

Interpreting Dropout Of High School Risk Factors in Algerian Context: A Qualitative Approach

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Abstract:

This paper aims to reveal the risk factors of high school dropout among the students of first year high school (FYHS). The study based on research question: What are the risk factors of high school dropout as viewed by the educational actors? The study uses qualitative data with semi-structured interviews. Conducted with High school Counselors of guidance and school orientations, educational supervisors, teachers and Schools principal. This paper chose qualitative methodology based on interpretative paradigm. The study selected one high school from six state from Algeria: Ghardaia, Tipaza, Ain Al-Defla, Wade Souf, West Algiers. The schools were selected on basis sociocultural criteria (poor municipalities, cultural diversity, high dropout rates, absence rates, diversified geographical distribution). Participants were six (two males, four Females) Counselors of guidance and school orientations, six (five males, one female) educational supervisors, 12 (four males, eight females) teachers and six (four males, two Females) Schools principal. The analysis of Participants answers from different actors in education: revealed five categories dropout of high school risk factors that increase the risk of early school leaving the personality characteristics, family domain, school achievement and school climate, social behavior at school and social behaviors out of school.

Keywords: At-Risk Factors, Dropout of School, Qualitative Method, Education, School Leaving.

Introduction:

Different international and local organizations seek to ensure the right of education for all children until they are qualified to have a job. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right to an education that develops their “personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential” (APA, 2012). Researchers said: students at risk of school dropout were those who are attending school, but show a very high probability of leaving school without obtaining a diploma. Socially, they have been characterized by a higher rate of unemployment and economically their lack of technical training has made it difficult for them to enter the labor market (Fortin, et al., 2006: 363-383).

Therefore, dropout of school become a major social-psychological and economic problem. viewed, as a complex long-term process that begins on entering the education system. Its complexity includes individual, family, school, peer and community factors. Considering those factors and their interplay in the lives of adolescent (Ogresta, Rezo, Kožljan, Paré, & Ajdukovic, 2021:934-954).

The dropouts are at higher risk of negative developmental outcomes such as poor peer relations, delinquency and crime, jail, violence, homelessness, alcohol abuse, gangs drug involvement, unemployment, and lower lifetime earning potential and affects the overall society (Webber, 2018, 82-90). In addition, dropout of school have a negative impact on individuals psychological well-being (Robison, Jagers , Rhodes , & Blackmon, 2016).

According to researchers, the effects of early leaving school may be multigenerational: Children whose parents dropped out of high school are more likely to experience poorer educational outcomes than children of people who finished high school (Ogresta, Rezo, Kožljan, Paré, & Ajdukovic, 2021,934-954). The phenomenon of school dropout has significant correlation with the family environment points out that healthy family environment marked by high parental income makes it convenient to provide more resources to support

children’s education, and more support for learning within home prevents children dropping out of school (Monga, Monga, & Monga, 2016, 263 – 266). In addition, research has shown that if students’ parents are supportive of autonomy instead of having a controlling or commanding attitude, this influence their degree of self-regulation

and Parents whom external observers evaluate as being supportive of autonomy and more emotionally involved tend to have children who are more intrinsically motivated (Alivernini & Lucidi, 2011, 241-252).

In addition to family environment, the factors internal to the school, such as disciplinary policies or conflicts with teachers, might serve to push students out of school for example Students who repeat a grade prior to high school have a higher risk of dropping out of high (Stearns, Moller, Blau, & Potochnick, 2007, 210–240)

Many studies have mentioned the factors, which can be significant for dropout. Although there is no single factor leading to dropping out, the risk increases if several factors coexist for a longer period of time (Nataša, and Ksenija, 2017: 51-70). Some researchers draw a distinction between pullout and push-out theories (Nataša, and Ksenija, 2017: 51-70). “Pull-out” theories view the adolescent in a contextual sense, in that schooling is only one important part of the adolescent’s life, along with family, the labor market, peers, and other organizations. Out-of-school employment or family responsibilities, for example, might serve to pull these adolescents out of school (Stearns, 2006: 29-57).

