



A Study on Causes and Consequences of School Dropouts at Elementary level in Purulia District, West Bengal

Gouranga Biswas

Research Scholar,
Meerut College,
CCSU, Meerut

Dr. Sukvinder Singh

Associate Professor
Department of Education,
Meerut College,
CCSU, Meerut

Abstract

The present study examines dropout issue among tribal students at elementary level in Purulia District of West Bengal. A qualitative survey method was adopted wherein 8 schools from 2 blocks (randomly) of Purulia district were selected as sample. School records, questionnaire and interview schedule were used to examine the dropout rate, male-female comparison and factors affecting dropout. The study found that dropout rate has been increased from 2019-20 to 2020-21 among tribal students at elementary level. It is also found that Economic variables have low significance to the extent of influencing dropout. A qualitative analysis of interview data revealed that good teacher, infrastructure, parental perception towards education, family involvement, social participation etc., were important aspects which positively and significantly mattered in the extent of enrolment dropout and retention.

Keywords: Dropout, tribal students, Purulia, qualitative survey.

Introduction

India is a home to a large variety of indigenous people. The Scheduled Tribe population represents one of the most economically impoverished and marginalized groups in India. With a population of more than 10.2 crores, India has the single largest tribal population in the world. This constitutes 8.6 percent of the total population of the country (Census of India, 2011). Total literacy rate of tribal people in India is

58.97% (Census of India 2011), which is very much lower as compared to total literacy rate of this country (74.4%). According to 'Backward Class Commsstion'1956 and 'Scheduled Area & Scheduled Tribe Commission'1962, tribal people are low educated because they are living in the dense forest area, which causes inadequate condition of school (Chakraborty.P, 2019). Now, it is a fact that India cannot reach its goal of "Development for All" without the development of its 10.2 crores tribal people.

The tribes form the grass root at the base of our indigenous culture and have certainly registered their contributions no less than any other sections of the society. Many students coming from Tribal community have enrolled their name in elementary education, but could not complete their journey towards elementary education. The National Family and Health Survey and many others have also indicated that the majority of elementary school dropouts belong to the poorest and least developed areas and they are usually from ST/SC communities and backward rural areas.

SI No	Scheduled Tribe	Population	Percentage of the total ST population
1	Santal	2,280,540	51.8
2	Oraon	617,138	14
3	Munda	341,542	7.8
4	Bhumij	336,436	7.6
5	Kora	142,789	3.2
6	Lodha	84,966	1.9
7	Mahali	76,102	1.7
8	Bhutia	60,091	1.4
9	Tamang	-	-
10	Subba (Limboo/Limbu)	-	-
11	Bedia	55,979	1.3
12	Sabar	43,599	1

Purulia district is one of the most tribal populated district in West Bengal. Being the part of "Jangal Mahal" huge amount of tribal people lives here. According to 2011 census 18.45% tribal people among total population lives in the Purulia district. The literacy rates among tribal population in West Bengal and Purulia district are 57.92% and 53.86% respectively, both the data are comparatively low than the average total literacy rate of India (Census of West Bengal 2011, and published data of BCW Department

Government of West Bengal). The Scheduled tribe populations are one of the primitive populations of India as well as of West Bengal, which are mostly found in the western parts of this state and in the northern part also. But among the other districts, Purulia, Bankura and West Medinipur district has the most amount of tribal population in West Bengal. Dropout is the most burning issue among these places. Though the state government of West Bengal takes some serious actions and steps regarding reduce of dropout to tribal students and overall development, but the district Purulia is also lagging behind in respect of educational development as well as economic prosperity among the tribal population. Being one of the most tribal dense districts of the state of West Bengal, it is necessary to evaluate the dropouts and barriers of education among the tribal communities in this district.

