

# A Sociological Study on School Dropouts in Perumbakkam

JAYARANI. P

Undergraduate Student of Department of Sociology, Stella Maris College,  
Under the guidance of HOD Dr.J.Maria Agnes Sasitha and Supervisor Dr.Shanmugapriya.S, Stella Maris College,  
Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

Email- [jayarani873@gmail.com](mailto:jayarani873@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** Schooling is the major tool for social inclusion, enabling societies to balance opportunities among the members of the society. The purpose of the study is to examine the factors that lead to school dropouts and the consequences of becoming a school dropout with a focus on Perumbakkam, one of the largest resettlement colony which is located at the periphery of the city. The study employs non-probability sampling method to collect data from children belonging to age group of 10-18 year; semi-structured interview method was used to gather the data from 40 respondents. Descriptive research design gives a deeper understanding on the demographic variables, socio-economic conditions and impacts of children in Perumbakkam. The study found that economic instability, peer group influences, lack of interest, family pressure and lack of parental support as the major factors of becoming dropouts at an early age. It also brought in the policy interventions and community initiatives that can improve the conditions of children in that locality. This study ultimately helps in understanding the causes and impacts of dropouts in urban slums and the availability of alternative education system.

**Key Words:** School Dropouts, Perumbakkam, Urban slum, Children, Socio-economic conditions, Peer group influences, Alternative education system.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

High dropout rates have many negative consequences both for the individual and society. It is often from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and may not have the financial resources to afford higher education. There are many causative factors for dropouts and to address the issues of dropouts it require multi-pronged approach which includes the quality of education, addressing socio-economic disparities and promoting gender equality. Slums are overcrowded with people trying to live, accommodate themselves in small spaces, Perumbakkam is one such area. Education problems in slum areas are making it difficult to improve the living standards of people in slums. The children often sell small items like flowers, food items or picking up garbage to contribute to their family income in some way. Children spend much of their time in unsafe environment because of lack of safe play areas and community spaces. These challenges encompass issues related to living conditions, education, health, safety and social stigma. The problem of urban poor in slum regions stems mostly from their inability to keep up with the skilled workforce class and afford a respectable level of living. It is essential to raise the educational levels of the urban poor for higher economic growth because slum dwellers in India have a very low level of education. Despite below the National average, India has a fluctuating dropout rates. There are Constitutional provinces that emphasize the Right to Education but the real challenge lies in implementation of these and enforcement of provisions. Socio-economic development of the country lies in reducing the school dropout rates.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Most of the works from the previous research papers were done on the Accessibility, Quality, Significance of education, gender disparities, determinants of dropouts, comparative study with urban locality. Hence there is a lack of focus on digital addiction, health issues, re-enrollment strategies, consequences of becoming dropouts and the other ground realities of the specified area. Most of the literature reviews focuses on structural factors but it does not focuses on the community development strategies.

### 3. OBJECTIVES

The major objectives of the study are:

- To identify the demographic effects of school dropouts
- To examine the factors that lead to dropping out of school
- To understand the issues of becoming dropouts.

The study also aims to focus on the initiatives by government and NGOs to address the dropout rates at school level.

### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Primary method of data were collected by interacting with children of urban slum gave in-depth information regarding school dropouts.

- **RESEARCH DESIGN**

Descriptive research design is used in this study to understand the demographic variables, socio-economic conditions and impacts of children.

- **AREA OF THE STUDY**

Perumbakkam is an urban slum which lies within Chengalpattu district and it is along the southern part of Chennai city. Large scale relocation to Perumbakkam began in 2015, after the Chennai floods, with over 4000 families from the banks of Adyar River being shifted.

- **SAMPLING METHOD**

The target population is children belonging to age group of 10-18years who have dropped out of school. Non-Probability Purposive sampling method was used to collect the data from specific characteristics of the population with a sample size of around 40 respondents.

- **TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION**

Semi-structured interview schedule with both open-ended and close-ended questions were framed. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed to explore the lived experiences of the respondents.

