

School Dropouts: The Role of Education in Transforming Minds for Sustainable Futures and Climate Action in Rural Areas

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ABSTRACT:

Education is critical in molding environmentally responsible citizens and encouraging climate-conscious behaviour, both of which are required for sustainable living. However, school dropouts remain a serious educational and social burden, particularly in rural areas where poverty, societal constraints, and limited access to resources impede ongoing learning and understanding of sustainability and climate action. This non-doctrinal field-based study was conducted in two rural schools to investigate the rate of school dropouts and how continuous education helps pupils develop climate awareness and sustainable ideals. Data were gathered from students in grades 6–10 through direct observation, interactions with teachers, and class-specific inquiries. During the academic year, there were no dropouts at the Elementary School, while twenty-six pupils dropped out of High School. Dropouts were mostly caused by child labour for family income, early marriage among female students, a lack of academic interest, and a temporary stoppage of study. The findings show a gradual fall in dropout rates compared to previous years, demonstrating increased knowledge, literacy, and education's rising importance in encouraging sustainable thinking, even in remote areas. The study underlines the importance of continuing education not only for academic progress, but also for teaching environmental responsibility and climate-sensitive mindsets. It finds that increasing parental involvement, improving school environments, incorporating climate teaching, and giving financial and counseling support can considerably lower dropout rates and help to shift young minds toward climate action and sustainable living. A collaborative effort between schools, families, and the community is required to promote inclusive education and a sustainable future.

KEYWORDS School Dropouts, Poverty, Child Labour, Right to Education, Educational Retention.

1. INTRODUCTION

School dropout is a serious educational and social problem that affects millions of children across the world. Dropping out occurs when students leave school before completing their prescribed level of education, mainly due to poverty, academic difficulties, lack of parental support, early marriage, or involvement in child labour. These factors often force children to prioritise work or family responsibilities over schooling. Health problems, bullying, and emotional stress also affect their ability to continue education and create a sense of fear and failure. In India, the Right to Education is an integral part of ¹Article 21 of the Constitution, which guarantees the Right to Life and personal liberty. The Supreme

¹ Article 21 of an Indian Constitution, 1950

Court has interpreted that “Right to Life” also includes the right to live with dignity, and education is a crucial element of that dignity. School dropout, therefore, not only affects individuals but also undermines a fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution.

The consequences of dropping out are severe, as it limits future job opportunities, reduces income levels, and increases dependency on others. High dropout rates also weaken the skilled workforce of a nation and slow down economic progress. Children who leave school early are more likely to face social marginalisation and remain trapped in cycles of poverty. Therefore, reducing dropout rates requires a coordinated effort by schools, parents, communities, and government agencies. Ensuring access to quality education, providing financial and academic support, and creating a safe, motivating and inclusive school environment are essential steps to help children complete their education and enjoy a life of dignity as envisioned under Article 21.

OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH

- To identify the major social, economic and academic factors that contribute to school dropouts in Tallapalem.
- To examine the role of poverty, child labour, early marriage and family environment in influencing students to leave school.
- To analyse the extent to which lack of parental support, health issues, and emotional stress affect school attendance and performance.
- To assess the awareness of parents and community members regarding the importance of education and the right to education under Article 21 and 21A.
- To evaluate the existing school facilities, teaching methods, and support systems available to students in Tallapalem.
- To study the impact of school dropout on the future opportunities, economic conditions and social development of children.
- To identify government schemes and programmes aimed at reducing dropout rates and to suggest measures for their effective implementation at the local level.
- To propose practical strategies and recommendations for preventing school dropouts and improving student retention in Tallapalem.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a Non-Doctrinal (empirical) research methodology to understand the causes and effects of school dropouts in Tallapalem. The research is based on field data collected directly from students, parents, teachers and community members through structured interviews, observation and questionnaires. Primary data was gathered by visiting schools, interacting with dropout students and conducting informal discussions with village stakeholders to examine social, economic and psychological factors influencing dropout rates. Secondary data was collected from books, journals, government reports, educational statistics and relevant constitutional provisions, including the Right to Education under **Article 21 and 21-A**. The collected data was analysed qualitatively to identify common patterns, recurring issues and local challenges. This methodology helps to understand the real-life situations of children and families in Tallapalem and provides a factual basis for practical suggestions to reduce school dropouts.

