

MULTIDISCIPLINARY SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

BJMSR VOL 6 NO 1 (2022) P-ISSN 2687-850X E-ISSN 2687-8518

Available online at <https://www.cribfb.com>  
 Journal homepage: <https://www.cribfb.com/journal/index.php/BJMSR>  
 Published by CRIBFB, USA

STUDENTS’ DROPOUT AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL OF EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH: A CASE STUDY OF NAWABGANJ GOVT. PILOT HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE AT KALAKOPA UNION OF NAWABGANJ UPAZILA



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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022  
 Accepted: 25<sup>th</sup> December 2022  
 Online Publication: 30<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Keywords:

Education, Secondary Education, Dropout, Students’ Dropout, Poverty, Eve-Teasing, School

JEL Classification Codes:

G32, F65, L66, L25, M41

ABSTRACT

Education is a staircase that moves us from the darkness to light and leads us to a new height. Education removes our inner ignorance and broadens our minds and outlook. Bangladesh has made outstanding progress in the education sector. The Government of Bangladesh has been able to restrain the dropout rate at the primary level of education but needs to check the dropout rate at the secondary level. It is still alarming. So, it is necessary to study the issue to know the real picture of the students' dropouts. The study examines the causes behind students' dropout and to understand the current status of students' dropout at Nawabganj Govt. Pilot High School & College. The study employs a simple random sampling process through interviews to collect the primary data based on qualitative research. The result of the study reveals mainly the ignorance of parents, parents' unconsciousness, poverty, child labor, migration, lack of adequate facilities, lack of quality education, early marriage, eve-teasing, disobedience to parents, addiction to mobile phone and internet as well as addiction to drugs are the leading causes of students' dropout. The study's finding suggests that to mitigate or eradicate the dropout of students, there should be some necessary steps like- increasing parental awareness and activity, confirming adequate sports arrangements at the school, ensuring a beautiful environment for education, and enhancing stipends facilities for the poor and meritorious students.

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INTRODUCTION

English philosopher Francis Bacon said, 'Education is the root of all power.' Another is saying that education is the backbone of the nation. Like the backbone of a person, education is one of the most crucial parts of a country. Just as curry has no flavor without salt, a nation can never imagine progress without education. If a nation is to advance on the upward path of improvement or to reach the highest pinnacle, there is no alternative but education. Education is the very thing that provides us with wisdom. Article 17 of the Constitution of Bangladesh has ensured free and compulsory education for all children. The process of education in Bangladesh starts from the primary level. Then, the next level is secondary education which is very significant to every citizen as primary education (Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, 2010). The period of education between primary education level and higher secondary education level is called secondary education. So, this education acts as a bridge between primary and higher education. Secondary-level education in Bangladesh implies education from six to ten grades in Bangladesh. The importance of secondary education is immense to educate the nation. Through secondary education, students know national consciousness, context, constitutional responsibility, and a sense of duty.

Moreover, human values, democratic consciousness, and values towards society are developed among the students from this level. That is why; this education level is the foundation stage for the students. Bangladesh has shown much success in the education sector. Since Bangladesh is a densely populated country (Ahmad et al., 2022), it cannot be

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<https://doi.org/10.46281/bjmsr.v6i1.1884>

To cite this article: Hasan, M. M., & Surjamokhey, S. Y. (2022). STUDENTS’ DROPOUT AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL OF EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH: A CASE STUDY OF NAWABGANJ GOVT. PILOT HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE AT KALAKOPA UNION OF NAWABGANJ UPAZILA. *Bangladesh Journal of Multidisciplinary Scientific Research*, 6(1), 24-29. <https://doi.org/10.46281/bjmsr.v6i1.1884>

possible to transform this large population into a productive asset without quality education. The Bangladesh Government has successfully improved the quality of education but cannot stop school dropouts. The dropout rate in primary education has been reduced through various Government programs. Besides, several NGOs in Bangladesh have also provided support to the government in attaining this goal; for example, BRAC has made an outstanding contribution (Banu et al., 2021), but the dropout problem remains in the secondary level of education due to poverty, child marriage, child labor, unawareness, low quality of education, poor management of schools, etc. A large number of students drop out every year from a second level which is not suitable for the country and the nation because when a student drops out from a crucial stage of education, it is an irreparable loss to the country and the nation. At the same time, the high dropout rate indicates a shortage of quality education. The dropout rate of secondary levels in Bangladesh is alarming. The BANBEIS annual education survey shows that the dropout rate for girls' students is 8.90% higher than for boys, while the total dropout rate is 37.80%. According to the report, there are 20,467 secondary educational institutions with 10330695 students, 54.20% girls (Nowrin, 2021). Apart from this, vast numbers of boys students are dropping out of the secondary education level in Bangladesh. According to a draft report prepared by the government in 2011, around 47 percent of boys dropped out before completing secondary education, but the rate fell to 34.9% in 2012.

