



## THE EFFECT OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ON HIGHER PRIMARY SCHOOL DROPOUT RATES

Ashwakh Ahamed B. A

Department of Sociology

Government First Grade College, Tumkur-572102, Karnataka, India

[ashwakhahamed71@gmail.com](mailto:ashwakhahamed71@gmail.com)

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### **ABSTRACT:**

*The school environment has a critical influence on educational performance, and not least in rates of dropout among primary students. Theoretically Based Studies on How the School Environment Relates to Dropouts Using Social Learning Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, Institutional Theory and Critical Pedagogy as epistemological foundations this research examines dimensions of peer relationships, school buildings and facilities teaching methods; organizational cultures in student retention. A closer examination of these frameworks reveals many dimensions that suggest a complex mix of school environmental factors in promoting academic engagement or worsening disengagement predict dropout. Conclusions and Relevance To provide students with the environmental supports needed for success, policies to improve school facilities should be considered alongside efforts to promote positive social interactions as well as reform educational practices.*

**Keywords:** School environment, dropout rates, theoretical frameworks, Social Learning Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, Institutional Theory, Critical Pedagogy.

### **I. Introduction**

#### **1.1. Background**

High primary school dropout rates are an urgent concern worldwide, mirroring large-scale problems in the education systems of entire countries. Smith (2014) notes that drop-out can vary widely between regions and socio-economic context, affecting education attainment prospects for students. Research has increasingly recognized the seminal role of the school environment, which includes safety infrastructure to social organization and academic climate in determining whether students persist or succeed (Jones 2012). Research consistently shows that a positive learning environment increases student engagement, decreases drop-out rates and promotes overall academic achievement (Brown 2015). On the flip side, a negative and unsupportive environment can lead to disconnection,



unhappiness and ultimately attrition (Roberts, 2013) This information is critically important for educators, policymakers and researchers who strive to reduce dropout rates by fostering more inclusive learning environments that effectively support a spectrum of student needs. Hence, an investigation of the theoretical constructs connecting school environmental factors with dropout rates is vital to ascertain effective interventions and policies for ameliorating educational outcomes and equity in primary education.

### **1.2. Research Objective**

- This study aims to explore and analyze the theoretical foundations that link various aspects of the school environment to dropout rates.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

- What theoretical frameworks can elucidate the complex relationship between school environment and dropout rates?
- How do specific aspects of the school environment (such as physical facilities, social interactions, and academic climate) impact dropout rates?

## **II. Theoretical Frameworks**

### **2.1. Social Learning Theory**

Bandura (1977) suggests through his Social Learning Theory that people learn from one another, via observation, imitation and modelling of behaviour(s), as in live organisms having the capacity to change their environment. Concerning the purpose of school dropout rate, this theory essays that peer influence and role model behaviour in school environment effect as strong reasons or factors to decide whether students should study until completion or just leave it (Bandura, 1977). Students might imitate behaviours shown by others who may demonstrate their disengagement in academic situations or negative views towards schooling which could affect them from being dedicated to education.

### **2.2. Ecological Systems Theory**

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory focuses on the complexity of influences surrounding human development, from microenvironments within an individual to macro-level environments influencing larger segments. At the school level this theory explains how interactions among various levels (microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem and macrosystem)



contribute to student outcomes such as drop-out rates (Bronfenbrenner 1979). There are, for example, a number of factors that undoubtedly influence the experiences and decisions with respect to school continuation or dropout: classroom dynamics have an effect; teacher-student interaction is relevant; schools policies matter; community support counts as well society's broader influences on students.

### **2.3. Institutional Theory**

Institutional Theory as related to the field of Education is a perspective that Schools, As Organizations with sets collectively perceived norms and values, etc. create organizational routines which influence individual behaviours with long term outcomes (Meyer & Rowan 1977). In the context of dropping out from school, this theory is concerned with how institutional factors (e.g., policies and practices at schools; organizational culture etc.) are related to community engagement in terms of student's involvedness. Schools that provide supportive environments, clearly articulated academic expectations and positive reinforcement will likely result in higher levels of student retention whereas those weak on these dimensions may inadvertently contribute to raising the dropout rate (Meyer & Rowan 1977).

### **2.4. Critical Pedagogy**

Building on Freire (1970), Critical Pedagogy highlights a concern for social justice in education and focuses on challenging educational inequalities as well as providing students with the means to develop skills that help them critically examine their own reality. Regarding dropout rates, Critical Pedagogy can point up power processes and cultural prejudice that exists within school settings which left alone marginalizes student groups resulting in loss of interest leading students to abandon education (Freire, 1970). Educators can foster critical consciousness among students, address systemic injustices within schools to challenge but be supported by them, create a more inclusive and supportive environment that enables educational equity, and decrease rates of dropout-from short-term absence.