MEANING OF SCHOOL DROPOUTS

School dropouts refer to individuals, typically students, who leave formal education before completing the required levels, such as finishing high school or completing secondary education. This means that the student discontinues their studies for reasons such as academic difficulties, financial constraints, lack of interest, personal issues, or external pressures like early marriage or family responsibilities.

Dropping out can happen at any stage of a child's education, but it most commonly occurs during the transition from elementary to middle school or from middle school to high school. The term generally implies that the student has permanently or temporarily exited the formal education system without completing the educational milestones set by the schooling system.

²REASONS FOR SCHOOL DROPOUTS

There are various reasons why students drop out of school, and these reasons often stem from a combination of personal, familial, economic, and institutional factors. Here are some of the key reasons:

- **ECONOMIC FACTORS**

Economic issues are a key cause of school dropouts, especially in rural and low-income communities. Families may not be able to pay school fees, uniforms, books, or transportation. Children are frequently expected to contribute to the family income through part-time or full-time employment. Even when school is free, indirect and opportunity costs force students to prefer earning above learning. Seasonal migration for work can impair education. A lack of scholarships or financial aid exacerbates the problem. Economic challenges limit access to learning resources, tutoring, and extracurricular activities, resulting in worse academic achievement. Without assistance, poverty reinforces the cycle of school dropouts

- **ACADEMIC STRUGGLES**

Students who are struggling academically are more likely to drop out. Poor performance in basic disciplines like as reading, writing, and arithmetic can result in frustration and disengagement. Students who have undetected learning difficulties such as dyslexia or ADHD struggle to keep up. Overcrowded classrooms and a lack of individual attention impede academic support. Language obstacles, poor study habits, and issues with time management all have an impact on learning outcomes. Students are further discouraged by emotional problems such as low self-esteem, anxiety, and stress. Students who do not receive early intervention, tutoring, or remedial programs believe they are incapable of succeeding, which leads to dropout. Academic difficulties, exacerbated by external pressures, are a significant factor in early school dropout. and limits future chances.

- **FAMILY ISSUES**

A child's educational experience is substantially influenced by his or her family environment. Children from dysfunctional or unstable families may suffer emotional, financial, and social barriers to education. Parental neglect, substance misuse, domestic violence, divorce, or a lack of support lower motivation and participation. Children may need to care for siblings or contribute to household income, which limits their study time. Cultural circumstances, such as early marriage or adolescent pregnancy, particularly among girls, may compel school dropout. Financial constraints at home can limit access to fundamental educational needs. A supportive family that appreciates education is essential for academic persistence.

² *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews, Issue (7), July (2025), Page – 6810-6813*

Addressing family issues necessitates school, community, and government intervention to assist students stay in school.

- **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL FACTORS**

Social and emotional disorders have a significant impact on school dropouts. Bullying, harassment, discrimination, and peer rejection instill dread, insecurity, and feelings of isolation. Mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and stress impair motivation, focus, and academic performance. Cultural and cultural obligations, such as early marriage or household chores, have a particular impact on girls in rural communities. Students feel uncomfortable at school due to a lack of peer support and social connections. Schools' failure to provide counseling or safe conditions exacerbates the problem. Emotional hardship, paired with academic or economic constraints, frequently causes students to disengage. Addressing these issues through supportive peer networks, mentorship, and inclusive policies is critical for retaining students.

