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School Dropout Among Students-An Analysis of Causes, Consequences, and Solutions-

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Abstract:

Countries worldwide strive to enhance education to propel future generations toward development, advancement, and prosperity. However, school dropout has become a pressing concern for those involved in education, affecting all levels, from primary to secondary. The increasing severity of this issue in recent years has compelled experts to delve into its root causes, which have profoundly impacted individuals and society.

Keywords: School dropout, student, teacher, school.

Introduction:

School dropout has emerged as a pressing concern within educational systems worldwide, perplexing educators and parents alike. Families, often deeply invested in their children's academic success, are frequently taken aback by their children's sudden decisions to abandon their formal education before completion. While primary school students rarely contemplate leaving school, secondary students are more likely to express a desire to enter the workforce, driven by often unrealistic aspirations. However, the reality is that many of these students eventually regret their decision.

A student's decision to drop out is rarely impulsive but rather the result of a confluence of factors that collectively motivate them to make such a significant choice. These factors can have far-reaching negative consequences for both the individual and society.

This study seeks to address the following research questions:

What is school dropout? What are the underlying causes of this phenomenon? What are the Consequences of dropping out of school? And finally, what solutions can be implemented to mitigate this issue?

1. School Dropout:

Before delving into the phenomenon of school dropout, it is imperative to examine the linguistic and conceptual underpinnings of the term. The Arabic word 'تسرب' is derived from the root 'س،ر،ب' which connotes the ideas of withdrawal, seepage¹, and spreading. This linguistic analysis reveals two primary meanings: the first implies a retreat or withdrawal, while the second suggests a diffusion or permeation. Furthermore, the term 'سارِب' refers to one who wanders², lacking a clear direction.

Based on these linguistic definitions, school dropout can be understood as a phenomenon that signifies a disruption of equilibrium and a deviation from the norm. An individual who drops out of school is often characterized by a lack of direction and a tendency to make irrational decisions.

Conceptually, school dropout is defined as the discontinuation of formal education before its completion³. This details a student leaving their educational institution and leaving to pursue academic studies. The consequences of such a decision are far-reaching, impacting both the individual and the educational system⁴. A dropout not only misses out on valuable educational opportunities but also burdens the education system and society.

The student who drops out is the primary agent in this phenomenon. They are defined as an individual who have abandoned their formal education, regardless of the reasons behind this decision, whether they be health-related, economic, or social⁵. By leaving school, a student foregoes⁶ the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills that are essential for personal and professional development."

2. Causes of Student Dropout:

School dropout has many causes and factors that cannot be fully enumerated in a discussion like this. However, we can highlight some of the main reasons behind this problem that has destabilized and continues to destabilize the foundations of society. These three reasons can be categorized as those related to the student, those related to their social circumstances as the central focus of the phenomenon, and those related to the school as the second party in the equation of school dropout. We will begin with the reasons related to the student.

A. Learner-Specific Causes for Dropping Out:

Learner-specific reasons can be categorized into psychological, intellectual, health, and academic factors. Among the most significant psychological factors is the inability to pay attention. Attention is a crucial element in academic success, defined as "... a sensory adaptation resulting in a state of extreme alertness, or the occurrence of adaptation in the nervous system of a living organism, making it easy for it to respond to a particular stimulus or function"⁷, and "... the use of mental energy in a cognitive process, or the direction and focus of feeling on a particular thing in preparation for observing, performing, or thinking about it"⁸. A learner who pays attention to their teacher during a lesson does not encounter difficulties in the learning process and never considers dropping out, as they find enjoyment in learning. However, those who struggle with attention, defined as "the inability of an individual to continue focusing on a specific stimulus for a specific period"⁹, feel bored and frustrated and may direct their attention elsewhere. These distractions can hinder understanding and success.