According to pullout theorists, students are more likely to leave school because their likelihood of finding employment is high. Pullout theories also focus on family responsibilities, including family formation and care of siblings and elders, which may have a greater influence on students (Stearns, 2006: 29-57).

Push-out theories concentrate on the school factors that discourage students from continuing with their education. Push-out theorists argue that students leave school not only because of their individual attributes but also because of school structure. Push effects define as factors located within the school itself that negatively impact the connection students make with the school’s environment and cause them to reject the context of schooling. These factors can be structural, contextual, climate related, or individualized, and can influence certain students to view school as an unwelcoming place. School policies that dictate suspensions and expulsions for students whomisscertain numbers of days and then push the student out of school are one not able example” (Stearns, 2006: 29-57). Students who repeat a grade prior to high school have a higher risk of dropping out of high school than do students who are continuously promoted.

The Algerian case: the education law ensures the right to free education for all Algerian children without discrimination. Until the age of 16, education is compulsory(Official Bulletin of National Education, 2008: 21).Secondary education is critical for young people to access stable employment and decent pay to improve general living standards. (Ogresta, Rezo, Kožljan, Paré, & Ajdukovic, 2021:934-954).Despite that, dropout becomes a stressful problem for educators and it is necessary to reduce dropout rates by prevention programs, which becomes easy when we reveal dropout risk factors.

In Algeria first-year high school (FYHS)many adolescents cannot pass (FYHS) as we mention in table (1) below. They left school without having a high school diploma, or at least attending the third year of secondary school for more opportunities in labor market and training institutions.

Table (1) Presents Dropout Rates of First year secondary school in Algeria 2020/2021 school year

Students Leave School Temporarily		Students Totally Leave School		Expulseres students		Total	
Total	females	Total	females	Total	females	Total	females
440	146	19452	8525	9207	3098	29099	11769

Source (1): Sub-Department of Statistical Studies .M.E.N since 2021

The aim of this qualitative study is to show and to interpret the risk factors that leading to (FYHS) dropout in Algerian context. The paper used an heterogeneity sample from deferent Algeria regions that are known for their cultural and social diversity and qualitative approach to better understand dropout phenomenon, to reveal the dropout out of high school risk factors from the point view of education actors; That will help provide information for school management and psychosocial intervention programs. Accordingly, our research question was as follows: what are the risk factors of high school dropout as viewed by the educational actors?

Literature review

Many studies have been raised during the last decades since the decrease of school dropout phenomenon. Researchers used different methodological approaches depends on the research aim. Our paper is an exploratory study of a research project, that aim to understand what factors put the student at risk of leaving school early, using qualitative method. As follow somestudies in dropout topic used qualitative method.

First study titled “The discovery of the possible reasons for delayed graduation and dropout in the light of a qualitative research study” these study aims to measure the possible reasons for dropout. It wasinvestigating the role of the sociocultural background, the years prior to the time spent in higher education, and the motivation of the choice of institution, employment, sports, and social activities were measured through an analysis of seven individual interviews and one focus group conversation involving 10 participants based on a semi-structured interview methodology. The causes of delayed graduation and dropout, which are more difficult to observe, are an inappropriately chosen institution and/or course, employment while studying intensively in a higher education institution, competitive sport and friends with a negative attitude toward learning(Veronika, et al., 2019; 27–38).

The second study its topic was “evaluated how high school dropouts in Croatia interpret their school experiences and life circumstances, using semi-structured interviews of 20 young people, M (SD) = 18.4 (1.23) years, 63.6% male, based on questions following a chronological life course from elementary to high school. Using qualitative content analysis and cluster analysis. Four high school dropout types were identified based on the factors leading to dropout: the poor academic achievers, the quiet dropouts, the maladjusted dropouts, and the stressed dropouts. Our findings confirm the previously reported role of poor academic achievement and externalizing problems in high school dropout and additionally highlight the importance of internalizing problems and highly stressful life events for dropout risk(Ogresta, et al., 2021, 934-954).