The report also shows that the national dropout rate among boys in 2018 was 36.01%; in 2017, it was 33.43%; in 2016, it was 33.88%; in 2015, it was 33.72%; in 2014, it was 34.52%; in 2013 it was 34.18%, in 2012 it was 34.90%, and in 2011 it was 46.73% (The Daily Star, 2019). The Government of Bangladesh is providing all-out efforts to augment access to secondary education through various initiatives and measures. Still, in Bangladesh, the dropout rate at the secondary level is vast. The study aims to investigate the causes behind the students' dropout at the secondary level of education at the Nawabganj Govt. Pilot High School & College. Moreover, to explore the current status of students' dropouts and suggest some policy recommendations to negotiate the students' dropout at Nawabganj Govt. Pilot High School & College.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Sarker et al. (2019) in the article focused on the economic impacts of school dropout in the scenario of Bangladesh. The study showed that school dropout is badly associated with economic progress in Bangladesh. The study found the main reasons behind school dropout like poverty, parent's unwillingness, financial problems, school's poor infrastructure, lack of quality education, unequal access to education, and security problems for girls as well; as the study suggested some policy solicitations like ensuring free education program, raising awareness of parents by teacher-parents relationship, improving school's infrastructure, confirming equal access to education, providing quality training for teachers, provision of all related facilities should be assured at the policy level by the government.

Hasnat (2017) pointed out the causes behind the dropout of students at school in Bangladesh and showed the information on a percentage basis of the comparison between enrollment and dropouts. The study indicated the government statistics from BANBEIS showing that in 2015, the national dropout rate in the secondary level was 40.29%, out of which 45.92% were girls and 33.72% were boys. Besides, the paper focused on the national dropout rate of Bangladesh.

In the article, Latif et al. (2015) stated the causes of students' dropout. The paper pointed out the causes of students' dropout, such as financial problems, parent's unwillingness, distances from the school and lack of basic facilities, lousy quality of education, inadequate school environment and building, overcrowded classrooms, foul languages of teaching, carelessness of teachers and security problems of girls. Moreover, the authors presented the impact of students' dropouts on the economy- showing the negative impact on the student's dropouts on the economy because education is the crucial component of economic growth because it has a direct influence on entrepreneurship, productivity growth, and it increases employment opportunities and women empowerment. Besides, the authors suggested some remedial measures to reduce student dropout.

In the article, Doll et al. (2013) indicated the specific causes of dropout students. The article has shown various factors behind the students' dropout, including school & family-related, peer-related as well as health-related factors like- disfavoring school students, early marriage of the girls, poor health condition of students, and financial crisis also. The authors concentrated on the dropout of students from several states and provided a lengthy discussion on the issue.

In the article, Sabates et al. (2013) pointed out the different factors associated with school dropout using data collected between 2007 and 2009 in Bangladesh. The study found significant factors of school dropout, like financial constraints, including lack of income, school expenditure, parental support for children's school work, and school absenteeism. The study suggested some policy recommendations to diminish school dropout, including the curtailment of the expense of schooling and augmentation of educational support.

Ahmed et al. (2010) in the book revealed the students' dropout rate in Bangladesh. The study used direct primary data sources for the survey methodology and focused on the main reasons behind student dropout in Bangladesh. The paper demonstrated the causes of students' dropout, including poverty, child marriage of girls, etc. In addition, the authors recapitulated the solution to the dropout of students at the secondary level in Bangladesh.