- **SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**

The school environment has a substantial influence on student engagement and dropout rates. Overcrowded classrooms, bad infrastructure, and a lack of resources all impede learning. Teachers may be undertrained, and the curriculum may be restrictive or unrelated to the students' lives, lowering motivation. Unsafe conditions, such as bullying or violence, deter attendance. Struggling pupils do not receive support because of limited teacher-student engagement and a lack of counseling. Extracurricular and guidance programs are sometimes lacking, particularly in rural schools. Positive relationships with teachers, effective classroom management, and access to learning resources all help to increase retention rates. A safe, inclusive, and supportive school atmosphere encourages kids to attend on a regular basis and minimizes dropout rates, so promoting academic progress and personal growth.

- **HEALTH ISSUES**

Health issues have an impact on students' capacity to continue their education. Chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and epilepsy might result in frequent absences, compromising learning continuity. Disability, if not supported, further limits participation. Mental health issues such as sadness, anxiety, or stress reduce motivation and concentration, resulting in disengagement. Malnutrition and a lack of healthcare in rural regions worsen physical and cognitive problems. Stigmatization of health issues might lead to social isolation among students. Schools frequently lack medical care, counseling, and accommodations to address these issues. Early intervention, healthcare access, and mental health assistance are essential. Addressing health difficulties allows students to fully participate in education, lowering dropout rates and increasing overall development.

- **ACCESS TO EDUCATION**

Limited access to education is a significant factor in school dropout. Children in rural or remote areas may travel long distances without proper transportation, discouraging attendance. Poor infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of qualified teachers affect educational quality. Economic barriers, such as school fees, uniforms, and materials, further limit access for low-income families. Social discrimination based on gender, disability, or ethnicity can prevent children from attending school. Conflict or political instability may disrupt learning in some regions. Improving access requires building schools in underserved areas, providing scholarships, inclusive education, transportation support, and quality teaching. Ensuring equitable access increases enrollment, reduces dropout, and promotes educational opportunities for all children.

• PEER INFLUENCE

Peer influence plays a critical role in students' attitudes toward school. Positive peer groups encourage academic engagement, discipline, and motivation. Conversely, negative peer pressure can promote behaviors such as substance abuse, delinquency, or school neglect. Adolescents may follow peers to gain acceptance, which can affect attendance, study habits, and educational aspirations. Students lacking strong family or school support are more susceptible to negative peer influence. Encouraging supportive friendships, mentorship, and critical thinking skills can mitigate adverse effects. Schools and families must guide students in choosing the right social environment. Leveraging positive peer influence fosters motivation, reduces dropout risk, and encourages academic and personal growth.

Peer influence has a substantial impact on students' decisions to continue in school or drop out. Positive peer groups encourage pupils to learn, participate in extracurricular activities, and maintain appropriate behavior. In contrast, negative peer pressure might lead to truancy, substance misuse, or academic disinterest. Adolescents frequently place a high importance on social acceptance, and those who surround themselves with friends who do not prioritize education may dismiss school as irrelevant.

JUDICIARY INTERPRETATION

Judicial interpretation has been essential in improving India's right to education. Initially, education was included in the Directive Principles of State Policy, rendering it non-enforceable. However, via a series of judicial rulings, the Supreme Court steadily elevated it to the status of basic right. In ³**Unni Krishnan v. State of Andhra Pradesh (1993)**, the Court ruled that the right to education is inherent in Article 21, guaranteeing education to children aged 6 to 14. This legal interpretation paved the way for Article 21A, which established education as a basic right under the Constitution.

In ⁴**Avinash Mehrotra v. Union of India (2009)**, the Court broadened the extent of this right by establishing safe school infrastructure and fire safety standards, underlining that the right to education encompasses more than just access to a facility, but also access to a safe and enabling learning environment. These and other verdicts have compelled the government to assure not only free and compulsory education, but also quality, inclusivity, and dignity in the classroom. They eventually pushed legislative action, resulting in the passage of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009, which converted court reasoning into enforceable statutory rights.

