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Causes and Tendency of Student Dropouts in Community Colleges in Kathmandu: A Study of Baneshwor Multiple Campus

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Abstract

The trend of students dropping out is currently a global concern. This problem not only affects the progress of national development. It is certain that it will affect the stability of the entire educational institution. More than that, it also directly affects the possibility of personality development of every person within the country and internationally. This research mainly focuses on the problem of dropping out without completing their studies among the students of Baneshwor Multiple Campus of Nepal. This study aims to investigate the causes and tendencies of dropout. The study attempts to conclude using campus records along with secondary data obtained from BMC's Educational Management Information System (EMIS) and primary data collected through a structured questionnaire from a sample of 177 college leavers. The descriptive research method has been used for the research. Key findings from this study show that financial problems are the biggest reason for dropping out of college, with 24.9 percent citing inability to pay fees as the main reason for dropping out. Other important factors found that 10.7 percent dropped out due to a lack of value in pursuing higher education, and another 22.0 percent due to foreign employment. This study compares other national and international research on student dropout and attempts to highlight both similarities and specific differences. Similarly, the present study attempts to suggest targeted interventions and policy changes at both institutional and governmental levels to reduce dropout rates, improve retention, and create a more supportive learning environment.

Keywords: Dropout, higher education, community campus, foreign job, college fee

Introduction

Individual development as well as the social and economic advancement of countries, are significantly influenced by higher education. It not only offers specialized knowledge but also fosters intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and analytical capabilities, and hence economic growth, social mobility, and innovation (Altbach et al., 2019). Considering its importance, access to higher education is greatly improved in most developing nations, including Nepal. However, the growing trend of student dropouts has undermined efforts to expand access to education. Dropping out can have a detrimental effect on students' personal development and their economic prospects, as well as psychological harm and feelings of failure. In addition, it can reduce their lifetime income. As a result, this can lead to an increase in poverty and unemployment (OECD, 2019). College and university-related parties are also responsible for the high dropout rate. Especially, the sustainability of the educational institution, the curriculum structure, and the use of resources also affect the dropout trend and pattern. A high dropout rate causes instability in the higher education system itself and can affect society as a whole. Failure of educational investments to achieve the expected educational outcomes can also lead to significant financial losses (González et al., 2007).

Student dropout is a global concern, yet it continues around the world. According to 2019 statistics from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), about 20 percent of students drop out of school without completing secondary education. Although college dropout rates vary by location and context, it is becoming an even greater problem in developing countries than in developed countries. In Nepal, access to higher education is gradually improving. Because of this, the rate of dropping out of college without completing the studies varies according to the institution, program, and location. Baneshwor Multiple Campus (BMC) was established in 2047 BS (1990/91 AD), as a community college in the capital city Kathmandu, Nepal. It was founded by a group of social activists, including social workers, scholars, and educators. BMC has been important in improving access to higher education in the capital city. However, like other higher educational institutions in Nepal, this Baneshwor Multiple Campus is also facing the problem of students dropping out. This problem has not only appeared recently but has been happening for years. Many students drop out of their studies before graduating. Colleges really need to find out why students are dropping out. If the root cause of this problem can be found, the campus will be able to find ways to keep more students in college. This research aims to look into all the complicated reasons students drop out of Baneshwor Multiple Campus. This will add to what the college knows, and

also add to the bigger picture of why students leave universities in Nepal. Researchers around the world have long studied why students drop out of higher education. Both theoretical frameworks and empirical studies have attempted to explain the complex web of causes leading to students' early extraction from college and university.

