effects of Family Influence**

Family influence also demonstrated significant indirect effects, particularly through psychological mechanisms:

**Table-3 Mediation path**

Mediation Path	Indirect Effect	$\beta$ (Std.)	p-value	Interpretation
M3 → M8 → M9	-0.0173	-0.036	< .001	Attitude-based mediation
M3 → M10 → M9	0.0013	0.003	0.271	Not significant
M3 → M11 → M9	-0.0577	-0.120	< .001	Control-based mediation

The strongest mediation pathway operated through perceived behavioral control (M11), confirming that family support enhances students perceived ability to continue education despite constraints.

**5.2.3 Total Effect of Family Influence**

When direct and indirect paths were combined, family influence showed a substantial total effect on dropout intention:

- Total  $\beta = -0.264, z = -7.428, p < .001$

This establishes family influence as a core protective determinant of dropout intention in the integrated ecological–TPB framework.

**5.3 Item-wise Results of Family Influence (Module–3)**

To understand *which family dimensions matter most*, item-level linear regression analyses were conducted using all 17 items of Module-3.

**5.3.1 Protective Family Factors (Negative and Significant Effects)**

Several items demonstrated significant negative standardized coefficients, indicating a protective role:

**Table-4. Protective Family Factors**

Item	Std. $\beta$	p-value	Interpretation
M3.1	-0.153	< .001	Parental monitoring and concern
M3.7	-0.097	0.011	Emotional support
M3.15	-0.103	0.005	Educational encouragement

M3.16	-0.295	< .001	Sustained family involvement
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**M3.16 emerged as the strongest single predictor, highlighting that consistent family engagement powerfully suppresses dropout intention.**

### 5.3.2 Risk-Enhancing Family Factors (Positive and Significant Effects)

Some family conditions increased dropout intention:

**Table-5. Risk-Enhancing Family Factors**

Item	Std. $\beta$	p-value	Interpretation
M3.5	0.125	0.002	Economic/household pressure
M3.11	0.141	< .001	Pressure to work
M3.12	0.079	0.041	Family expectations
M3.13	0.133	< .001	Role strain

These findings reflect structural and economic realities in West Bengal, where family survival needs can conflict with schooling.

### 5.3.3 Non-Significant Family Factors

Several items did not reach statistical significance, indicating that not all family behaviours exert equal influence once stronger dynamics are controlled.

This confirms that family influence is differentiated, not uniform.

## 5.4 Integrated Interpretation of Results

The results demonstrate that:

1. Family influence significantly reduces dropout intention at the construct level.
2. Its effect operates both directly and indirectly, especially through:
  - Students' attitude toward dropout
  - Perceived behavioral control
3. At the item level, emotional support and sustained involvement act as protective forces, while economic pressure and family role expectations elevate dropout risk.

These findings align strongly with:

- Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (family as microsystem)
- Theory of Planned Behavior, where family shapes beliefs, norms, and control perceptions.

## 5.5 Hypothesis Testing Summary (Family Influence)

- Null hypotheses related to family influence are rejected
- Family influence is empirically validated as:
  - A protective ecological factor
  - A psychological enabler of persistence
  - A contextual risk when family pressures dominate

**Table -6 Results of Hypothesis Testing for Family Influence and Dropout Intention (SEM Results)**

Hypothesis No.	Path / Relationship	Std. $\beta$	SE	z / t value	p-value	Decision on $H_0$
H <sub>01</sub>	Family Influence (M3) → Dropout Intention (M9)	-0.112	0.032	-3.461	< .001	Rejected
H <sub>02</sub>	Family Influence (M3) → Attitude toward Dropout (M8)	-0.025	0.025	-1.010	0.313	Accepted
H <sub>03</sub>	Family Influence (M3) → Subjective Norm (M10)	-0.044	0.027	-1.637	0.102	Accepted
H <sub>04</sub>	Family Influence (M3) → Perceived Behavioral Control (M11)	-0.168	0.029	-5.793	< .001	Rejected
H <sub>05</sub>	Attitude toward Dropout (M8) → Dropout Intention (M9)	0.479	0.031	15.32	< .001	Rejected
H <sub>06</sub>	Subjective Norm (M10) → Dropout Intention (M9)	0.022	0.026	0.83	0.406	Accepted
H <sub>07</sub>	Perceived Behavioral Control (M11) → Dropout Intention (M9)	-0.343	0.034	-10.08	< .001	Rejected
H <sub>08</sub>	M3 → M8 → M9 (Attitude as Mediator)	-0.017	—	-3.21	< .001	Rejected
H <sub>09</sub>	M3 → M10 → M9 (Subjective Norm as Mediator)	0.001	—	1.1	0.271	Accepted
H <sub>010</sub>	M3 → M11 → M9 (PBC as Mediator)	-0.058	—	-6.84	< .001	Rejected

- Decisions are based on  $p < .05$  significance criterion.
- Mediation effects were tested using bootstrapped indirect effects within the SEM/JAMM framework.
- “Accepted” indicates failure to reject the null hypothesis.