The third study titled: “Using unique longitudinal quantitative and qualitative data”. The study examines the role that low learning plays in driving dropout in Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam. Regression analysis using IRT-linked test scores and data on schooling attainment and dropout shows a strong, significant association with one standard deviation higher test scores associated with 50 percent lower odds of dropping out between the ages of 8 and 12, and a similar association between the ages of 12 and 15. Qualitative analysis indicates a direct relationship between low learning and dropout, with children and parents choosing to discontinue school when they realize how little is being learned. Qualitative results also show that low learning interacts with and exacerbates more proximate causes of dropout, with low learning often contributing to choices of early marriage (for girls) and of leaving school to work (for both genders), with families making practical decisions about which options will best provide for children in the long run. Finally, learning, work, and poverty often interact, as the need to work to help provide for the household reduces the opportunities to learn, and low learning covers the opportunity cost of time in favor of working. These findings suggest that low learning may play a larger role in dropout decisions, by underlying and interacting with other causes.(Kaffenberger, Sobol, and Spindelman, 2021).

Methodological framework

Sample

The present data used in this article are part of a larger research project that uses a blend method that combines a mixed quantitative qualitative data from a study with semi-structed interviews. Conducted with Counselors of guidance and school orientations, educational supervisors,teachers and Schools principal. In this paper we chose qualitative methodology based on interpretative paradigm;"which implies the importance of understanding the meaning built into the respondents' experience" (Nataša & Ksenija , 2017, pp. 51-70).Since the focus of our paper was on identifying the variety of risk factors in school dropout. We selected one high school from sixstate from Algeria : Ghardaia, Tipaza, Ain Al-Defla, Ouade Souf, West Algiers. The schools were selected on basis sociocultural criteria (poor municipalities, cultural diversity, high dropout rates,absence rates, diversified geographical distribution).

Participants

Purposive sampling from educational actors. Participants were six (twomales,four Females) Counselors of guidance and school orientations, six(five males, one Female) educational supervisors,12 (fourmales, eight Females) teachers and six (four males, two Females) Schools principal.

Data Collection

The semi-structured interviews conducted after the first trioof 2022/2023 school year at school audio-recorded or written. The Participants were asked to talk retrospectively about the events, experiences, and social behaviors that make the(FYHS) at risk of quitting high school. Six broad domains were covered: personality

characteristics, family domain, peer domain, school achievement domain, social behavior at school domain, social behaviors out of school domain. The interview was piloted with focus group male and female at Setif districts, focus group two males in school at West Algiers. The interview based on Literature review and the primary interviews.

Results:

Based on participants' answers. The analysis and comparison of answers from different actors in education: Counselors of guidance and school orientations, educational supervisors, teachers and school's principal revealed five categories of risk of dropout of school factors; that increase the risk of early school leaving: the personality characteristics, family domain, school achievement and school climate, social behavior at school and social behaviors out of school.

Dropout of school risk factors related to the Personality Characteristics:

Accordingly, to the interview's answers, primarily from Counselors of guidance and school orientations, and teachers it can be concluded that the main characteristic of students at risk of dropout is that, they had internalizing problems directly affected their performance at school, for example they find difficult to fit in with themselves and with others. Usually, they are too old than their colleagues. They have low scores on intelligence. They are moody and anxious get rapidly angry. They have a poor academic self-image and expects upcoming grades to be bad. Due to their internalizing problems, they started skipping class so their absenteeism aggravated and their academic performance and achievement deteriorated. Next sample of educational actors' statements:

"They do not possess critical thinking and analytical skills, sometimes I revert back to lessons from elementary school".

"They have a weak ability to imagine, and teachers make efforts to develop their thinking and dialogue skills. They tend to imitate Western culture and feminine behaviors among males. They hold peculiar values and beliefs about Algerian society, and most of them have a good level English language".

"They are victims of bullying and ridiculed by their peers, teachers, and school administration."

"The dropouts are not aggressive, they have a loss of willingness to study"

"They feel they are older so don't obey the school's rules. They want absolute freedom."