### 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The qualitative and quantitative data collected were analyzed as follows:

Residences of Perumbakkam live for more than 5 years but they are less concerned by the government and the policy implementations are unreachable. Most of the parents of the respondents are engaged in unorganized sector, domestic work and few are self-employed. Parental occupation decides the economic condition of the family and this ultimately forces the children to get into the workforce population at the early age. Equally family size plays a crucial role in dropout of younger children because of the economic constraints and social pressure which the family faces thus forcing the children to stop going and imposing responsibilities in terms of financial support. Because of the financial constraints, children are pushed into the situation of dropping out of school. There are possibilities of other school going children being influenced by their siblings who have dropped out of school. Girl children are highly seen in taking family responsibilities, taking care of young ones and engage in family occupation.

**TABLE I**

**DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON DROPOUT STANDARD**

| S.No | STANDARD                         | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE |
|------|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1    | 1 <sup>st</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup> | 13        | 33         |
| 2    | 6 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> | 22        | 55         |
| 3    | After 9 <sup>th</sup>            | 05        | 12         |
|      | <b>TOTAL</b>                     | <b>40</b> | <b>100</b> |

From the above table it is clearly seen that more than half of the respondents were dropped out during their middle school. The Right to Education (RTE) Act of India, 2009 guarantees free and compulsory education to children between ages of 6-14. Despite the presence of rejoining the school there is no efforts taken by the children and their family to re-enroll in school. Economic pressure, household responsibilities, social barriers like education beyond certain age is not considered necessary and lack of interest are the major reasons for the refusal to rejoin.

**TABLE II**

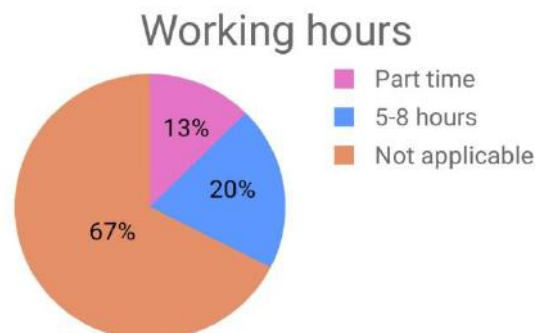
**DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON REASONS FOR DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL**

| S.No | REASONS            | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE |
|------|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1    | Economic           | 07        | 18         |
| 2    | Social             | 14        | 35         |
| 3    | Institutional      | 01        | 02         |
| 4    | Personal           | 13        | 33         |
| 5    | More than 1 reason | 05        | 12         |
|      | <b>TOTAL</b>       | <b>40</b> | <b>100</b> |

The above table shows that social factors are more common among the children which includes family pressure, peer influence and substance use. The social circumstances including unwanted peer group influences and migration affects the children in continuing school. Economic reasons include the financial difficulties work and cost of education. This financial difficulty forces the children to work in a low paying job which leads to reducing the priority of education. Institutional factors like distance of school and discrimination discourages the children in going to school. Personal factors include lack of interest, low self-confidence and poor health.

**FIGURE I**

**DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON THEIR WORKING HOURS**



Most of the families in Perumbakkam belong to economically weaker sections who struggle to meet their daily needs, in these dropped out children nearly 69% are forced into work to fulfill their needs which makes schooling a lower priority. This creates a gap within their social circle which detaches them from their earlier peer group thus leading to less self-confidence. The nature of employment that they engage in includes domestic work, family occupation and few are self-employed. There are key legislations against child labour and regulate the type of work a child can engage in. The Child and Adolescent Labour Act, 1986 prohibits employment of children below 14 years in any occupation. Education of parents plays a key role in dropout rates of school children; a literate parent encourages their children to study and knows the importance of education whereas an illiterate parent believes that schooling doesn't lead to a good job opportunity.

As the conditions continues for generation there are some issues after dropping out which includes avoidance, change in peer group, inferiority complex and early marriages especially for girls. Most of the respondents do not regret, there is a lack of awareness about the importance of education. They regret after dropping out due to hardships faced in terms of employment, salary, social status and upliftment. They also regret that they missed their childhood and taken up

responsibilities at an earlier age. The change in the social networking and the satisfaction of what they have doesn't bring the idea of rejoining the school again. Those children are pushed into the circle of digital addiction, limited social interaction within their locality and a less exposure to the reality. To eradicate all these, there are few NGOs which work for the welfare of the children along with providing job opportunities for parents to relieve the family from economic distress. Alternative education includes the governmental programme, vocational training centre and tuition centre which are made easily accessible to every child in that locality, but when it comes to the awareness of these facilities it is much lesser. The awareness and utilization of all these initiatives which is already available in that locality is lower, these steps in Perumbakkam are undertaken by non-governmental organization. These are the data analyzed and the critical interpretation of all these responses.