Reputable motivational theories and models shed light on student perseverance and dropout rates. According to Tinto's (1975) student integration model, a student's success in college depends on their ability to integrate into the social and academic environments of university life. Academic integration, which includes exposure to academic expectations; social integration, which includes participation in the social and cultural facets of university life; and institutional commitment, which measures the extent to which the institution supports student integration, are the three key components identified by this model. According to Tinto's model, pupils who don't fit in well in these areas are likely to drop out. Another perspective on why students are not finishing high school is provided by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943). With this theory, individuals are motivated by a hierarchical set of needs, from basic physiological needs (medical care, food, and housing) to safety, belongingness and love, esteem, and finally self-actualization. In the case of dropouts, unless students' basic needs are met or they do not see higher education as a tool for fulfilling their personal goals and aspirations (self-actualization), they are bound to drop out of school. Theories of motivation and engagement underscore the significance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation towards academic success and graduation. Intrinsic motivation is the result of enjoyment and satisfaction that one gets from learning, while extrinsic motivation is brought about by external rewards or punishment. Student engagement, such as behavioural (participation, attendance), emotional (interest, enthusiasm, sense of belonging), cognitive (effort, investment in learning), and social (interactions with peers and teachers) dimensions, is also directly connected to student persistence. Disengagement in any of these areas can create a downward spiral that culminates in drop out.

Numerous empirical studies have examined that have examined the diverse factors that underlie the dropout of students in higher education. Such factors can broadly be categorized into students-related (individual), family-related, campus-related (institutional), and community-related factors (Wells, Bechard, & Hambly, 1989).

Student-related factors encompass the individual characteristics and experiences resulting in dropout. Academic issues, such as poor performance, being unprepared, and lack of ability to adapt to the academic demands of the program, are also principal reasons for dropping out (Rumberger, 2011). Low levels of motivation, disinterest, and low self-efficacy are important factors in student dropout behaviour. Other variables

associated with student dropout behaviour are economic variables and the need for employment in both local and international contexts, especially in developing nations. The influences of individual characteristics on dropout decisions include health-related issues; family obligations such as marriage, childbirth, childcare, and lack of satisfaction with their selected academic discipline. Psychology-related variables such as frustration, depersonalisation, psychological stress, and anxiety, along with sociocultural and economic status, were found to be significant predictors of dropout behaviour. Family-related variables have an additional influence on student dropout behaviour. A low socio-economic status in the family could lead to economic limitations, making it difficult for students to cover college tuition fees, living costs, and other education-related expenses. Parental lack of support, both financial and emotional, and family problems may negatively affect a student's continuing his or her studies.

Robbins et al. (2004), conducting a meta-analysis of 109 research studies, explored the interaction between university success and psychological and academic variables. The findings identified explanatory variables for university dropout as motivation for academic success, academic goals (e.g., wanting to gain a degree), institutional commitment, self-perceived social support, engagement with others, the capacity to self-evaluate, perception of oneself, academic proficiency, and contextual variables, including financial support from the institution, the size of the institution, and selectivity of the institution. Bean (1982) constructed ten determinants of student attrition, namely the intention to leave, perceived utilitarian value of selected field, security of selection (whether the university is best suited for the student), institutional commitment, academic achievement, course perception, importance of university studies, career confidence, possibility of transferring to another institution, and family approval of the university.

Robbins et al. (2004) also noted that student's academic aspirations, self-evaluation ability, and academic ability are the strongest predictors of university dropout. Other predictors such as institutional commitment, social support, social integration, financial aid, and institutional selectivity are also of critical significance. Students who experience course demands and are doubtful about their academic ability are likely to drop out of university. DeBerard et al. (2004) found that dropout rates are not directly predicted by students' reactions to stress or health-affecting behaviors, although these behaviors do influence academic achievement. Concurrently, Jia and Maloney (2014) also identified other university dropout predictors such as ethnicity (majority students being more likely to graduate compared to minority students), gender (women having a higher graduation rate; Paura & Arhipova, 2014), mode of schooling (traditional higher education program

students having better retention rates), and age (students older than the average age of enrollment having greater dropout rates).

