

An Analysis Of 'Drop-Out' In Education– The Case In West Bengal

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Abstract

Educational level of a population is one of the most important determinants of its quality. Data on literacy and educational levels of the population are collected as a part of the demographic particulars of the household members in most of the survey rounds of the National Sample Survey Organisation. In the 42nd round [July 1986 - June 1987] a comprehensive survey was carried out by the NSSO to study the extent of participation of children and youth in the formal and non-formal educational systems including drop-outs at various levels. Subsequently, a survey on literacy was taken up during July 1991 – December 1991 during which a schedule was canvassed for ascertaining literacy status of persons. Further during the 52nd round [July 1995 – June 1996] of the NSSO, information on participation in education was collected. In this study, data on reasons for drop out, available in the NSSO 52nd Round, has been used to analyse the crucial reasons leading to males and females dropping out of formal education at various levels.

Key words: literacy, drop out, gender gap

Data source: NSS 52nd round

Methodology: An empirical analysis has been done using the available data from NSS 52nd round. Various reasons behind children dropping out of formal school education have been considered. Weights have been calculated separately for the male and the female children to identify the strongest reasons behind dropping out and to check whether the reasons are different or same for the male and the female children dropping out of school at different stages.

Defining 'Drop-out':

This term has been used in two senses. It may mean either

- (i) One who has discontinued education before completing the last level of education for which he or she was enrolled, or
- (ii) One who has discontinued education before attaining a specific level

According to the first definition, for example, if someone has completed the middle school but does not enrol for higher education, he/she will not be considered a drop-out. It is a case of discontinuation. However, if someone enrols for the secondary level but does not complete it, then he/she will be considered a drop-out. According to the second definition, in either case the person will be considered a drop-out.

We can look into the drop-out rate as an index of educational status and relate the situation to reasons for dropping out at various levels of education, particularly for the girl children in West Bengal.

Table I: Proportion (per 1000) of drop-out [age 5 -24 years] and their per 1000 distribution by level at which dropped out

State: W.B	Proportion of drop-outs	Level at which dropped out					
		Primary	Middle	Secondary	H.S.	Above H.S.	N.R.
Rural: Male	674	403	432	106	15	10	34
Rural: Female	617	475	346	132	13	06	29
Urban: Male	588	380	304	256	27	27	06
Urban: Female	499	276	368	256	48	25	28

Source: NSS 52nd Round**Table II: Per 1000 distribution of drop-outs [5 to 24 years] by reasons for dropping out**

	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	total	Estd
Rural Male	1	358	34	125	0	10	0	68	74	1	14	278	-	-	30	1000	17143
Female	3	209	145	120	-	14	7	4	28	24	122	224	-	-	94	1000	14697
Urban Male	-	207	57	147	-	14	2	71	129	12	2	308	-	-	37	1000	5733
Female	3	142	79	227	-	-	-	21	8	5	99	297	-	-	103	1000	3760

Source: NSS 52nd Round**Codes for reasons of dropping out:**

- 01: no tradition in the family
- 02: child not interested in studies
- 03: parents not interested in studies
- 04: inability to cope with failure in studies
- 05: unfriendly atmosphere in school
- 06: education not considered useful
- 07: schooling/ higher education facilities not available conveniently
- 08: has to work for wage/salary
- 09: has to participate in other economic activities
- 10: has to look after younger siblings
- 11: has to attend other domestic activities
- 12: financial constraints

13: completed the desired level

14: awaiting admission to the next level

15: others

From Table II we can find out the relative importance of each reason leading to dropping out of education at different levels. The weight of each reason can be calculated for males and females separately [wm and wf] as follows:

Weight of the reason for males [wm] = number of males dropping out due to the reason / total number of males dropping out

Weight of the reason for females dropping out [wf] = number of females dropping out due to the reason / total number of females dropping out

The findings of such weights have been tabulated below:

Table III: Weights of the reasons for dropping out

Reason for drop-out	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
01	0.001	0.003	-	0.003
02	0.358	0.209	0.207	0.142
03	0.034	0.145	0.057	0.079
04	0.125	0.120	0.147	0.227
05	-	-	-	-
06	0.010	0.014	0.014	-
07	-	0.007	0.002	-
08	0.068	0.004	0.071	0.021
09	0.074	0.028	0.129	0.008
10	0.001	0.024	0.012	0.005
11	0.014	0.122	0.002	0.099
12	0.278	0.224	0.308	0.297
15	0.030	0.094	0.037	0.103

Certain observations can be made from the above findings. For the reason '03' i.e. parents not interested in studies, $wf > wm$, ie. parents are not interested in educating their girl children [more clearly in the rural sector] and hence they drop out. Again for reason '07' i.e. 'higher education facilities not available conveniently', in the rural sector $wm < wf$. Thus, more females drop out of education than males for inconvenient location of schools. Reason '10' i.e. 'looking after younger siblings' is an important determinant of girls dropping out of school. Girls have to attend other domestic activities [reason 11] and this also leads to their discontinuation of studies.

In general, educational decisions are radically different for boys and girls. In the case of education of the male child, there are strong economic incentives, because improved education enhances employment prospects and parents have a strong stake in the economic advancement of their sons. Economic returns and parental self - interest, on the other hand, provide very weak incentives for female education, given the prevailing gender division of labour, marriage practices and property rights. This contrast has strong implications for public policy. In case of education of the girl child it is particularly important to address the conservation of social attitudes and parental inertia. The value attached to female education in India has

changed substantially over time under the impact of economic change, public action and social movements. The non-government organisations have played a key role in this respect. To cite an example, we can take note of the Nari Bikash Sangha, a rural women's organisation in Bankura, West Bengal, which runs creches in villages and train children of working mothers in Bengali alphabets and simple arithmetic. The crèche mothers are expected to ensure that all the children go on to primary school. The role played by such NGOs has really made a difference to the lives of girl children in the state.

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