

*The Most Influential Determinants of School Dropout: A Case of Special Education Complex at Skardu*

## The Most Influential Determinants of School Dropout: A Case of Special Education Complex at Skardu

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### Abstract

The current study aimed to find the most influential determinants behind students' dropouts at Special Education Complex Skardu. The study was a quantitative method, and a survey design was used in this descriptive study. The study's sample included 78 special education students who had been dropped from Special Education Complex Skardu between 2016 and 2022. To collect data regarding determinants of dropout, the researcher developed one research tool. The field expert validated the tool, and the reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using SPSS through the Cronbach Alpha formula and Pearson r (Questionnaires for dropped students, Cronbach Alpha =0.84, Pearson r=0.80). Data were analyzed by using SPSS. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were carried out to find the determinants of dropout of school. The study found that the significant, influential determinants of the dropouts were lack of trained teachers, the attitude of teachers, parents, siblings, and community members who do not love special needs children, non-availability of basic facilities at school, and language difficulties. The findings of the study indicated that there was a dire need for a survey regarding dropouts so that

*The Most Influential Determinants of School Dropout: A Case of Special Education Complex at Skardu*

dropout rates may be reduced in the future. Based on the study, it is concluded that there is a need for a policy regarding overcoming the dropout ratio in schools and providing necessary provisions before opening new schools at the tehsil level.

**Keywords:** School dropouts, Special education, Trained teachers, Facilities in schools, Community role in education

### **Background of the Study**

Everyone needs to get an education, regardless of gender, age, and disability, to develop a strong foundation for a nation. Education is the process of development of an individual in its way; that's why it plays in personality building (Birdsall et al., 2005). Human development is essential for a country's success and prosperity. It is built on cutting-edge social transformation and poverty alleviation tactics. People are a country's true wealth and asset. The objective of Universal Primary Education and Education for All cannot be realized unless the issue of dropouts and out-of-school children is addressed.

The issue of dropouts is a hot topic all across Pakistan. One of Pakistan's provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan, situated in the north of the country, has three divisions: Gilgit, Diamer, and Baltistan. It is a large area of land that is different from the rest in terms of its geographical features, customs, and characteristics. Gilgit-Baltistan has the highest disability population, 2.9 percent of the total population (Jahangir, 2011), out of which 0.40 percent are enrolled, consisting of 0.27 % boys and 0.13 % girls (ASER, 2019).

There are 15660 disabled people in Skardu, with 285 children aged 5 to 12 living within 2 kilometers of the special education complex (Balti, personal communication, January 19, 2022). For this vast population, there is only one school in each division, and particularly the special education complex, Skardu is the only institution that depends on the disabled population of 4 districts for their education. Without educated people in society, progress and prosperity are impossible to achieve and maintain. The state's affairs cannot function properly if the group of the population having special needs is uneducated or has low qualifications. The data obtained from the office of Special Education Complex Skardu shows that since 2016, 78 students have dropped out of Special Education Complex Skardu, which is a significant magnitude. Dropout rates will become a severe problem for future generations if they are not adequately addressed. It is necessary to define the problem before going on to its solution to solve it.

As the literature suggests, from the leading causes of high dropout are the country's low level of economic development, the people's low income, scattered area, religious problems, insufficient physical facilities in schools, lack of funds, particularly to meet recurring expenditure, poor standards of health and nutrition, inadequacy provisions at schools, language conflict, poor condition of school buildings, parents' low motivation to send their children to school, punitive measures taken by teachers, and loss of selves, learning problems in children, unappealing/unfamiliar school environments, dispersed population in large parts of region, long distances between schools and homes, natural calamities in hilly areas, poor communication facilities, lack of transportation system, lax supervision and weak administration, meeting the learning needs of all, administrative indifference and supervisory personnel toward teaching community, teacher absenteeism, undue political interference, curriculum not in harmony with the needs and cognitive abilities of children, lack of relevance of curriculum to the needs of the community, poor quality of education, rigid

*The Most Influential Determinants of School Dropout: A Case of Special Education Complex at Skardu*

system of examinations, shortage of teachers are some of the leading causes of dropouts (Ministry of Education, 2003). Bullying among secondary school students is one of the factors that cause kids to drop out (Ndibalema, 2013). Poverty, child labor, school-related factors, student-related factors, poor parental supervision, malnutrition, and health-related factors were identified as driving forces for secondary school dropout (Chinyoka, 2014). Poor academic achievement is a cause of dropouts, and causes for secondary school females dropping out include economic issues such as schooling costs, family variables such as household/child work, school-level factors such as absenteeism, and cultural ones such as early marriage (Shahidul & Karim, 2015; Ntuva & Rwambali, 2013). It is apprehended that students with special needs at district Skardu may also face some of these above factors that result in reasons for dropping out of school.