Westrick et al. (2015) emphasized the role of first-year academic performance as a determinant for student retention. Good first-year performance is correlated with reduced dropouts, and high academic achievement prior to entering university is correlated with better academic achievement. The researchers also found no significant connection between parental level of income and drop rate, particularly where universities subsidize those in need. Bonaldo and Pereira (2016) identified that gender, level of education among parents, educational failure among students, or attending university while already having a child were not statistically associated with dropping out. But in another study (Araque et al., 2009), age, differences in civil status (i.e., marriage, divorce, or childbearing), and economic non-support were discovered to be causes of university dropouts.

Araque et al. (2009) also found differences in dropout rates by field of study, with humanities students more likely to drop out compared to students in engineering or economics streams. They brought in additional factors, such as the type of admission process, students admitted through examinations are less likely to drop out compared to students admitted based on previous academic achievement, and failing examinations is an important risk factor.

Oreopoulos (2007) found that students who don't find the courses they are enrolled in to be motivational or interesting are likely to drop out. Moreover, research suggests that dropout mostly happens after examination periods, particularly among failing test-takers. Such students who are academically weak at the pre-university level, along with those with better academic credentials but with disappointed hopes about programs at universities, have a high likelihood of departing from the university (Paura & Arhipova, 2014).

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies mentions the gap between initial university hopes by students and the actual outcome, with the corresponding danger of dropout rising (Diaconu & Staiculescu, 2012). The larger part of the Romanian university population is 18 to 25 years old, which is a year characterized by individual and social changes, the problem of finding living space, career, and academic aims, uncertainty. Psychosocial stressors such as family dislocation, economic independence, academic stress, social integration problems, and self-perception changes render students vulnerable to dropping out of the learning process. Emotional distress such as

fear, insecurity, anxiety, and distraction is common during this stage of life (Diaconu & Stăiculescu, 2012).

Campus-related factors pertain to the aspects and conditions within the educational institution. The quality of instruction, staff, the availability of academic support services (e.g., tutoring, counseling), and the overall learning and physical environments on campus influence student satisfaction and engagement directly. Students who see a sense of belonging with students, teachers, and campus groups are likely to remain. Conversely, a lack of proper academic guidance, feedback, encouragement, and motivation on the part of teachers, coupled with problems concerning the institutional information system and unawareness of students' expectations, can result in dropout. Inadequacy of the examination system and library facilities, coupled with a lackadaisical attitude of administrative staff, can also be causal factors. Community-related factors involve the broader social context in which the institution is located. Regional variations, location, and patterns of migration can affect student access to and persistence in postsecondary education. Access to employment opportunities in the local community and values regarding the value of education also contribute to dropout rates. A large proportion of the university dropout population in Nepal is related to students' interests in working abroad. This is based on the belief that by working abroad, the students will be in a better economic position than being unemployed after graduation. For instance, Subedi (2023) studied Nepalese bachelor's degree programs; his research shows that several student-related, campus-related, and family-related problems have resulted in students in Nepal dropping out of their posted programs. Similarly, his research shows that most dropout rates for people seeking jobs abroad are due to personal factors. For example, Ghimire (2024), who researched a community college in the semi-urban district of Myagdi, found that the primary factors causing students to leave their programs to seek overseas jobs were due to personal rather than financial or campus-related factors. Subedi (2023) studied dropout rates at Pokhara Kalika Multiple Campus and found that several very common problems poor performance by students, class attendance, lack of academic counseling and support, inadequate amounts of feedback and motivation from teachers, lack of institutional information systems, and lack of financial support from home, were all found to have a consistent influence on dropout rates. Recent studies of Nepalese student dropout indicate that it is a multifaceted problem with a broad array of individual, family, institutional, and societal factors at play. However, there remain few context-based studies exploring the particular challenges facing urban community colleges like those in Kathmandu. This study attempts to address this lacuna by carrying out an intensive study of student dropouts' causes and trends at Baneshwor Multiple Campus.