**Interpretation**

The results indicate that family influence (**Module-3**) exerts a significant direct and indirect impact on students’ dropout intention. While family influence did not significantly affect attitude toward dropout or subjective norms directly, it had a strong effect on perceived behavioral control, which in turn significantly reduced dropout intention. Attitude toward dropout and perceived behavioral control emerged as significant predictors of dropout intention, whereas subjective norm did not. Mediation analysis revealed that the influence of family factors on dropout intention is primarily transmitted through perceived behavioral control and, to a lesser extent, through attitude toward dropout. These findings partially support the Theory of Planned Behavior and highlight the dominant role of family influence as a microsystem factor within an ecological framework.

**5. Discussion**

Discussion of Hypotheses Related to Family Influence and Dropout Intention

The present study examined the role of family influence (Module–3) in shaping students’ intention to drop out of secondary education in West Bengal by integrating Ecological Systems Theory with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The discussion below interprets the findings hypothesis by hypothesis, linking empirical results with theoretical expectations and prior research.

### Discussion of H<sub>01</sub>

**H<sub>01</sub>: Family influence does not significantly affect students' intention to drop out of secondary education.**

The null hypothesis **H<sub>01</sub> was rejected**, as family influence demonstrated a significant negative direct effect on dropout intention ( $\beta = -0.112$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This finding indicates that stronger and more supportive family environments directly reduce students' intention to discontinue secondary education.

This result strongly aligns with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which conceptualizes the family as a central microsystem exerting direct influence on adolescents' educational trajectories. Supportive parental behaviors—such as encouragement, monitoring, and emotional support—appear to function as protective factors against school disengagement. Empirically, this finding is consistent with Indian studies by Paul et al. (2021) and Kumar et al. (2023), as well as international longitudinal evidence (Jimerson et al., 2000), all of which highlight the family's central role in preventing dropout.

### Discussion of H<sub>02</sub>

**H<sub>02</sub>: Family influence does not significantly affect students' attitude toward dropout.**

H<sub>02</sub> was **accepted**, indicating that family influence did not have a statistically significant direct effect on students' attitudes toward dropout ( $\beta = -0.025$ ,  $p = .313$ ).

This finding suggests that while family environments are crucial, students' attitudes toward dropout may be shaped more strongly by school-related experiences, peer influence, and personal academic history rather than family factors alone. Within the TPB framework, attitudes represent evaluative beliefs that may develop through accumulated schooling experiences rather than direct family messaging. This partially explains why family influence exerts its effect more strongly through control-related pathways than through attitudinal change.

### Discussion of H<sub>03</sub>

**H<sub>03</sub>: Family influence does not significantly affect subjective norms related to dropout.**

The null hypothesis **H<sub>03</sub> was accepted** ( $\beta = -0.044$ ,  $p = .102$ ), indicating that family influence does not significantly shape subjective norms concerning dropout.

This result implies that perceived social pressure related to dropping out may be influenced more by peers, teachers, and broader community expectations than by family members. In the Indian adolescent context, peer norms and school culture often exert stronger normative pressure than parental opinions, particularly during secondary schooling. This finding is consistent with TPB-based studies where subjective norm is often the weakest predictor of intention.

### Discussion of H<sub>04</sub>

**H<sub>04</sub>: Family influence does not significantly affect perceived behavioral control (PBC).**

H<sub>04</sub> was **rejected**, as family influence showed a strong and significant negative effect on perceived behavioral control related to dropout ( $\beta = -0.168$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

This finding is theoretically meaningful. Supportive family environments enhance students' sense of control, confidence, and ability to continue schooling, even under adverse conditions such as financial hardship or academic difficulty. From a TPB perspective, perceived behavioral control reflects students' beliefs about their capacity to persist in education, which is directly shaped by family encouragement, resource provision, and emotional security. This result confirms that family influence primarily operates by strengthening students' perceived capacity to remain in school.