In addition to attention difficulties, another factor contributing to student dropout is intelligence. "... intelligent individuals are better able to acquire and learn, and they are more accurate and faster in understanding and perceiving relationships. Low intelligence in a student compared to their classmates also leads to relatively low academic achievement"¹⁰. This can lead to feelings of inferiority and inadequacy, and to escape these feelings, students may resort to dropping out of school as a solution to alleviate their discomfort.

In addition to the psychological challenges that learners face, which can lead them to drop out of school, there are also health-related issues. As stated, "... certain medical conditions, in their extreme cases, can disable a student and affect their academic achievement, as well as their social adjustment. These conditions include visual or auditory impairments, physical disabilities, or speech impediments. "These factors are prevalent in our schools, which rely heavily on written and spoken materials for instruction"¹¹. Any congenital defect in hearing or vision can lead to "... language delay, as language is a fundamental component in learning other subjects, inevitably affecting the understanding of other cognitive content"¹². Furthermore, having such a health condition can result in bullying from peers, leading to a dislike of the school environment and its occupants. Consequently, this can weaken the student's motivation to study.

Fear and anxiety are among the most significant reasons for dropping out. These emotions can negatively impact a student's academic performance, as "... many students find it difficult to adapt to the school environment and struggle to cope with various educational situations. This can lead to disorders that cause academic delays. Some studies have shown that the academic achievement of students with low anxiety levels is better than that of students with high anxiety levels"¹³. Anxiety and fear are disruptive and prevent students from concentrating. They also keep students in a constant state of alertness, making them feel unsafe and unsettled. They may develop an unfounded fear of teachers or resort to apathy and isolation to avoid peer reactions. Excessive worry about exams, often without a valid reason, can lead to obsessive thoughts about leaving school.

Other learner-related factors include "... stress, tension, motor disorders, nervous movements, emotional instability, feelings of guilt and inadequacy, resentment, and deviance, which are symptoms that affect a child and prevent them from attending school..."¹⁴.

Some students struggle to socialize with their peers, leading to dissatisfaction and resentment. Additionally, difficulties in relating to teachers can arise due to individual differences. As stated, "...a student's incompatibility with their peers and teachers can lead to a dislike of school and, consequently, a dislike of studying. This can result in frustration and despair, weakening their determination to study, work hard, and strive for success"¹⁵. Such students may become rebellious, disrupt the classroom, or intentionally fail to pass to avoid school.

B. Socioeconomic Factors Affecting Student:

The family is the primary foundation of an individual and a cornerstone of society. A strong family leads to a strong society, while a weak family results in a weak society. The family is primarily responsible for the proper care and upbringing of children. It instills good morals, provides guidance, and cultivates a love of learning. If a family neglects its responsibilities, its members, especially the learners, will suffer. The father, in particular, is entrusted with the responsibility of education and guidance. If he fulfills his role, he has done his duty completely; if he fails, the child will suffer. As stated, "... a child who lives in a situation where they lack their father's supervision and follow-up, and where

they experience a lack of attention, systematic study, and affection from their parents, will have a disturbed personality, which is reflected in their academic results. They will experience frequent absences and behavioral problems, and may decide to drop out of school"¹⁶.

C. School-Related Factors:

The school is the other party involved in the equation of school dropout. If we were to ask any student who has dropped out of school, we would find a series of justifications for leaving. For many, the school represents an obstacle in their lives. Some students feel that the rules and regulations imposed by the school are restrictive, hindering their freedom. As stated, "... students at risk of dropping out have a strong and clear tendency towards non-compliance with school rules and regulations, which directly leads to academic weakness, then academic failure, and finally dropping out of school"¹⁷. During adolescence, when students are in middle or high school, they often express dissatisfaction with the imposed systems. They feel a loss of control when someone tries to guide them. As they frequently experience guidance from their parents and educators, they may feel restricted and rebel against the rules. This can lead to inattention in class, disruptive behavior towards teachers, and eventually, failure and dropout.