"The school does not have psychologists and social workers"

"they are Introvert and not doing homework"

Dropout of school risk factors related to family Domain

According to Counselors of guidance and school orientations most of the students at risk of leaving school their families are breaking up, Parental divorce, Child lives with divorced parent or lives with the stepparents or being orphan. Their parents did not play an important role in their education; their parent never asked them about school except about grades. The majority dropouts' case the mother who controlled and supervises the children at school.

In addition, the respondents said that the majority of dropouts' family members are unemployed and live in poverty with Low-income Parents cannot offer structure. The most cases of children at risk of leave school their home is far distance from school and no school transportation. Some of them homeless, or live in tiny house and share a room with siblings. Their Parents received no education and were high school dropouts. A minority of participants said that Children whom show high level of at risk of drop out are working for money or worked in past year to help in feeding their families.

Next, we provide a sample of educational actor's statements:

"One reason for dropping out is social conditions such as poverty, early marriage of females, early involvement in the army and police, and the community's inferior view of the learner.

The main reason behind school dropout is the desire to achieve financial independence and to get a job early"

"Poor, he drops out because of the desire to work and help his parents earn his living despite his good behavior and emotional balance, but the social circumstances necessitate that he drops out".

"the countryside affects their school, it is difficult for them to attend support lessons at the end of the week due to the lack of transportation and the distance of the residence from the institutions, in addition to their preoccupation with practicing commercial activities - the spread of the work in clothing sewing warehouses - in addition their parents do not look after their children's education"

"parents do not care or control or support their children"

"Student interest in social media and parents do not control them"

Dropout of school risk factors related to peer domain

Based on educational supervisors and teachers answers children whom highly at risk of leave school early are influenced by their friends. Most of them are Involved with truancy and deviant peers whom show low levels of school engagement. Some cases, student has older friends.

Also, they said there is bullying within school, a child Being bullied or is a victim of bullying or worries about bullying.

Here some educational supervisors and teachers' answers:

"He imitates what his friends do in dangerous and bad behaviours".

"Friend puller friend out, the students imitate each other in many behaviors".

"Bad companions who repeat the year".

"Companions has a great impact, bad companions with family neglect".

"Technology has become the source of ideas, his role model, his future, his dream, his "lifestyle, he was brought up on a love of material, not on values".

"Preoccupation with social media and detachment from the real world is the driving force towards leakage".

"What is observed is the drop out of a group of students who are usually friends".

"A strict law to repeat the year".

"Reclusive, he has friends who are younger than him".

"The effect of virtual world friends and wasting a lot of time on social medea".

Dropout of school risk factors related to school achievement and school climate:

The fact that these young people spend long period of life at school and the school context plays an important role in its personality development. The majority interlocutors' answers confess that the early leavers carried over poor grades from elementary school most had to repeat the first year of high school. They have poor academic background the years before secondary school. The students at risk of dropouts had a low-Grade Point Average at mathematics, physics, French, English. In addition, they have a poor academic self-image, expects upcoming grades to be bad. They perceive school grades as unimportant.

Besides, untrained teachers, large classes with more than 40 students with low levels of control by teachers that produce a negative class climate influence all students, old teaching methods that not fit 21-century children.

Next examples of teachers' statements:

"The students of first are the most exposed to the risk of dropping out due to the difference between their grade and their desire".

"The intensity of the study program tired the student and affected his absorptive capacity and led to poor results".

"Lack of teachers' training, especially in mathematics and foreign languages teachers do Exclude learners at risk of leaving school and marginalized them".

"His achievement is low in all educational subjects".

"poor school achievements from the preceding years"

"It should be noted here that high school students suffer from the difficulty of dealing with foreign languages, as well as mathematics among students of the literary divisions and the division of management and economics relatively"

"The Impact of Covid years on academic achievements"

"Language impairment among students"

"Weakness in all subjects except physical education"

"low grade of evaluation"

"He is a victim of teacher bullying"

Dropout of school risk factors related to the social behavior at school:

According to participants' responses dropout have a negative attitude towards school, shows low attachment to school with high levels of absenteeism, especially skipping classes, often arrived late in class. They have disciplinary referrals at school because they behave inappropriately in class with teachers and supervisors. For example, they talk during class, do not pay attention to teachers, and smoke cigarettes inside class, run and scream.