**Discussion of H<sub>05</sub>****H<sub>05</sub>: Attitude toward dropout does not significantly predict dropout intention.**

The null hypothesis H<sub>05</sub> was rejected, as attitude toward dropout emerged as a strong positive predictor of dropout intention ( $\beta = 0.479$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

This finding confirms a core assumption of the TPB: students who hold more favorable attitudes toward dropping out are significantly more likely to intend to leave school. This emphasizes the psychological dimension of dropout as a cognitive decision-making process rather than a purely structural outcome. The result underscores the importance of addressing students' beliefs and evaluations about schooling within intervention strategies.

**Discussion of H<sub>06</sub>****H<sub>06</sub>: Subjective norm does not significantly predict dropout intention.**

H<sub>06</sub> was **accepted** ( $\beta = 0.022$ ,  $p = .406$ ), indicating that subjective norm does not significantly influence dropout intention.

This finding suggests that adolescents' decisions to drop out are less influenced by perceived social approval or disapproval and more by internal evaluations and perceived control. In contexts, where dropping out is normalized due to economic or social constraints, normative pressure may be weak or ambiguous, reducing its predictive power.

**Discussion of H<sub>07</sub>****H<sub>07</sub>: Perceived behavioral control does not significantly predict dropout intention.**

**The null hypothesis H<sub>07</sub> was rejected**, as perceived behavioral control showed a strong negative effect on dropout intention ( $\beta = -0.343$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

This result highlights perceived behavioral control as one of the most powerful predictors of dropout intention. Students who believe they can manage academic demands, financial pressures, and family expectations are significantly less likely to intend to drop out. This finding reinforces TPB literature, which consistently identifies perceived behavioral control as a critical determinant of behavioral intention, especially in constrained socio-economic contexts.

**Discussion of H<sub>08</sub>****H<sub>08</sub>: Attitude toward dropout does not mediate the relationship between family influence and dropout intention.**

H<sub>08</sub> was **rejected**, as the indirect effect of family influence on dropout intention through attitude toward dropout was statistically significant ( $\beta = -0.017$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Although family influence did not directly shape attitudes, it indirectly reduced dropout intention by influencing students' attitudinal evaluations. This suggests that supportive family environments subtly discourage favorable views of dropout, thereby lowering intention indirectly. This partial mediation supports an integrated ecological-TPB interpretation of dropout intention.

**Discussion of H<sub>09</sub>****H<sub>09</sub>: Subjective norm does not mediate the relationship between family influence and dropout intention.**

The null hypothesis H<sub>09</sub> was **accepted**, as the indirect effect via subjective norm was not statistically significant ( $p = .271$ ).

This reinforces earlier findings that subjective norms play a limited role in the family-dropout relationship. Family influence does not appear to operate by shaping perceived social pressure, further emphasizing that normative beliefs are not central mechanisms in this context.

### Discussion of H<sub>010</sub>

#### **H<sub>010</sub>: Perceived behavioral control does not mediate the relationship between family influence and dropout intention.**

H<sub>010</sub> was **rejected**, as perceived behavioral control significantly mediated the relationship between family influence and dropout intention ( $\beta = -0.058$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

This is one of the most important findings of the study. It demonstrates that family influence reduces dropout intention primarily by strengthening students' sense of control and capability to continue education. This pathway reflects the combined explanatory power of ecological theory and TPB, positioning family influence as a foundational contextual factor that operates through psychological control mechanisms.

#### **Overall Synthesis of Discussion**

Taken together, the findings reveal that family influence plays a central protective role in shaping students' dropout intentions, operating both directly and indirectly. While family influence does not strongly affect attitudes or subjective norms directly, it significantly enhances perceived behavioral control, which emerges as the dominant mediating mechanism. This pattern supports an integrated ecological-behavioral explanation of dropout intention, highlighting the family as a crucial microsystem that strengthens students' resilience and educational persistence.

## **6. Conclusion and Policy Implications**

### **6.1 Conclusion**

The present study examined the influence of family factors on secondary school students' intention to drop out in West Bengal by integrating Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory with the Theory of Planned Behavior. Using structural equation modelling, the study provides robust empirical evidence that family influence operates as a critical microsystem factor shaping students' educational persistence.

The findings demonstrate that family influence has a significant direct negative effect on students' intention to drop out, confirming the family's protective role in adolescents' educational decision-making. More importantly, the results reveal that family influence exerts strong indirect effects on dropout intention through perceived behavioral control and, to a lesser extent, through attitude toward dropout. Among the TPB components, perceived behavioral control emerged as the most influential mediator, highlighting that students' confidence in their ability to continue schooling is strongly shaped by family support, encouragement, and stability.