### **Statement of Problem**

The purpose of this research was to find out the most influential determinants of school dropout: a case of a special education complex at Skardu. For this purpose, school leavers were selected as research participants. A questionnaire was asked from these students about the reasons why they dropped out. In this questionnaire, the children were asked about the behavior of teachers, their parents, school staff, and students. The student was also asked whether they were weak in education, or were they suffering from anxiety, did not get justice, had any issues of shame, or were there religious issues, had linguistic or cast problems, or had any financial problems. This research was fundamental research of its kind, as such research is scarce in Pakistan, and it is also an essential need of the current situation. The findings of this research will be of great benefit to stakeholders, policymakers, teachers, and parents. This research will be significant for other researchers.

### **Research Objectives**

The objectives of the study were to;

1. Identify the psycho-social determinants that are associated with the dropout of students.
2. Determine the ethnic factors that result in dropping out of school.
3. Ascertain the physical determinants which become hindrances for school-going children with special needs.
4. Find out the financial constraints which result in the drop out of school.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the primary psycho-social factors contributing to student dropout rates?
2. Are there significant differences in dropout rates among different ethnic groups?
3. What physical barriers prevent students with special needs from attending school?
4. How does family income level correlate with student dropout rates?

### **Research Methodology**

The survey method was used for data collection in this research. By accessing the dropout students, data were collected by a questionnaire on various factors, then the data was put into SPSS, and the results were extracted. Mean value and standard deviation were used to

*The Most Influential Determinants of School Dropout: A Case of Special Education Complex at Skardu*

draw the results. The positivity and negativity of the results were checked, and conclusions were made based on this.

**Population of the Study**

The population for the study was comprised of 78 students who had dropped out of the school of special education complex Skardu.

**Participants of the Study**

The study comprised of 78 dropped students, of the special education complex Skardu, the research population. The whole population was taken as the research population for this study; when the research site's members are limited, or it is essential to contact each one, the total population is taken (Wambua, 2018).

**Development of Tool**

A five-point Likert scale was developed for data collection. This scale consisted of different factors. This scale asked about attitudes faced by students, students' weak academic ability, students' anxiety, students' justice, and students' shyness, religion, and caste. These things are not obstacles to your education. It was asked about the child's language, school environment, and financial problems.

**Validation of Tool**

The field expert validated the tool, and the reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using SPSS through the Cronbach Alpha formula and Pearson r (Questionnaires for dropped students, Cronbach Alpha =0.84, Pearson r=0.80).

**Data Collection**

Data was collected from:

Students on a Questionnaire developed a five-point Likert scale.

The researcher visited the place where the students where students lived and distributed the questionnaire to the students; if any students felt any difficulty, the researcher translated it into the local language, and for those deaf children took a sign language expert and some students had trouble filling there taken help from their caretakers to fill the questionnaire.

**Analysis of the Data**

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantity of data from the surveys. Calculated and presented as tables for readers' comprehension, the distribution of the variables was reported using computer-generated tables of the mean of replies.

**Results and Findings**

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data as follows:

*The Most Influential Determinants of School Dropout: A Case of Special Education Complex at Skardu*