One of the most significant reasons for dropping out is the difficulty of the curriculum. Some subjects are simply not suitable for the age and comprehension level of the students. Students may feel alienated from the curriculum, as "... for the curriculum not to be a factor leading to student dropout, educational programs must be progressive, moving from easy to difficulty and from simple to complex, to meet the needs and abilities of students, as well as their interests and thinking. They should also be relevant to their environment and help them solve problems or any obstacles that may lead to their dropping out of school"¹⁸. The curriculum is like seeds planted in the minds of students; if they are suitable, they will produce good results. If not, the minds of students will reject them. It is also important to note that even if the curriculum is challenging, it should be accompanied by extracurricular activities to provide students with relaxation and a greater connection to the school environment. The difficulty of "... the curriculum... makes students feel bored and stressed due to this intensity, which affects their academic achievement. The lack of field trips or visits as recreational activities..."¹⁹ further complicates matters and encourages students to drop out.

We can also highlight the difficulties faced by the education sector in terms of providing educational resources. As stated, "... the budget allocated to the education system is very small compared to other sectors. This has led to the education system lacking the educational tools necessary to provide the best education and services to education workers and to retain and attract students"²⁰.

Among the school-related factors is the role of the teacher. The teacher is a key player in the teaching-learning process. In the past, the teacher was considered the center of the educational process, but now they are seen as facilitators. Therefore, teachers must possess professional competence, which can only be achieved through good training. Over time, they acquire experience that increases their mastery of the subject matter and teaching methods. "... if teachers are not selected and trained scientifically and pedagogically with precision, it will be a deterrent for students to attend school or will teach students cheating, lying, indifference, and disrespect for the system"²¹. This means that the teacher is a role model for their students. If they are well-prepared, it will be beneficial; otherwise, it will be harmful and waste the potential of young people.

Good preparation alone is not enough for a teacher to be effective. Certain psychological factors should also be present, such as the ability to lead a classroom, as well as intelligence and perceptiveness, which enable them to understand their students. Patience, sound judgment, and calmness are also essential, as teachers deal with young people. Regardless of their age, students are still younger and less mature than their teachers. If the opposite is true, the teacher becomes one of "... the most important reasons for student dropout due to several factors, including their unattractive personality, and their failure to use flexible teaching methods that respond to the educational and psychological needs of their students and include elements of excitement and stimulation, as well as a lack of attention to providing feedback on the lesson"²². It is clear that this type of teacher creates negative attitudes and behaviors in students, leading them to leave school. "... a student may dislike a subject due to their attitude towards the teacher and their method of explanation or interaction with students"²³.

This leads us to discuss the adherence of some teachers to traditional teaching methods that rely solely on rote memorization. These methods make the teacher a mere parrot, repeating the lesson, which leads to boredom and kills the desire for discovery and innovation. "The teacher's use of traditional methods in presenting the curriculum, such as reading the lesson from the textbook and writing it on the board, and having students randomly repeat after the teacher and copy the words written on the board, kills the spirit of creativity in students and creates a depressing atmosphere in the classroom, causing students to dislike studying, which is far removed from the spirit of technological progress that they see everywhere outside of their school"²⁴. Therefore, teachers need to update their teaching methods and adopt modern approaches that make learning enjoyable. The teacher should "... wait for children to learn individually or in groups, wait for the individual to do what they can, provide them with the necessary opinions to progress in their project, and succeed in their work. By waiting, we do not mean complete withdrawal or non-intervention, but rather observing the learner with patience and guiding them wisely and prudently, and providing guidance when needed"²⁵.

Another factor related to both the school in general and the teacher, in particular, is "... the failure to take into account individual differences by responding only to distinguished students and praising them, while neglecting weak students and assigning them to the back seats in the classroom, making them completely isolated from the other students. This gradually leads to the dropout of weak students from school due to their lack of attention and feeling of being rejected by the teacher and their classmates"²⁶. Many students have dropped out of school due to feeling inferior and unwanted by their teachers and school administration. Underachieving students may feel like failures, especially if they are not promoted to the next grade. Lack of support from teachers and administrators can make them feel like outcasts, leading them to believe that they are not suited for studying. Due to a lack of understanding, they may resort to disruptive behavior to be expelled from school.