SURVEY CONDUCTED IN SCHOOLS ON DROPOUTS:

The Researcher wants to find out school dropouts in both Elementary School and High School belongs to Rural Area. Researcher approached both Schools and asked dropout list in School.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:

Researcher approached Elementary School in **JONNALAVARI MODI** Village, where asked Teachers in that school for dropouts list.

OBSERVATION

1. Researcher observed that School attendance is very good.

³ *Unni Krishnan, J.P. And Ors. Etc. Etc vs State Of Andhra Pradesh And Ors. Etc. Etc on 4 February, 1993*

CITATION:

1993 AIR 2178/1993 SCR (1) 594/1993 SCC (1) 645/JT 1993 (1)474/1993 SCALE (1)290

⁴ *Avinash Mehrotra vs Union of India & Ors on 13 April, 2009/ WRIT PETITION (CIVIL) NO.483 OF 2004*

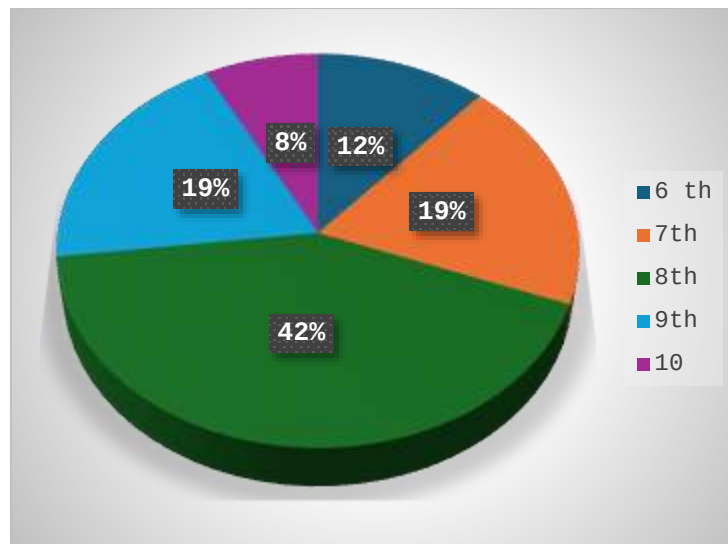
2. Teachers of Elementary School mentioned that, there are some dropouts from that School but they have joined somewhere i.e, Private Schools.

HIGHSCHOOL DROPOUTS:

The Researcher approached the ⁵**Zilla Parishad High School, Tallapalem for taking School dropouts list from High School**. Researcher asked Head Master of that School where she told simply that Zero dropouts. But Researcher approached each and every class from 6th to 10th Class Boys and Girls list for conducting enquiry on Dropouts.

OBSERVATION:

The Researcher observed Dropouts From 6th Class to 10th Class from both Boys and Girls and asked reasons for their dropouts and collected information from their friends and classmates. From that basis collected the list mentioned as follows:



From 6th Class

Boys Dropouts - 1

Girls Dropouts-2

From 7th Class:

Boys Dropouts-3

Girls dropouts-2

From 8th Class:

Boys Dropouts-6

Girls Dropouts-5

From 9th Class:

Boys Dropouts-2

Girls Dropouts-3

From 10th Class:

Boys Dropouts-0

Girls Dropouts-2

⁵ School situated at Tallapalem, Krishna District, Machilipatnam.

OVERALL REVIEW FROM SURVEY:

1. Researcher observed that Zero dropouts from Elementary Schools.
2. Researcher observed that there are **26 Students** dropped out from Education basing on various reasons. The reasons stated by the classmates of dropped students are as follows.
 - Going for work along with their parents.
 - Some girls from 8th to 10th Students got married.
 - Some students stopped due to lack of interest on Education.
 - Some Students continues after some days.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Though there are some dropouts, it is less number as compared to previous years. The Literacy rate got increased. The Education impacts a lot not only in urban areas but also in Rural areas.