Table 1

Statement No	Min	Max	Mean	SD
<b>Attitude Determinants</b>				
My teacher's attitude was not to love us.	1	5	3.14	1.393
My parents' attitude towards me was not favorable.	1	5	2.69	1.471
At school, the staff was not friendly and was not attending to our needs.	1	5	3.32	1.428
Teachers made fun of me due to my weakness in studying.	1	5	1.92	.964
Students called me a bad name, which I did not like at school.	1	5	2.17	1.086
<b>Determinants Poor Academic</b>				
During my schooling, I was very weak in my studies.	2	5	4.86	.528
My result was disappointing, and I felt that I should leave school.	1	5	2.86	1.560
The teacher's teaching method was not enjoyable for me because of which I did not understand.	1	5	4.21	1.049
<b>Anxiety Determinant</b>				
During study, most of the time, I was sick.	1	5	3.09	1.425
<b>Prejudice Determinant</b>				
Some teachers were treating pupils unfairly.	1	5	2.50	1.182
The majority of students at school thought poorly of me.	1	5	2.45	1.306
<b>Support From Teacher Determinant</b>				
Teachers in our school lacked a lot of competence.	1	5	3.21	1.418
There was a lack of teachers in the school, and that's why I faced problems at school.	1	5	4.37	1.196
In my opinion, teachers at school did not care about our issues.	1	5	2.90	1.420
I frequently felt that teachers did not help me out when I was having difficulties.	1	5	2.69	1.342
<b>Shame Determinant</b>				
I was feeling that going to school with special needs was shameful for me.	1	5	2.72	1.37
Community members made fun of me when I was going to school.	1	5	3.16	1.47
I left school because, most of the time, my classmates made me feel scared.	1	5	2.08	1.25
<b>Determinants of Religion</b>				
I belonged to a particular sect of Islam, that's why at school, I felt uncomfortable	1	5	2.15	1.29
<b>Language Determinant</b>				
I couldn't understand the teacher's language.	1	5	3.21	1.48
My language was different from the rest, and that's why I was having problems at school.	1	5	2.97	1.60
<b>Race Determinant</b>				

*The Most Influential Determinants of School Dropout: A Case of Special Education Complex at Skardu*

I realized that I belonged to a particular race, and that's why I was in trouble in the classroom and at school	1	5	3.10	1.47
<b>School Mapping and Provisions Determinant</b>				
My School was far from my home.	1	5	4.13	1.39
Our school generally lacked cleanliness, and I did not feel comfortable there.	1	5	2.08	1.09
At my school, the furniture was not in excellent or accessible condition.	1	5	2.45	1.26
Our classrooms did not have adequate lighting.	1	5	2.19	1.19
The school had an accessible toilet that was not fulfilling my needs.	1	5	3.31	1.31
The school did not have adequate sports materials.	1	5	2.83	1.30
The school did not have all the basic facilities that I needed at school.	1	5	3.18	1.38
<b>Financial Determinants</b>				
I belonged to a low-income family, and that's why I had a problem meeting the school expenditure.	1	5	3.14	1.37
My parents were ill because of this; I was facing financial problems.	1	5	2.05	1.24

Table 1 indicated that teacher's attitudes towards their students were not loving, that is why students were facing difficulties at school; table 1 also found that lower staff of the school attitude was not supportive of the special needs students at school, and they were not helping children when they need their help. It was found that students were weak in their studies during their schooling because the students did not understand the teacher's teaching methods. It was identified through Table 1 that some students' health was not allowing them to continue their studies because they were facing illness problems during their study time. It was revealed that teachers at school were not trained in their field of area, which is why students were feeling there uncomfortable and, as a result, they dropped out of school; table 1 also shows that the school did not have the required number of teachers that caters the educational needs of the children in the unique education complex Skardu. Children while going to school, community members on the way to school made fun of them, and they felt scared. It was found through Table 1 that there was a language barrier between students and teachers of the school, and the children did not understand the language used by the teachers in the school. Response to the race determinants from the student's questionnaire identified that students belonged to different races and, due to being associated with a certain race, they were facing difficulties within and outside of school. Table 1 shows that the school's distance from the city was very far, and students were feeling tired due to the long distance of the school from their homes. Table 1 also found that children were facing difficulties in using the washroom, as the washrooms were not catering to the needs of the children. The school was not providing the basic facilities according to the needs of the children, which is why they were feeling uncomfortable at school. It was revealed through Table 1 that some students were facing financial problems due to their low family income.

*The Most Influential Determinants of School Dropout: A Case of Special Education Complex at Skardu*

### Conclusions

The study concluded that psychological factors, social factors, ethnic factors, and financial constraints determine the dropout of children with special needs. The psychological factors include attitude, poor academics, anxiety, and prejudice. The social issues include shame and support from teachers. The ethnic factors include language difficulties, religion, and race. The physical factors include school mapping and provisions at school, long distances, non-availability of trained teachers, lack of supporting staff, and lack of sports equipment. Financial constraints include low family income and the illness of the parents.

### Recommendations

1. It is recommended that comprehensive training be given to teachers.
2. Recommendations are made to correct attitudes towards students, improve school infrastructure, and provide all basic facilities.
3. Students should be given financial facilities; if the school is far away, then students should be given free transport.
4. To control the religious and linguistic problems, cultural programs should be conducted in the school.
5. Parents and the community should be motivated by making them aware of education by participating in educational activities.

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