Rationale

The tribal people are facing multifarious problems that are reflected through their present socio-economic conditions and prevalent social taboos, tensions, conflicts and various other inertias existing within their communities. It has been realized by the Indian Constitution, since her independence that educational development would provide opportunities to the deprived/backward children, so that they could recognize and make the best of their power and potential. They could also play the vital role in the sustainable economic development of the country besides improving their own standard of living. So, for this reason the Indian constitution under Article 46 states that The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the SC and ST and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. But even after sixty-eight years of independence there prevails the inequality and injustice amidst the tribal communities of the state as evidenced through their standard of living and lifestyle. They are still living at the bottom of the social ladder. It is highly eventual to bring them into mainstream by providing quality education. Many researches have been conducted at individual or institute level on dropout rate of students belonging to different communities. Researches have also been conducted on the issue of dropout of tribal students of different states and its associated factors (Balamurugan, 2015). Though there are several efforts from government on this line, due to various factors, the tribal students who had enrolled in the school are not able to continue their education. The issue is more severe at elementary level. There are various scholars, researchers and experts who have often identified and highlighted the various factors responsible for dropout among the students belonging to different communities. However, more focus studies on them are yet to be undertaken so that the problems of the magnitude of effect of each responsible factor can be more loudly and clearly articulated and the possible solutions might be invented. Review of related literature revealed that there are only a few studies had been conducted on dropout of tribal students of west Bengal and no studies with specific reference to tribal students of Purulia district though Purulia is a district having sizable tribal population which covers one-eighth (12.08%) of the total population. The tribal communities of West Bengal comprise mainly 18 groups wherein Santal, Oraon, Munda, Bhumij are prominent in Purulia district which is the focus of the study. According to SDO reports (2013-14, Purulia) that 78.09% of tribal students have enrolled their name in elementary level but only 60.03% have completed their elementary education and

Gross enrolment ratio of ST boys is more than ST girls in all classes. The literacy rate among the tribal communities of the district (61.9%) is less than the state (77.08%) although there is a substantial increase in the tribal literacy rate of the district during the last four decades, viz. 33.9% in 1971 Census to 68.64% in 2011 Census. Further, a consolidated knowledge of the magnitude of the effect of the responsible factors causing large number of child dropout and especially among the tribal communities may help the educational planners, policy makers, educators and other concerned authorities in preparing and planning the effective policy to universalize elementary education and to empower the tribal children to compete with their nontribal counterparts/contenders in the society at large. So, the investigators perceive the study to be quite significant as it is high time to study the magnitude or extent of the effect of some responsible factors on the tribal child dropout of the district and to make elementary education available to one and all with quality and equity for ensuring sustainable development among themselves and across the district as well.

Statement of problem

In the present study, the investigator tries to make an attempt to examine the issue of dropout and to identify the magnitude of effect of some responsible factors on the tribal students drop out in the age group of 12-14 years in the elementary schools of the Purulia district and the problem has been stated as: **“A Study on Causes and Consequences of School Dropouts at Elementary level in Purulia District, West Bengal.”**

Operational Definition

In order to avoid the misinterpretation of the terms used in the problem under investigation, the investigator attempts to define the following terms as follows:

Tribal student: Tribes refers to a group of people of the same race, and with the same customs, language, religion etc., living in a particular area and a class of people, especially of one profession. And the students who are belonging to tribal communities like Santal, Munda, Oraon, Bhumij are tribal students.

Dropout: UNESCO (1970) has defined dropout as “Leaving school before the completion of a given stage of education or leaving at some intermediate or non-terminal point in a cycle of schooling”. In the present study we mean dropouts are those children who enrolled but do not complete and leave put at different levels of elementary education and whatever may be the number of years they spent in elementary schools. In this study dropout refers to those students who left the schools before arriving at the next higher class i.e., class IX.

Dropout rate: Dropout rate is the percentage of dropouts in a given year out of the total number of those enrolled in a programme in the same year.

Elementary level: Elementary level school is defined as a period of formal education following pre-school but before high school. It usually encompasses grades 1-8 and students learn basic skills in areas such as reading, writing and math.

Objectives

1. To study the socio-economic background of the school dropouts in the study area.
2. To analyse the facilities available in the schools of study tribal villages.

Research Questions

1. What is the socio-economic background of the school dropouts in the study area?
2. What are the facilities available in the schools of study tribal area in Purulia district?

Delimitation of the study

1. The empirical study is limited to 2 blocks (Balarampur & Hura) tribal mandals of Purulia district.
2. The study is limited to Elementary level (class VIII) only.
3. The study is limited to respondents of school dropouts, who were sampled purposively and were readily available in study villages.
4. It is limited to know about the domestic or social conditions, economic status but no scope to know either scholastic ability on class study.