3. Consequences of Dropping Out of School

Dropping out of school has serious consequences for both individuals and society. One of the most significant negative outcomes is the increased likelihood of students becoming involved in antisocial behavior and deviance. As stated, "... dropouts lack the qualities of a good citizen, are easily manipulated, and are less productive and less adaptable to societal norms. Moreover, the problem of student dropout exacerbates social backwardness, influencing and being influenced by other forms of backwardness in the economic, cultural, and political spheres"²⁷.

Dropouts often find themselves surrounded by negative influences, which can lead them to engage in risky or illegal activities. These behaviors may stem from a desire for excitement, a need to prove themselves, or a sense of alienation from society. As noted, "... this socio-educational problem creates an imbalanced social situation and plays a significant role in transforming some members of society into illiterate, unproductive individuals or into deviant criminals who form gangs that disrupt social security and increase crime rates"²⁸.

In addition to deviant behavior, another consequence of dropping out is a lack of education and skills. Dropouts are "... not equipped with the culture, knowledge, and values necessary to adapt to society. They also lack the critical thinking skills required to develop their lives. This can lead to an increase in illiteracy, especially among women. Women make up more than half of society and are responsible for raising the next generation. Incomplete education for women weakens society and hinders its progress"²⁹.

4. Solutions and Proposals

Among the most important solutions we propose to mitigate the phenomenon of school dropout are the following:

- **Curriculum Reform:** The curriculum does not merely refer to content; it also encompasses objectives, teaching methods, educational tools, and assessment strategies. Therefore, developing the curriculum solely in terms of content remains a partial development. Rather, all elements of the curriculum must be developed simultaneously to ensure its effectiveness and relevance to the educational process³⁰.
- To attract learners to education and align it with their future aspirations, the content of textbooks should be relevant to students' social lives. Learners should not feel alienated from their daily lives by studying irrelevant material. Instead, the curriculum should be an integral part of their everyday experience.
- **Quality Teacher Training:** Teachers should be equipped with the necessary skills to effectively carry out their duties. They should be passionate about their profession and have a deep understanding of their students' needs, abilities, and readiness. Teachers should possess strong academic qualifications to achieve the desired learning outcomes for their students³¹.
- **Encouraging Extracurricular Activities:** Extracurricular activities can break the monotony and boredom that students often experience. These activities can make students more engaged in school and allow them to develop social skills. Numerous studies have suggested designing and implementing programs in social skills to improve students' interactions with others and enhance their overall success. Such skills include problem-solving, decision-making, negotiation, peaceful conflict resolution, and expressing and understanding emotions³².

Conclusion

Having explored the phenomenon of school dropout from the perspectives of its definition, causes, and consequences, we can draw the following conclusions:

- ✓ **School dropout** is a pervasive societal issue, particularly among adolescents, characterized by students discontinuing their education at a specific stage.
- ✓ **The causes of school dropout** are multifaceted. They include individual factors such as psychological and social issues, as well as familial factors, where the family environment plays a significant role in shaping the student's educational trajectory. Additionally, school-related factors contribute to dropout rates, often due to various circumstances within the educational setting.
- ✓ **The consequences of school dropout** are detrimental to both individuals and society. At the individual level, dropout deprives students of the opportunity to pursue their education and increases the likelihood of delinquency and deviant behavior. Societally, high dropout rates result in a less skilled workforce and hinder overall societal development.
- ✓ **Addressing the issue of school dropout** is imperative. It is essential to implement strategies that prevent students from leaving school we can mitigate the negative impacts of school dropout and foster a more educated and productive society.

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