Research Gap

Although there are informative studies regarding student dropout among higher level students, there remains a research gap, particularly for community campuses in Nepal. The majority of studies in the literature involve universities and colleges in Western research, and thus there is a lacuna in dropout patterns in Nepalese community campuses. Particularly, Baneshwor Multiple Campus (BMC), which is one of the premier institutions in Kathmandu, has not been a subject of rigorous research on dropout among students. While some research has been done in Nepal on dropout rates at the higher education level, very little research has been done on the particular issues of students at community colleges. The research in Nepal has tended focus on primary or secondary level education or given an overview of higher education without addressing the specific dynamics and causes of dropping out at semi-urban region community campuses. Since BMC plays an imperative role in the availability of accessible and affordable higher education in Kathmandu, there is a need for an in-depth exploration of determinants of dropout among students in the institution. By giving a thorough examination of the student dropout statistics in BMC, this research will cover the gap, determine the main reasons for the withdrawals, and examine how socio-economic and cultural factors, such as foreign job aspirations, influence the dropout decision. The study will also seek to present a comparison of the dropout trends in BMC with data from the capital cities of Nepal, thereby illustrating the particular obstacles faced by urban community campuses. The outcome of this research will provide primary information about the direction of student dropout at Baneshwor Multiple Campus. This will help in devising ways and means of keeping students at the college. Besides, the research will add to the existing knowledge about the Nepalese higher education student attrition and the patterns of it, and could also impact policy and intervention measures taken at both national and institutional levels.

Objectives of the Study

The following behavioral objectives are envisioned to be accomplished through the study:

1. To evaluate and quantify the students' dropout at Baneshwor Multiple Campus across academic years.
2. To identify and examine the various reasons affecting students' dropout of undergraduate programs at Baneshwor Multiple Campus.
3. To investigate the impact of foreign employment aspirations on students' decisions to dropout at Baneshwor Multiple Campus.

Research Methodology

Study Area

This study was conducted within the premises of Baneshwor Multiple Campus (BMC) in the central part of Kathmandu, Nepal. The study focused specifically on students enrolled in different undergraduate (bachelor's) programs offered by the campus. The data examined mainly involved first-year students enrolled in undergraduate programs in 2019 and their academic status over the years up to 2023. This specific cohort was selected in order to relate their academic experiences over the length of a typical four-year undergraduate program in Nepal.

Research Design

This research employed a descriptive research design. Descriptive research is ideal for understanding or describing any social phenomenon in detail, giving a good picture of the problem being studied (Creswell, 2014). The purpose of the study was to quantify the level of dropouts at BMC (what and when), however, mostly it was to understand the causes and reasons behind these dropouts (why and how). In this respect, it adopts a mixed-methods approach that includes both quantitative data on the enrolment and dropout statistics over the years and qualitative data on the reasons for dropping out as given by students. Quantitative data showed that there was a tendency towards dropout; on the other hand, qualitative data revealed the causes and factors influencing them.

Sample Population

The target population of this study consisted of the first-year undergraduate students who enrolled at Baneshwor Multiple Campus in 2019 and dropped out before completing their studies. According to records of the campus, the total number of students enrolled in the first year in 2019 was 674, of which only 300 students completed their undergraduate studies by 2023; thus, 374 students dropped out. Hence, the total dropout population for the 2019 cohort was a total of 374 students.