Sabates et al. (2010) in the book addressed the main reasons for school dropout in Bangladesh, mentioning poor health conditions of the students, shortage of nutrition, lack of motivation to learn, child labor, migration, poverty, teacher absenteeism, school location and the poor quality of education.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This present study used data collected from Nawabganj Govt. Pilot High School & College at Kalakopa Union of Nawabganj Upazila. This study adopted a qualitative research design to collect data. The data were collected using a simple random sampling process from 120 respondents, including teachers, guardians, and students. This research was based on primary data and secondary data. The questionnaire, including open and close-ended, was prepared and filled up with a face-to-face interview to collect primary data. This study used secondary data from books, journals, articles, published works, newspapers, websites, and documents. To analyze the collected data, descriptive statistical tools were used.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The following table mainly presents the enrollment and dropout data of the students of Nawabganj Govt. Pilot High School & College in three different years from class six to ten, including the students' enrollment per year, the number of the students' dropouts among the boys and girls students per year, as well as the percentages of students' dropout among the boys and girls students separately.

Table 1. Students' enrollment & dropout information at Nawabganj Govt. Pilot High School & College

Year	Grade	Enrollment			Students dropout			Rate of dropout		
		Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total %	Boys %	Girls %
2018	6	349	268	81	-	-	-	-	-	-
	7	263	200	63	26	16	10	7.44%	5.97%	12.34%
	8	268	195	73	15	6	9	5.70%	3%	14.28%
	9	232	171	61	27	15	12	10.07%	7.69%	16.43%
	10	218	181	37	8	3	5	3.44%	1.75%	8.19%
2019	6	376	309	67	-	-	-	-	-	-
	7	295	216	79	25	17	8	6.64%	5.50%	11.94%
	8	256	195	61	12	1	11	4.06%	0.46%	13.92%
	9	369	285	84	35	21	14	13.67%	13.67%	22.95%
	10	217	162	55	36	19	17	9.75%	6.66%	20.23%
2020	6	206	167	39	-	-	-	-	-	-
	7	275	199	76	20	17	3	9.70%	10.17%	7.69%
	8	228	162	66	30	21	9	10.90%	10.55%	11.84%
	9	270	199	71	39	26	13	17.10%	16.04%	19.69%
	10	253	211	42	23	9	14	8.51%	4.52%	19.71%

Source: Field survey from Nawabganj Govt. Pilot High School & College

The study finds the data for 2018 firstly, which shows the information relating to the student's enrollment and drop out of the year. The total enrollment of classes six and seven was 349, including boys 268 & girls 81 and 263, including boys 200 & girls 63. Analyzing the data, 26 students, including 16 boys & girls, and 10 dropped out of class seven. 7.44% of students dropped out, including boys 5.97% and girls 12.34%. In classes eight, nine & ten, the total enrollments were 268, including boys 195 & girls 73, 232 including boys 171 & girls 61, and 218, including boys 181 & girls 37. Exploring the data, it is found that many students dropped out respectively, 15, including boys 6 & girls 9, 27 including boys 15 & girls 12 and 8 including boys 3 & girls 5 at classes eight, nine & ten. A total of 5.70% of students dropped out, including boys 3% & girls, 14.28% in class eight; 10.07% of students dropped out in class nine, including boys 7.69% & girls 16.43%. Moreover, about 3.44% of students dropped out of class ten, including boys, 1.75% & girls, 8.19%. Apart from this, the above table shows the students' enrollment, dropout, and dropout rate, including boys and girls students of 2019 Nawabganj Govt. Pilot High School & College. The table points out that the total enrollments of classes six and seven of the year 2019 were 376, including boys 309 & girls 67, and 295, including boys 216 and 79, respectively. Considering the data, it is noticed that a total of 25 students, including 17 boys and 8 girls, dropped out of class seven. The total dropout rate of the class was 6.64%, including boys at 5.50% and girls at 11.94%. In class eight, the total enrollment was 256, including boys 195 and girls 61. About 12 students, including boys 1 and girls 11, dropped out of class eight. The total dropout rate was 4.06% of the class, including boys at 0.46% and girls at 13.92%. In classes nine & ten, the total enrollments were 369, including boys 285 and girls 84 and 217, including boys 162 & girls 55. The total numbers of dropout of the classes were 35, including boys, 21 & girls, 14, and 36, including boys, 19 & girls, 17. The total dropout rates of the classes were 13.67%, including boys at 13.67% & girls at 22.95%, as well as 9.75%, including boys at 6.66% & girls at 20.23%, respectively. In addition, the above table presents the students' enrollment, dropout, and dropout rate, including boys and girls students of 2020 Nawabganj Govt. Pilot High School & College. The table indicates the total enrollments of classes six and seven of the year 2020 was 206, including boys 167 & girls 39 and 275, including boys, 199 and 76, respectively. The data shows that 20 students, including boys 17 and 3 dropped out of class seven. The total dropout rate of the class was 9.70%, including boys at 10.17% and girls at 7.69%. In class eight, the total enrollments were 228, including 162 boys and 66 girls. About 30 students, including 21 boys and girls 9, were dropped out of class eight. The total dropout rate was 10.90% of the class, including boys at 10.55% and girls at 11.84%. In classes nine & ten, the total enrollments were 270, including boys 199 and girls 71, and 253, including boys 211 & girls 42. The total numbers of dropout of the classes were 39, including boys, 26 & girls, 13, and 23, including boys, 9 & girls, 14. The total dropout rates of the classes were 17.10%, including boys at 16.04% & girls at 19.69%, and 8.51%, including boys at 4.52% & girls at 19.71%, respectively.