School dropout rates in rural areas present a significant challenge to achieving universal education and socio-economic development. Data analysis reveals that several factors contribute to this issue, including poverty, lack of access to quality education, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-cultural barriers such as early marriage or child labour. Financial constraints often force families to prioritize immediate income generation over long-term educational benefits, leading to higher dropout rates among children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Gender disparities are also evident, with girls more likely to drop out due to societal expectations, domestic responsibilities, or safety concerns during travel to distant schools. Poor infrastructure, including a lack of adequate school facilities, qualified teachers, and basic amenities like toilets, further exacerbates the problem. Seasonal migration of families in search of work disrupts children's education, contributing to irregular attendance and eventual dropout.

Analyzing dropout patterns helps identify critical points of intervention, such as providing financial incentives through scholarships, improving school infrastructure, and implementing community awareness programs to emphasize the value of education. Data also highlights the need for policies that address specific vulnerabilities, such as schemes for girl child education and support for migrant families. By understanding the data trends and root causes, stakeholders can implement targeted strategies to reduce dropout rates and ensure that every child in rural areas has access to sustained, quality education. Addressing these challenges is essential for breaking the cycle of poverty and empowering rural communities through education.

7. SUGGESTIONS

1. Strengthen implementation of existing Government Schemes rather than creating new ones.
2. Conduct regular Parent-Teacher interaction to improve parental awareness about education.
3. Introduce Counselling Services for students facing emotional, family or economic stress.
4. Provide Special Support Classes for slow learners and academically weak students.
5. Establish Community Based Education monitoring committees at village/ward level.
6. Improve school infrastructure safe buildings, clean toilets, drinking water and electricity.
7. Ensure availability of separate toilets and menstrual hygiene facilities for girl students.
8. Arrange free or subsidised transport facilities in remote and rural areas.
9. Implement digital attendance with SMS alerts to parents of absent students.
10. Provide career guidance and motivational programs to increase student interest.

11. Organise awareness campaigns on the importance of education, especially for parents of first-generation learners.
12. Coordinate with local NGOs and youth clubs for follow-up of irregular students.
13. Provide flexible learning opportunities, such as evening classes for working children.
14. Ensure strict prohibition of child labour by local authorities with regular inspections.
15. Strengthen mid-day meal quality and nutrition standards to retain children in school.
16. Provide financial incentives and scholarships especially for girl children and marginalised groups.
17. Conduct regular surveys to identify dropout-prone areas and categories.
18. Promote school safety and anti-bullying measures to create a friendly environment.
19. Use community radio, street plays, and village meetings to spread educational awareness.
20. Provide training to teachers on modern teaching methods and student psychology

8. CONCLUSION

The present study clearly shows that school dropout is not the result of a single reason, but a combination of social, economic, academic and psychological factors. In Tallapalem and other rural areas, poverty, child labour, early marriage, lack of parental encouragement, inadequate school facilities and emotional stress are the major causes which force children to discontinue their education. Although education is recognised as a fundamental right under **Article 21 and 21-A of the Constitution**, many children in rural communities are unable to enjoy this right in reality. Every dropout child represents a loss of human potential, a future worker and a responsible citizen. When children leave school prematurely, it not only affects their personal growth and career opportunities, but also hampers the development of the entire village and society.

The study concludes that preventing dropouts requires a collective responsibility of schools, parents, local communities and government authorities. Strengthening school infrastructure, providing financial support, ensuring safe transportation, counselling services and improving parental awareness are essential steps in Tallapalem as well as other rural regions. Regular monitoring of attendance, involvement of teachers and community participation can significantly reduce dropout rates. No child should be denied education because of poverty, gender or social barriers. The ultimate goal must be to create a supportive educational environment where every child in Tallapalem and other rural areas is encouraged to complete schooling, realise his or her potential and live a life of dignity as guaranteed under Article 21. Only through continuous commitment and cooperative efforts can rural communities move towards zero dropouts and inclusive development.

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