Sample Selection Process

In light of the large dropout population (N=374), a sample was selected for data collection. Using this formula, the sample size required was calculated (Slovin, 1960):

$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + N * e^2)}$$

Where:

n = sample size

$N = \text{population size (374)}$

$e = \text{margin of error (5\% or 0.05)}$

Substituting the values: $n = \frac{374}{(1 + 374 * 0.05^2)}$, $n = \frac{374}{(1 + 374 * 0.0025)}$

$$n = \frac{374}{(1 + 0.935)}, \quad n = \frac{374}{1.935}, \quad n \approx 193.28$$

The calculated sample size came out to be approximately 193 students. A simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample. This technique ensures that every student in the dropout population has equal opportunities to be included in the study, which further reduce potential sampling bias in the findings. A complete list of all 374 students who have dropped out was obtained from the administration of the campus. From this list, 193 students were randomly selected using a random number generator. Afterward, they tried to contact these 193 selected students using the contact information provided in the campus enrollment records from the enrollment records from 2019. Unfortunately, not all selected students could be reached, either due to obsolete contact information or other reasons. Eventually, 177 of the students were contacted and accepted to participate in the study, constituting the final sample size. Although this number is somewhat less than the originally calculated sample size, 177 study participants still created a workable basis for data analysis and drawing meaningful conclusions.

Data Collection Methods:

This research applied structured questionnaires as the principal method of data collection, a tool best suited to carrying out large surveys involving heterogeneous respondents (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). The survey was made up of closed-ended and open-ended questions, and thus, the standardization and qualitative insights were achieved (Fowler, 2013). Free text responses were allowed for open-ended questions (Patton, 2002). The closed-ended questions were used for gathering structured quantitative data through predefined options (DeVellis, 2017). Like in this study, open- and closed-ended questions were used to provide qualitative insight while maintaining a level of standardization (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Methods of Administering Structured Questionnaires

In the most optimal way, various methods were used to conduct structured questionnaires and data collection. Real-time interaction and immediate clarification were allowed through face-to-face interviews with 48 respondents (Opdenakker, 2006). A mail

questionnaire method was used with 36 respondents, thus allowing for time to be taken in the answering process (Dillman et al., 2014). Besides, 43 interviews were carried out over Facebook Messenger, and people's engagement was further facilitated by the use of social media (Bryer & Zavattaro, 2011). Moreover, to eliminate geographical barriers, 26 interviews were held through Viber, and 24 interviews were conducted through WhatsApp calls (Gibbs, 2018). The research utilized this mixed-methods approach not only to unveil the numerical trends and patterns but also to offer qualitative knowledge of dropout as a phenomenon (Creswell, 2014).

Data Analysis

The data analysis was done with the help of SPSS software which is a popular statistical package for social research (Field, 2018). Various descriptive statistical techniques were used for the present study, i.e., frequency distributions, percentage analysis, and cross-tabulation, to understand the behavior of dropouts from the point of view of the patterns and trends (Pallant, 2020). The Chi-square test was used to determine the association between the reasons for dropout and other demographic variables. The use of these statistical techniques as a set was very important for maximizing the trustworthiness and comprehensibility of the results (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

Research Ethics

Ethical considerations represent the heart and soul of every research process. During the data collection process, respondents were well informed about the nature and objectives of the research. The voluntariness of their participation and the anonymity of their responses were handled before administering the questionnaire. The participants were fully assured that their responses would be used only for this research. Each participant was made aware that he or she was giving consent and approval to participate in the study. Data collected from the participants was then stored safely, and upon analysis, kept in such a manner that strongly ensured the secrecy of the respondents. The research has attempted to strictly adhere to the standards and ethical norms of social research, whereby the welfare and rights of the participants have been given the utmost respect during the time of research.

Results and Discussion

The last section discusses the relevant results of this study conducted at Baneshwor Multiple Campus, Myagdi Multiple Campus, and Kalika Multiple Campus in light of available literature on student dropouts in higher education.