### **Causes of students' dropout at Nawabganj Govt. Pilot High School & College**

According to the respondents from the study area including teachers, guardians, and students, the study identified some specific causes of students' dropout at Nawabganj Govt. Pilot High School & College. Firstly, the ignorance of parents, the apathy of the parents towards education, not understanding the significance of education, and the need to be able to motivate the children in the right way. The parents of illiterate and less educated refuse to invest in education for their children. Their ignorance guide and stimulate child labor. Besides, poverty is one of the factors most responsible for students' dropout. Bangladesh's education system is still stuck in the vicious cycle of poverty. Impoverished people spend a large part of their income on affording food. Education is nothing special to those deprived of food, housing, and treatment. Low-income families cannot afford the expense of their children's schooling. For those who need help to eat correctly, education is fancy. They need more money to afford the cost of their child's education. When parents fail to provide expenses for a child's education due to poverty, they employ children to earn money. Child labor is one of the most important reasons for the closure of secondary education. In the middle of secondary education, students drop out of school because of child labor. Parents send them to work, believing it costs money to study, but it gives them cash to work. Migration is one of the significant causes of student dropout at the secondary level. In order to earn a living, parents usually change their workplace at any time. As a result, the study of the student needs to be improved. Either they change their school, or they take part in classes from a long distance.

As a result, the students become irregular in school, leading to dropouts. The disobedience to the parents is one reason for students dropping out. Many students are disobedient to their parents. Even though their parents are very cordial in educating them, they want to avoid going to school. Because many students get addicted to drugs, and at the same time, they do not like going to school due to mobile and internet addiction. Some students are indifferent to their studies and going to school. They deliberately skip school. As a result, they get very low marks and ultimately drop out in the middle of their secondary education. One of the biggest reasons for the dropout of girl students is child marriage. Girls are married off at an early age. As a result, their study needs to be improved. The Parents give their daughters an early marriage showing an excuse for security. The majority of cases of early marriage come at the secondary level.

Eve-teasing, sexual abuse, and harassment are the significant reasons for girls' dropout to the secondary level. Parents think of the security of their children. Eve-teasing is one of the biggest causes of student dropout, especially for girls. When the parents feel unsafe sending their daughters out for schooling, their study is hampered. By the side or at the corner of the road, the bad boys stand for teasing the girls. Many girls do not want to go to school for this fear. The reasons mentioned above led to the students' dropout at Nawabganj Govt. Pilot High School & College.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Education implies light. It works as a light that illuminates and brings darkness to light. There goes a proverb that the more educated the nation is, the more advanced the nation is. Education is a process it includes opportunity, knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, habits, and so on. Education is a social process in which one can learn principles, values, and behavior. Secondary education is also essential to every student's life because it offers basic education that students must learn before going to higher studies. It is called the preparation level for the students. The necessity of secondary education is obvious. Students are prepared for higher education at this stage. Because secondary education basically strengthens the overall education base of the country. Every year, many students are dropped out of the secondary level of education in Bangladesh. If we behold the education sector of Bangladesh, we can visualize that the literacy rate has been exacerbated over the past decade. Although the dropout rate at the primary level has lessened over the past decade, the school dropout at the secondary level still exists in Bangladesh and is still alarming. There are many reasons for student dropout at the secondary level in Bangladesh, such as poverty, lack of awareness, child marriage, bad physical condition, the effect of relationships, insecurity, eve-teasing and sexual violence, lack of adequate facilities, lack of quality education, and so on. Nawabganj Govt. Pilot High School & College at Kalakopa Union is not beyond this problem. Like other educational institutions of Bangladesh, many students are dropped out at the secondary level of education at Nawabganj Govt. Pilot High School & College. According to the respondents, due to having many reasons the students are dropped out at the secondary level the ignorance of parents, parents' unconsciousness, poverty, child labor, migration, early marriage, eve-teasing, disobedience to parents, addiction to mobile phones and the internet, addiction to drugs. Several necessary steps can be taken to solve students' dropout at the secondary level at Nawabganj Govt. Pilot High School & College at Kalakopa Union. Students at risk of dropout must be provided tremendous aid in school and outside to motivate them to continue. This can boost them as provoking to attend school regularly. The students who practice regularly staying away from school, those who make low results, and those who are repeated in the same class should remain under monitoring. To stop the students' dropout, parents must be more cautious and aware of their children. Parents have to play a major role in restraining students' dropouts. The first step to removing students' dropouts would be making every family aware of the significance of education. If parents were sentient to their child's schooling, it would be possible to stop dropping out at the secondary level. Education expense is not a waste; it is an investment for the future. They must understand that the most valuable investment in life is education. All types of facilities in the school should be increased by which the students will be inspired to go to school. Besides, the government should increase the education budget, which will ultimately facilitate the students. There should be increased sports arrangements at the school. Students are encouraged to study when they have access to sports. They do not want to miss school for sports. Besides, sports keep the mind and body sound. Moreover, there should be created a beautiful environment for education at school. Many students do not want to go to school because of having a below-standard teaching-learning environment. There is no alternative to creating a good environment to direct the students to school. There