The students whom show a high level of early leave school generally have negative attitudes toward teachers and teachers have negative attitudes towards them. A Poor pupil-teacher relationship appears in the repeatedly student-teacher conflict so the repeatedly negative interaction between teacher and student affect both on academic achievement and the student's engagement in school and social activities.

The student at risk of drop out do not participate in leisure time activities or any extracurricular activities, breaking school rules, not obey to educational supervisors orders, destroy school properties. Here is some participants answers:

“Lack of containment, exchange of views, leisure activities, and educational communication”.

“Non-practice of out-of-school sport and lack of reading”

“Problems with educational supervisors”

“Most dropout children have appeared in listening council as a result of anti-rules behaviors and repeated disagreement with teachers”

Dropout of school risk factors related to social behaviors out of school:

According to the participants, the student at risk of early leave school seldom shows religious behaviors as going to the mosque or Quranic School. They often started early smoking in life until becoming a heavy smoker brought cigarettes to school, which is against school roles that become reason of problems with educational supervisors and teachers. Some of them show risky behaviors for example rides a motorbike or drives without a helmet or license.

Some student at risk of dropout express externalizing problems as consumption of alcohol, drugs and psychoactive substances, gambling, vagrancy, violence, and spending time in the company of older youth with risky behavior, involved in gangs' drug, involved in criminal acts or was arrested, carries a weapon at school and has committing school crime for example bit someone in knife or steals her/his friends.

Next examples of teachers' statements:

“Study and work at the same time”

“He is Forced to work by the family if the family has independent work”

“If the family takes responsibility and assumes its responsibility towards its children, and raises children on religious values, conviction, safe life style, limiting the use of technology, keeping them away from violent television programmes, the student will love school”.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study's aim was to highlight the factors and life circumstances that preceded dropping out of high school among students prevention in the Algerian context. Based on the study results, it is clear that there are many factors make the student at risk of leaving school early; those risks factors classified into six categories as reported by the educational actors: personality characteristics domain, family domain, peer domain, school achievement domain, social behavior at school domain, social behaviors out of school domain.

Dropout of high school risk factors related to Personality Characteristics: internalizing problems, age being elder than their colleagues, low scores on intelligence, and poor academic self-image.

Risk factors related to the family that highly pulls the student out of school are family break up, Parental divorce, stepparent parents, dead parents, Parents' carelessness, and only the mother who supervises the children at school. Other family factors that affect the student less are: family members are unemployed, poverty with low income, home is a far distance from school or homeless, no school transportation, the family living in a tiny house, low Parents education, and the student is working for money.

Drop out of school risk factors related to peer domain: Involved truancy and deviant peers, in some cases the student has older friends and bullying within the school.

Dropout of high school risk factors related to school achievement and school climate that highly affect the student: poor grades from elementary school, repetition of under achievement in mathematics, physics, French and English, poor academic self-image, perceive school grades as unimportant. Some factors affect the student less: untrained teachers, large classes, negative class climate, and old teaching methods.

Dropout of high school risk factors related to social behavior at school: student has a negative attitude towards school, low attachment to school with high levels of absenteeism; they behave inappropriately in class with teachers and supervisors. The students have negative attitudes toward teachers and teachers have negative attitudes toward them. A Poor pupil-teacher relationship, student-teacher conflict. Other factors affect the student less: breaking school rules and destroying school properties.

Dropout of high school risk factors related to out-of-school social behaviors: they seldom show religious behaviors. Often they started smoking early; some of them show risky behaviors. Some students express externalizing problems such as the consumption of alcohol, drugs, and psychoactive substances. They spend time in the company of older youth, are involved in gangs' drug, are involved in criminal acts, or were arrested.

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