Trends of Student Dropout at Baneshwor Campus (BMC)

Baneshwor Campus is a community campus situated in the central part of Kathmandu, Nepal, and it is one of the leading community campuses in the country. Unlike rural places where student dropouts are a common phenomenon due to migration to urban centers, the dropout rates at urban campuses like BMC are expected to be quite lower. However, over a span of five years, a rather distressing picture of higher dropout rates from various academic programs at the campus has emerged. BMC experiences varying rates of student enrollment and dropout in the different programs it offers. In the Bachelor of Business Studies program, withdrawal rates have shifted from a low of 44.44 percent to a high of 63.99 percent. Students who enrolled in the year 2076 had the highest dropouts of 63.99 percent, with 2075 having the lowest at 44.44 percent. This shows that for BBS, dropouts in most years have crossed the 50 percent mark. The dropouts in that of the Bachelor of Arts program, while lower than BBS, are equally alarming, ranging from 19.23 Percent to 49.62 Percent. The lowest was recorded for the group of 2075, from which 19.23 Percent were out by 2078, while the most was from the group of 2076, wherein 49.62 Percent withdrew by 2079. Though the BA program does not post a high dropout rate like that of the BBS, this dropout rate, too, is distressingly high.

The most significant variation in dropout rates is seen in the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program, where dropout rates lie between a low of 46.88 Percent and a high of 65.38 Percent. The cohort of 2073 had the highest dropout rate of 65.38 Percent, as these candidates had failed to complete by 2077. The cohort of 2075, on the other hand, exhibited the lowest dropout rate with just 46.88 Percent. More or less, the B.Ed. program reveals a steady high dropout rate, especially during the early years of the program. Over five years, a total of 2,261 students enrolled in all the programs at BMC, and of those, 1,225 were successful. This translates into an overall dropout rate of 45.87 Percent. The BBS program, being the largest in terms of enrollment, contributes significantly to the overall dropout rate and is, thus, likely in dire need of pinpointed intervention to be able to address this issue. The dropout rate of the BA program is fairly lower when compared to the BBS and B.Ed. programs; still, those numbers are intolerably high and terribly call for attention to further strengthening retention strategies. With respect to the B.Ed. The program its a high rate of dropout, which shows that definite challenges should be diagnosed and better managed to prevent further student losses.

Table 1

Program-wise Dropout Rates of Students for the Last Five Years at BMC

Program	Year of Enrolment	Enrolment Number	Completion year	Completion Number	Drop-out Percent
BBS	2073	368	2077	143	61.14
BBS	2074	189	2078	91	51.85
BBS	2075	171	2079	95	44.44
BBS	2076	286	2080	103	63.99
BA	2073	237	2076	152	35.86
BA	2074	274	2077	196	28.47
BA	2075	260	2078	210	19.23
BA	2076	262	2080	132	49.62
B.Ed.	2073	26	2077	9	65.38
B.Ed.	2074	30	2078	12	60.00
B.Ed.	2075	32	2079	17	46.88
B.Ed.	2076	126	2080	65	48.41
Grand Total	-	2261	-	1225	44.87

(Source: Baneshwor Multiple Campus EMIS, 2080)

Finally, across the entire program offered in Baneshwor Campus, dropout rates are alarmingly high, especially in the BBS and B.Ed. programs, where dropout rates hover around 45 percent and sometimes soar above that percentage. Compared to BBS and B.Ed. programs, BA programs have recorded a few dropout rates; nonetheless, their level is very high too. Since these programs are characterized by high dropout rates, a real understanding of the peculiar issues that each program faces, together with remedial steps taken, must be analyzed in-depth.

Major Reasons for Dropout

The results of the survey indicate that the financial, academic, individual, and socio-economic factors are the major causes of student dropout. A quarter (24.9%) of students indicate that an inability to pay college fees was the primary cause for dropout. This figure clearly shows that the main reason students drop out of college is financial difficulties. This makes it abundantly evident that different options for targeted financial aid, scholarship assistance, or fee waivers for underprivileged students should be investigated and taken into consideration.