should be increased stipend facilities for the poor, needy, and meritorious students. The present government is granting stipends for poor and meritorious students. However, these are not enough, and at the same time, it should be checked by the authority whether those who are supposed to get them are having them or not. There should be increased monitoring for the students. Parents and teachers should monitor why students are not attending school, what they are doing, and why they are not attentive to their studies. Socio-economic development can be a solution to this problem. It can be a remedy to solve students' dropout at the secondary level. Many families are left behind socio-economically. As poverty is one of the main factors of students dropping out at the secondary level, the easy dropout problem would be stopped if poverty could be abolished. There should be taken the special care for inattentive and absentminded at school. A little care can change their life. Even many talented students drop out because of inattentiveness. So, if they can be guided properly, it will be much better for them and will help them increase their interest in education. School authorities should take special initiatives against eve-teasing and always keep a watchful eye so that no girl student is subjected to physical and mental abuse. If this social disease can be treated properly, girls will feel free to go to school. It will help to increase their attendance at school. Child marriage has to be stopped. Due to child marriage, many girls students are dropped out in the middle of their secondary level of education. So, at any cost, child marriage has to be stopped, which will surely stop the girls' dropout. The efficient administrator and teacher should be appointed at the secondary level of the education board and the school. To enhance the quality of education, it is very required to have the expertise and adept teachers and administrators. Qualified teachers can provide better service to students and play a vital role in preventing dropouts at the secondary level of education. To solve student dropout, there should be given proper training for the teachers, which will enhance the capacity of the teachers as well as will ensure the quality of education certainly. Teachers can play a significant role in stopping the dropout problem. Besides, there should be provided proper counseling for the students. If the students are addicted to mobile phones, the internet, or addicted to drugs, then parents and teachers, or school authorities should counsel them to return to their normal life. The students should inform about the bad effects of mobile phones, smoking, drug addiction, and internet addiction. As a result, they will understand those bad impacts and focus on studying and being school-oriented. Apart from this, to check the students' dropout, schools should have enhanced facilities, including a common room, library, computer, club, etc. If these are available in the school, the students will be highly interested in going to school, which will surely restrain the students' dropout to the secondary level of education.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, M.M.H.; Methodology, M.M.H.; Software, N/A.; Validation, N/A.; Formal Analysis, M.M.H. and S.Y.S.; Investigation, M.M.H.; Resources, M.M.H. and S.Y.S.; Data Curation, N/A. and S.Y.S.; Writing – Original Draft Preparation, M.M.H.; Writing – Review & Editing, M.M.H.; Visualization, M.M.H.; Supervision, M.M.H.; Project Administration, M.M.H.; Funding Acquisition, M.M.H. and S.Y.S. Authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Ethical review and approval were waived for this study because the research does not deal with vulnerable groups or sensitive issues.

**Funding:** The authors received no direct funding for this research.

**Acknowledgments:** The authors want to thank all the respondents for the study.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data are not publicly available due to restrictions.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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