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Topic of Research: Dropout in Higher Education: A Study of Kashmir

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Findings of the study:

Dropout is a widespread phenomenon found at every level of education throughout the world and in every society. So, in order to effectively reduce wastage and impart proper education at all levels of education, the planners and administrations are often held back by the problem of dropping out. In the current study, on the basis of the interpretation of the collected data, it was concluded that different situations and parameters affect the decision of the students to drop out. The most important reason for students to drop out seemed to be socio-economic factors followed by a wide range of other equally important factors. The conclusions made by the researcher on the basis of the analysis and findings of the collected data are presented below;

- i) No significant relationship between age and dropout. This indicates that students may drop out at any age at any level of education. Dropout is not age-specific.
- ii) A significant relationship was found between total household income and dropout. Students whose annual parental income was low were found to drop out more as compared to the students whose annual parental incomes were better.
- iii) A significant relationship was found to be there between the marital status of the parents and the decision of the students to drop out. Students from single-parent households or families where one parent was absent were found to be dropping out more as compared to the families where both parents were present and married. Also, the dropout rate was average among the families where parents were divorced.
- iv) A significant relationship between students' dropout rates with respect to their parents' education level was also found. This implies that parental educational attainment has a direct impact on the educational attainments of their children.
- v) There is no significant relationship between language and dropout.
- vi) There is no significant difference in the problems faced by students based on region within the sampled institutions.
- vii) There is a significant relationship between gender and dropout. Gender was also seen to be among one of the major factors for dropout. Boys were found to drop out more as compared to girls. From the discussions with the sampling units, the researcher observed that the boys were often burdened with the running of their families. In many cases, it was found that even if there were females present in a household, the responsibility of earning was still taken by boys.
- viii) There is a significant difference in the problems faced by dropouts within the sampled institutions based on gender. This also points out the fact that boys face more problems within the educational institutes that push them to drop out. This suggests that the nature of the problems faced inside the educational institutes by both males and females leading them to drop out is gender-specific.
- ix) There is no significant difference in the problems faced by dropouts outside the sampled institutions based on gender. This means that the problems faced by both genders (male and female) outside the sampled educational institutions are the same and not gender-specific.
- x) There is no significant difference in the problems faced by dropouts from Srinagar compared to those from Outskirts.

Some other reasons were found to have an impact on the decision of the students to drop out. Those were not explored in detail due to the shortage of time and the sensitivity of the issues. However unofficial discussions with the sampling units led to some of the observations and attested to a few other extraneous factors already backed up by the statistical data collected. These are;

- i) Family issues:** Problems arising within the family like marriage of a sister, illness of a parent,

etc. were found to affect the attainment of the education by the students.

ii) Unskilled teaching staff: Many students highlighted the importance of competent teachers for imparting education at the college level. Incompetent teachers lead to a low quality of education.

iii) Low motivation: sometimes, students were not motivated enough both in terms of self-motivation as well as in terms of motivation by teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to complete their education.

iv) Safety issues: with respect to safety issues, different issues were named by different genders that hindered them from continuing their education. However, owing to the sensitivity of the topic, these issues were not pursued further.

v) Relocation to a new area: very few students reported the relocation to a different area to be the reason behind their dropout. However, since positive responses to the question were very low, this was not pursued further.

vi) Lack of support: Many dropouts reported a lack of support from their family and friends to complete their education. Many others complained if they were given proper support by the college administration, they wouldn't leave their education midway.

vii) Low quality of education: A few students reported that low quality of education added to the underlying reasons for them to drop out. it was not reported as the main reason to drop out and was not explored further.

viii) Type of accommodation: Most of the dropouts reported that they didn't owe a house or home and the nature of the accommodation they were in at the time of dropping out was 'rented'. However, owing to the time constraints of both the researcher as well as the sampling units to answer, this was dropped from further exploration.

ix) Socio-political environment: The political situation was the reason for many to drop out. during discussions, it was found that most of the dropouts were worried about the socio-political environment of the valley. Many were found to drop out because of political scenarios, most of them being boys. However, detailed interviews regarding the same were not conducted owing to the sensitive nature of the problem and the hostility of the sampling units in answering the same.

x) Size of family: As reported by the previous studies, the size of the family was associated with dropping out in many societies, in Kashmiri society, however, this was not reported as one of the leading causes of dropout by students, hence, was not investigated further.

xi) Order of birth: in many cases, it was found that elder children are more susceptible to dropping out as compared to their younger siblings. This has been backed by many studies across the world and was not investigated further.

xii) Death of a parent: In rare cases, the death of a parent was also found to be a major factor behind dropout. However, the death of a parent has both psychological as well as socioeconomic effects on the life of an individual. This can be grouped along with the socioeconomic factors and was dropped from further investigation.

xiii) Other factors like Curriculum, Interest, and Failure to pass examinations were also found to be contributing factors for dropping out of college. Rarely, was it that the student wanted to change subjects or courses. Because of the time constraints of the researcher, these were not explored further in detail.

xiv) Relevance: During the investigation, it was reported that many students perceived that the relevance of the present-day curriculum with the available job market was low. Students didn't perceive their studies to be helping them secure a job in the future. However, this was not investigated further. Irrespective of the plethora of problems reported above that pushed students to drop their studies midway, it was also found that most of the dropouts wanted to pursue studying, but their situations were hindering them from doing so. Moreover, the majority of the dropouts ascertained the importance of education in their lives and remarked that given a chance, they would go back to educating themselves and improving their standard of living and place in society.

To conclude, the study demonstrates a direct impact of different personal, social and economic factors on the educational attainment of the students. The findings offer valuable insights into understanding why students drop out, the nature of their problems in their respective societies and geographical areas in addition to the problems faced by different genders at different levels of higher education that push them to drop out.