Methodology

A qualitative research approach was followed wherein descriptive survey method was adopted to explore the causes and consequences of dropout among tribal students in Purulia district of West Bengal. The population of the study was dropout students belonging to tribal community and their parents and teachers of Purulia district. Multi-stage sampling strategy has been adopted for the present study. There are 20 blocks in Purulia district out of which 2 blocks have been selected (Balarampur & Hura) randomly considering the density of the tribal population. From each block, 5 (Balarampur) & 3 (Hura) elementary schools have been selected randomly. 25 teachers, 15 dropout students and their parents constituted the sample.

Analysis of dropout rate among tribal students

Data collected using different tools and techniques are represented and analysed

Table-1 Block wise school name

District	Block	School Name
Purulia	Balarampur	Rangadih S. B. High School
		Balarampur P. C. High School
		Harjora Jr. High School
		Chhoto Urma Jr. High School
		Chanditala S. N. High School
	Hura	Bishpuria High School
		Jorberia Jr. High School
		Dandudih S. N. High School

Table – 2: Distribution of government and private school dropouts in tribal areas by their house type

Type of house	Management		Total
	Government	Private	
Hut	17 (28.33)	08 (33.33)	25 (30.83)
Tiled	29 (48.33)	12 (50)	41 (49.17)
Terraced	14 (23.33)	04 (16.66)	18 (19.99)
Total	60 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	84

The type of house that the school dropouts are staying at present is shown on the above table. This infers 49.17 percent of the school dropouts are staying in tiled house, 30.83 percent are staying in huts and just above twenty percent are staying in terraced houses (19.99%). This indicates that the economic standards of most of the families in this area found below poverty level. Out of the total government school dropouts 48.33 percent of the students are staying in tiled house, 28.33 percent are staying in huts and just above twenty percent are staying in terraced houses (23.33%). This indicates that the economic standards of most of the government school dropouts families in this area found below poverty level. In regard to private school dropouts 50.0 percent of the students are staying in tiled house, 33.3 percent are staying in huts and nearly one-fourth are staying in terraced houses (16.66%). This infers that the economic standards of most of the private school dropouts families in this area found below poverty level.

Table 3 – Asset holdings (in rupees)

Asset holdings	Government		Private		Total	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Own House	22	03	09	02	32	04
Cattle	24	01	10	01	34	02
Furniture	14	11	05	05	20	16
Jewels	07	18	03	07	11	25
Vehicle	03	23	01	09	04	32
Others (agriculture equipment)	02	23	01	09	03	33

The table presents the asset holdings of the households of school dropouts in the study area. As per the table it shows that a dominated group of households are possessing own house (87.5%) and cattle (93.5%), where are 55.3 percent are having furniture, 32.0 percent are having jewellery and 11.9 percent are having vehicle. It is unfortunate to note below ten percent of the households are possessing other assets (9.2%) like agricultural equipment, electric goods (TV, Tape recorder, fan, etc.), etc. This ratio of asset holdings is one of the indicators of economic status of the households, this shows most of the families in this area do not have sufficient asset holding in their houses.

Table- 4 Extent of liabilities (debts)

Extent of liabilities (In rupees)	Management		Total
	Government	Private	
Below 2000	17 (28.33)	09 (37.5)	26 (32.92)
2000-5000	35 (58.33)	10 (41.67)	45 (50.0)
Above 5000	08 (13.33)	05 (20.83)	13 (17.08)
Total	60 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	84 (100.0)

The table presents the extent of debts incurred by the households of school dropout children in the study area. According to the above table it shows that more than sixty percent of the households of school dropout children are having debts between 1000-5000 rupees, 17.08 percent are having above 5000 rupees of debts and 32.92 percent of households are having less than 2000 rupees of debts of different sources. This range and ratio of debts were found among households of both school dropouts of government and private schools. This can be inferred that more than eighty percent of the households of school dropout children are having an extent of more than 1000 rupees debts at various sources.