## **III. Key Factors in School Environment**

### **3.1. Physical Environment**

Decent school facilities, classroom conditions and other learning resources available to students in primary schools Studies suggest that the lack of facilities (overcrowding,



deferred maintenance on buildings or systems, a shortage of textbooks and functioning computers in classrooms) can lead to student disengagement. The dropping-out process et al. Now, schools with a well-constructed and equipped modern building create an environment that looks suggestive to learn and therefore attendance is relatively higher than the rest.

### **3.2. Social Environment**

Read Full Text Public schools are key sites for the shaping of students' educations and lives, in part because young people from diverse backgrounds get to know each other in school. Dropout rates are heavily influenced by the role that peer relationships, teacher-student interactions and the overall school culture play in a young person's education. Research indicates that positive peer relationships and supportive teacher-student interactions lead to higher levels of student engagement, an important predictor of dropout (Wentzel, 1998). However, schools that have bullying environments and social exclusion or negative teacher-student relations can increase the likelihood dropout among at-risk students (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001).

### **3.3. Academic Environment**

The academic environment includes the curriculum itself, the ways in which information is taught and delivered, as well as standards set by schools. Research indicates that a well-articulated, rigorous instructional program matched to student learning needs and aptitudes can be an effective strategy for increasing students' motivation while decreasing the likelihood of their dropping out (Lee & Burkam, 2003) The latter can be offset by ensuring effective teaching methods that treat variety of learning styles in personal nature and lessen dropout risk to creating positive experience (Darling-Hammond, 2000). On the other hand, high-stakes testing and unrealistic academic demands like a strict curriculum may increase dropout rates as it pressures students to meet certain expectations (Rumberger 2011).

## **IV. Implications and Applications**

### **4.1. Theoretical Insights Explained**

Summary of the theoretical framework Various theories such as Social Learning Theory, Ecological Systems Theory Institutional theory and Critical Pedagogy primarily focus on different aspects to student behaviour in explaining why students drop out of school are



justifiable. The Social Learning Theory identifies how student engagement and effecting dropout outcomes, can be both aided as well as determined by peer influence (Bandura, 1977), in addition to role modelling. Based on Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes the interplay between different layers of school environment—microsystem (classes), mesosystem (school) and macrosystem (district)— influencing student behaviour/educational performance outcomes Positivity Project. Institutional Theory demonstrates the importance of school policy, practice and organizational culture on creating or diminishing capacity for student retention (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Critical Pedagogy attends to the nature of power and educational inequalities in schools that result in higher dropout rates amongst students on the margins (Freire, 1970).

#### **4.2. Implications for Policy and Practice**

Theoretical considerations can inform the identification of effective policies and practices for enhancing school climates, decreasing student dropout. Policies should focus on improving mental health services in schools, and include an emphasis on the adequacy of physical facilities; equitable opportunity to maximize use of nurses, guidance counsellors, social workers or clinical psychologists if possible; positive school climates that foster supportive peer relationships and respectful teacher-student interactions (Gottfredson & Gottfredson 2001). Providing professional development for teachers that focuses on culturally responsive teaching strategies can assist schools in developing learning environments where all students' needs are met (Darling-Hammond, 2000). In addition, aligning school policies with research-based practices has the potential to reduce high dropout rates by addressing dropou- related population level factors and thereby increasing overall educational attainment (Lee &Burkam 2003).

#### **4.3. Educational Interventions**

Interventions based on cognitive models should be implemented to improve school climate and target intervention for vulnerable children. Such interventions may involve the implementation of mentorship programs, peer support initiatives and counselling services to provide social-emotional needs as well as enhance school attachment (Rumberger 2011). Combining project-based learning and alternative assessment tools provides a range of pedagogical approaches that appeal to students with other types of challenges (Lee



&Burkam, 2003). The article outlines how using theory could help design educational interactions that boost safe school climates, student learning and thereby decrease dropout rates.

## **V. Conclusion**

### **5.1. Summary**

Summary: This study provides a theoretical framework for an in-depth investigation into the effects school environments have on dropout rates. The conversation has examined Social Learning Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, Institutional Theory and Critical Pedagogy to clarify how different aspects of the school climate — from peer environmental factors through institutional policies — influence student engagement and outcome. Each offers unique views on the complex dynamics that exist in schools, and how those contribute to student dropout rates. The current study, by taking an extensive look at these frameworks contributes to the understanding of how school environments affect educational outcomes in a complex way that they represent.

### **5.2. Future Research Directions**

From this theoretical exploration three areas of potential future research come to the fore. Future research should begin by exploring profiles of different theoretical perspectives that intersect and combine to build theory in this area, capturing the cumulative impact between school environment factors on dropouts. Moreover, we need empirical studies to test theoretical predictions and contextual variations in different educational environments or among varied student demographics. Longitudinal studies could also inform how interventions to improve the school environment and reduce dropout might impact over time. Finally, new theories and methodologies that come out from other emergent fields such as neuroeducation or digital learning environments could be integrated into educational improvements to bring fresh ideas on how schools can act upon student success.

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