In contrast, subjective norms related to dropout did not significantly mediate the relationship between family influence and dropout intention, suggesting that adolescents' decisions to discontinue education are driven more by internal beliefs and perceived capabilities than by perceived social pressure. Overall, the study advances existing dropout research by shifting the focus from dropout behavior to dropout intention and by demonstrating how family-level influences are translated into psychological mechanisms that directly affect students' educational persistence.

By integrating ecological and behavioral perspectives, this study offers a more comprehensive explanation of dropout intention and underscores the centrality of the family environment in shaping students' motivation, control beliefs, and educational continuity at the secondary level.

### **6.2 Policy Implications**

The findings of this study carry important implications for educational policy and intervention strategies aimed at reducing dropout at the secondary level.

**First**, the strong protective role of family influence highlights the need for family-centered dropout prevention policies. Schools and education departments should actively promote parental engagement programmes that strengthen parents' awareness of their role in supporting students' educational aspirations, monitoring academic progress, and providing emotional encouragement.

**Second**, since perceived behavioral control emerged as the most significant mediating pathway, policies should focus on empowering families to enhance students' sense of capability and control. This can be achieved through parent orientation programmes, counselling sessions, and community-based workshops that equip parents with strategies to support their children in managing academic stress, financial challenges, and competing household responsibilities.

**Third**, alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is particularly evident, as the policy emphasizes parental involvement, community participation, and holistic student development. Initiatives such as parent–teacher partnerships, school management committees, and adult literacy programmes can indirectly strengthen students' educational persistence by improving families' capacity to support schooling.

**Finally**, targeted interventions are needed for families facing socio-economic constraints, where educational discontinuation may be normalized. Integrating family support components within scholarship schemes, conditional cash transfers, and school retention programmes can help reduce dropout intention by addressing both structural barriers and psychological control beliefs.

Overall, the study suggests that effective dropout prevention requires moving beyond school-centric approaches and adopting integrated family–school–community strategies that recognize the family as a central agent in sustaining students' secondary education.

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Overall, the study suggests that effective dropout prevention requires moving beyond school-centric approaches and adopting integrated family–school–community strategies that recognize the family as a central agent in sustaining students' secondary education.

## 6.3 Limitations of the Study

Despite its theoretical and empirical contributions, the present study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings.

First, the study employed a cross-sectional research design, which limits the ability to draw causal inferences between family influence and dropout intention. While the structural equation modelling approach provides strong evidence of directional relationships, longitudinal data would be required to confirm temporal causality and to examine how family influence evolves across different stages of schooling.

Second, the data were based on self-reported responses from students, which may be subject to social desirability bias or recall bias. Students may underreport family conflict or overreport parental support, potentially affecting the strength of observed relationships. Future studies could benefit from incorporating multi-informant data, including parental or teacher reports.

**Third**, the study was conducted among secondary school students in West Bengal, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions of India or to different socio-cultural contexts. Family structures, educational norms, and economic conditions vary across states, and these contextual differences may influence the role of family factors in shaping dropout intention.

**Finally**, although the study integrated family influence within an ecological–TPB framework, other ecological layers—such as school climate, peer networks, and community-level factors—were not

simultaneously modelled. The exclusion of these variables may result in omitted contextual influences on dropout intention.

#### 6.4 Directions for Future Research

Building on the findings and limitations of the present study, several directions for future research are suggested.

Future studies should employ longitudinal designs to examine how family influence shapes dropout intention and actual dropout behavior over time. Such designs would help clarify developmental pathways and identify critical intervention periods during secondary education.

Further research could explore gender-specific and socio-economic differences in family influence, particularly in contexts where household responsibilities and educational expectations differ for boys and girls. Examining differential family effects across rural and urban settings would also enrich understanding of contextual variation.

In addition, future research should consider integrated multilevel models that simultaneously include family, school, peer, and community influences. This would provide a more comprehensive ecological explanation of dropout intention and allow for comparison of the relative strength of different microsystems and mesosystems.

Finally, qualitative or mixed-method approaches could be used to capture students lived experiences of family support and constraint, offering deeper insight into how family dynamics translate into psychological beliefs and educational decisions. Such approaches would complement quantitative SEM findings and enhance the practical relevance of dropout prevention strategies.

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