Availability of facilities in the study schools

The enrolment and dropouts of the schools mostly depends on the facilities available in the schools. Especially in tribal areas most of the children coming to the schools having poor family conditions who cannot effort on the school dresses, slate, books, pens and pencils, and also they cannot get three meals in a day. Due to some ignorance, in some schools in tribal area, there is poor facilities found for education, which are presented in the table

Table – 4.13: State the facilities available in their school

Facilities in school	Government		Private		Total	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Adequate teaching staff	13	12	7	3	20	15
Proper class room	13	12	7	3	20	15
Presence of basic amenities including drinking water	14	11	8	4	22	15
Mid – Day meals	15	12	6	5	21	17
Play ground	15	10	7	3	22	13
Play things	14	11	7	4	21	15
Good Library	12	13	8	4	20	17

Scholarship Facilities	12	14	7	5	19	19
Good lab facilities	15	11	6	4	21	15
Extracurricular activities	14	11	7	3	21	14
Strict discipline	15	12	8	6	23	18
Good school environment	13	12	8	4	21	16
Easily accessible place of school location	14	11	7	3	21	14

The availability of facilities in the schools of study villages presented on the above table. According to the table 52.3 percent of government school dropout children and 67.0 percent of private school dropout children said that there is adequate teaching staff available in their village schools. Regarding proper classroom facility 52.3 percent parents of government school dropouts and 67.0 percent of parents of private school dropouts felt satisfactory. Out of the total sample 52.3 percent parents of government school dropouts and 67.0 percent parents of private school dropouts opined that there is presence of basic amenities including safe drinking water available in their village schools.

Regarding Mid-day-Meal, while more than fifty percent parents of government school dropouts satisfied, more than sixty percent parents of private school dropout for availability of playground and play things in the school, more than two-third of private school dropout children's parents said the same. While less than fifty percent parents of government school dropouts expressed positive opinion on availability of good library and scholarship facilities in the schools, more than sixty percent parents of private school dropouts expressed this positive opinion.

Major findings of the study

- Good teacher, infrastructure, parental perception towards education, family involvement, social participation etc., were important aspects which positively and significantly mattered in the extent of enrolment dropout and retention.
- Economic variables have low significance to the extent of influencing dropout. Children dropout even from well-to-do families.
- Some parents do not realize the benefits of education rather they opt their children to engage in agricultural work even in their childhood, foregoing education, so that they can contribute to family income from very early age.

- The economic crisis is not a factor for girl to dropout but the pressure and or demand for child labour for domestic work. Most importantly the psychology of parents moreover nobody was there to motivate or support her in studies. Her teachers also ignored her since she was regularly absent and disinterested in studies. If a boy dropout from school in the study area, he would be immediately employed in some gainful work. But in the case of girls they not only go out to work but also have to do all the household chores from dawn to dusk till they are married. Even after marriage her situation would remain unchanged.

- For parents house hold income seems to have a major stake in the cause for dropout.

Discussion

The study found that the tribal students of the district possess low level of aspiration but some of them tend to be dropped out due to their low school adjustment ability. But the tribal non-dropout children also possess the same (low) level of aspiration and continuing their study, it may be because of their better educational adjustment than the dropout students or any other reason. The causes of low aspiration among the tribal students of the district may be due to their prolonged socio-cultural deprivation and less exposure to the cultural ethos of modernity as Gould (1939) found out that cultural pressure to a great extent is responsible for improving the level of aspiration of an individual. Knowledge of performance of other groups may have effect on goal-oriented behaviour or level of aspiration of the individual. Further, the socio-economic status of the family like social background, family background, education level of the parents, profession of the parents, physical resources (property) of the family, monthly income etc. have an effect on the dropout student in general and tribal students in particular. Several studies have been conducted on these variables and findings of most of them support the present study. The relatively more notable among them are. All these studies support the present research findings that the socio-economic status of the family the child comes from affects success and failure of schooling. The socio-economic status of the parent / family is a main determinant of school adjustment as supported by. All these studies supported the present research that, the socio-economic status of the family has a significant effect on student-dropout. However, the tribal dropout students are largely influenced by their socio-economic status with low level of aspiration and school adjustment ability. Another factor which has been studied earlier concluded that poor and inadequate facilities in school institutions were responsible for dropout among the children. This is supported by. These studies have shown that institutional facilities largely affect the learners' retention or dropping out of school. The present study also finds out that there is a large number of dropout cases found in non-tribal schools even if these schools are better in institutional facilities than tribal schools.

The most possible reasons for this are-

- (i) The poor socio-economic condition and less school adjustment abilities of the dropout children than the nondropout children of the same school.
- (ii) These categories of dropout children are found mostly in the schools of rural areas.
- (iii) The schools which are located in rural areas are more prone to inadequateness in various facilities than the schools located in urban and semi urban areas.