## **6. FINDINGS**

- Early age school dropouts are higher in Perumbakkam. Most of the dropouts occur during the middle school (6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>).
- Resettlement is the major drawback as it affects the occupation of the parents eventually affecting the economic conditions of the family leading to further difficulties.
- Despite the presence of school near the locality, 98% of the children discontinue their education. Hence, Proximity of the school doesn't play an important role there are other factors that lead to higher dropout rates.
- Digital addiction is also common among the children which reduce the interest among themselves.
- Social reasons for dropout include peer group influence, family pressure and substance use which encompass 35% of the respondents.
- As compared to other factors of becoming dropouts peer group influences within their social circle is the major reason.
- Children at a young age are very much satisfied with what they have and lack of vision on their future career. Present day needs are highly prioritized.
- There are forcible situations which pushes them to work for 5 to 8 hours in a day. Part- time works are comparatively lesser.
- Enforcement of policy remains a challenge especially in urban slums as Perumbakkam is less concerned by the government.
- 72% of the respondents are aware of the alternative education programme in their locality. Despite this, most of them do not engage in learning due to other preferences such as digital addiction and entertainment, early entry into workforces and lack of interest due to peer group influences.

## **7. SUGGESTIONS**

- Children should not have to bear larger responsibilities at a young age, as this can affect their individual development and well-being.
- Parental priorities towards educating their children help in shaping whether the children go to school or leave. Conducting Awareness campaigns on the importance of education for children as well as parents is more essential.
- There is a need for financial aid and community awareness initiatives which benefits the families to meet their basic needs.
- There is a need for Counseling Centre to reduce fear and the idea of interconnecting family-related issues with schooling.
- Ensuring proper nutrition and healthcare through schools with regular monitoring is important.
- Non-governmental organizations should step in to improve the conditions of family and children through initiatives like awareness campaigns, alternative education centre and extra-curricular activities, helping to bridge the gaps and promote overall growth.
- There has to be strict enforcement of Right to Education (RTE) Act and Child labour laws to prevent children from leaving school.
- Government should consistently look at the needs of these resettlement colonies with a regular check and monitoring the policy implementations.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The current situation around the school dropouts is higher. It indicates that a substantial percentage of children leave school before completing their education, it is particularly prominent in rural areas and among the marginalized communities. This study highlights the higher dropouts' rate by children in urban slums especially in Perumbakkam. This condition is due to various factors like social, economic and institutional factors and it also reveals that peer group influences are higher as compared to other reasons. To break the cycle of dropout there is a need for targeted interventions by government along with non-governmental organizations to bring in awareness, skill development and programme for studies. Equally parental motivation is crucial in encouraging the children to continue their education, psychological support which creates a positive impact despite their struggles. "A Child without education is like a bird without wings", let us strive together to give every child the wings they deserve to fly toward a better future.

## REFERENCES:

1. Anand E 2019, "A Study on the educational status of children living in Kalvankarai Slums, Saidapet- Chennai city". International Journal of Current Advanced Research, 08, pp.17293- 17297.
2. Prachi Belwariar Vishishtha and Bhanu Jain 2020, "Inefficient Education and High dropouts of school children in Indian Slums". International Journal of Policy Sciences and Law.
3. Sateesh Gouda M, Dr.T.V.Sekher 2014, "Factors Leading to School Dropouts in India: An Analysis of National Family Health Survey- 3 Data". IOSR Journal of Research and Method in Education, 4, pp.75-83
4. Tarunnum Siddiqui 2017, "Problems of Drop-out Students in Indian Slum". International Education and Research Journal.
5. Senthivel, A., Madurai, D., Valan, M.L. and E.Richards, G. 2024, "The Ripple Effect of School Dropout: Exploring the nexux between school dropout , deviance and subsequent arrest among children in India", Journal of Criminology Research, Policy and Practice, Vol.10 No.2, pp.136-149. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCRPP-03-2024-0015>