Further, in case of tribal dropout on the basis of gender difference, the tribal girls showed better in school adjustment than boys' counterpart. There is no difference has been seen in socio-economic status of their parents. The findings supported by. Study conducted by, also confirm the present study that the girls are more adjusted than the boys in dealing with emotional and social situations of the school. The socio-economic status of the boys and girls tribal dropout do not differ as both the sexes belong to the same socio-cultural background. This finding has been supported by sizable studies on dropout researches in the past decades. Notable among these are Okumu.

Conclusion

Dropping out is not simply a result of academic failure, but rather often results from both social and academic problems. These problems are influenced by a lack of support and resources in families, schools, and communities. These for reducing dropout rates will require comprehensive approaches both to help at-risk students address the social and academic problems that they face in their lives and to improve the at-risk settings that contribute to these problems.

Reference

Bhatia D. B. (1985), "Theory and principles of education", Dooba house booksellers and publishers, New Delhi.

Chanana, Karuna (ed). (1988), "Socialization, Education and Women: Explorations in Gender Identity", Orient Longman, New Delhi.

Desai S. (1994), "Gender Inequalities and Demographic Behaviour", P Council, New York.

Dreze, Jean, and H. Gazdar. (1996), "The Burden of Inertia", in Dreze and Amartya Sen (eds), Indian Development: Selected Regional Perspectives. Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

Dreze, Jean. (2003), "Patterns of Literacy and their Social Context", in Das V. et.al (ed),. The Oxford India Companion of Sociology and Social Anthropology. Vol II. Oxford University Press. New Delhi, pp. 15-20

Ananthakrishnan S. and Nalini P. (2010), "Social status of the Rural Girl Child in Tamil Nadu", Indian Journal of Pediatrics, Vol. 69, No. 7, pp. 579-583.

Anupreet S. (1999), "Education Department Clueless on Dropout rate", Indian Express, 30th July, p. 8.

Baluch M and Shahid S., (2008), "Determinants of Enrolment in Primary Education: A Case study of District Lahore", Economic and Social Review, Vol. 46, No. 2, pp. 161-200.

Banerji, Rukmini, (2000), "Poverty & Primary Schooling", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 35, No. 10, March 4, pp. 795-802. Bhagyalakshmi, J. (2001), "Presenting Educational Sciences: What next", Yojana, Vol. 45, pp. 48-49.

Bhal, P.N.M, (2002), "Demographic Transition, Family Size and Child Schooling", National Council of Applied Economic Research, Vol. 86, pp. 1-20.

Bhat, P.N. Mari (2002), "Demographic Transition, Family Size and Child Schooling", National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi, pp. 5-9.

Bhatty, Kiran (2007), "Child Labour: Breaking the vicious cycle", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 31, No. 7, pp. 65-70.

Bhatty, Kiran. (1998), "Educational Deprivation in India, A Survey of Field Investigations", *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 18, pp. 2021-2029.

Dreze, Jean and M. Saran. (1993), "Primary Education and Economic Development in China and India". Discussion Paper. DEP 47. London School of Economics. London, pp. 29-37.

Dube, Leela. (1981), "On the Economic Roles of children in India Methodological issues", in G. Rodgers and G. Standing (eds) Child work, Poverty and Underdevelopment. ILO, pp. 39-49.

Dutt, N. (1992), "Educational backwardness of girls in Andhra Pradesh State", a UNICEF aided project in collaborations with NCERT, SCERT, Andhra Pradesh, pp. 45-48.

Government of India, (2014), "Statistics of School Education 2011-12", Ministry of Human Resource and Development, New Delhi, p. 68.

Government of India, (2014a), "Educational Statistics at a Glance, 2014", Ministry of Human Resource and Development, New Delhi, p. 33.

Government of India, (2014b), "Statistics of School Education; 2011-12", Ministry of Human Resource and Development, New Delhi, p. S-14.

Government of Madras, (1895), Manual of Administration of Madras Presidency, Madras, p. 53.

Government of Tamil Nadu, "Season and Crop Report", Department of Economics and Statistics, Chennai, various years.

Rather A.R. (1985), "Incidence of dropout and maladjustment among students in realtions to creativity and social structures of the school", Ph.D. Edu, Kashmir University, BUCH M.B., pp. 16-17.

Thanji, K.G., (1996), *Socio-Economic History of North Arcot District – 1801-1981*, (unpublished Ph.D.Thesis), University of Madras, Madras, p. 33.)