According to this study, 22 percent of students leave their studies for foreign jobs. Similarly, 5.1 percent of students dropped out of their current studies because they

planned to study abroad in the future, and another 6.8 percent dropped out of this campus because of studying abroad. This is an indicator of the overall socio-economic environment in Nepal, where opportunities abroad are considered better than domestic ones. A sizable portion of students (10.75) stated that they did not think continuing their education would be beneficial. This suggests problems like mismatched careers, slow academic programs, or dissatisfaction with Nepal's educational system. Gender-specific issues such as marriage (7.35) and pregnancy (9.05) also significantly affect young female students, thereby limiting their pursuit of studies.

Other reasons include poverty (4.0%), family pressure and illness (4.0%), the need to care for children (1.7%), and a lack of interest in the chosen study course (4.5%). These factors highlight the lack of support systems and proper study guidance. Interestingly, illness was the least reported reason for leaving education (0.6%). This could be due to its lower occurrence or possible underreporting. Overall, the data from the table shows the need for broad interventions that address financial problems, improve academic relevance, provide better counseling, and help students overcome social or cultural barriers to education.

Table 2

Percent Distribution of Causes of Dropout of Students

Reason for Dropouts	Total No of Dropouts	Percent of Total (n=177)	Chi-square (χ^2)
Could Not Pay Fee	44	24.90	Pearson Chi-square = 64.441 df = 10 Sig = 0.000 Likelihood Ratio = 42.265 df = 10 sig = 0.000
Abroad Study	12	6.80	
Not Seen the Value of Further Study	19	10.70	
Got Married	13	7.30	
Got Pregnant	16	9.00	
Poverty	7	4.00	
Foreign Employment	39	22.00	
Loss of interest in the chosen program	8	4.50	
Abroad Study Plan	9	5.10	
To Care for Child	3	1.70	
Family Pressure and Illness	7	4.0	
Total	177	100.00	

(Source: Field Study, 2023)

To better understand the reasons for dropout and its significance among students at Baneshwor Multiple Campus (BMC), a statistical test utilizing the Chi-square (χ^2) method was employed. The data obtained from a field survey undertaken in 2023 categorized 177 cases of dropouts under ten unique reasons, namely, could not pay the fee, abroad study, not seeing the value of further study, poverty, got married, got pregnant, foreign employment, abroad study plan, to care for a child, and family pressure and illness.

Under the null hypothesis that all the reasons for dropping out are equally likely, the expected frequency in each category was calculated as:

$$E = 177/10 = 17.7$$

Chi-square test has been applied to determine differences between observed frequencies for each category and expected frequencies. Chi-square so obtained is $\chi^2 = 101.99$ with $df = 9$. Critical value of Chi-square at a 0.05 level of significance is 16.92. As the value obtained is so much higher than this value, the result is significant ($p < 0.001$).

Table 3

Chi-square Calculation Table

Reason	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(O - E) ² / E
Could Not Pay Fee	44	17.7	38.37
Abroad Study	12	17.7	1.84
Not Seen Value of Further Study	19	17.7	0.10
Got Married	13	17.7	1.25
Got Pregnant	16	17.7	0.16
Poverty	7	17.7	6.46
Foreign Employment	39	17.7	25.02
Loss of Interest in Program	8	17.7	5.33
Abroad Study Plan	9	17.7	4.28
To Care for Child	3	17.7	12.73
Family Pressure and Illness	7	17.7	6.46
Total chi-square			101.99

This implies that the pattern of causes of dropout is not by chance and that certain causes happen much more frequently than others. Specifically, economic issues (24.9%) and

employment abroad (22.0%) were the prevailing causes, followed by lack of value perceived in education (10.7%) and gender-related issues such as pregnancy (9.0%) and marriage (7.3%).

Less frequently cited reasons included poverty (4.0%), loss of interest in the chosen program (4.5%), preparation for future study abroad (5.1%), and family obligations such as child care (1.7%). Illness, cited by only 0.6% of students, was the least commonly cited reason.

These findings highlight the need for evidence-based interventions such as financial support, academic and career counseling, and interventions to overcome gender-specific and socio-cultural barriers to education. Strong evidence is provided by statistical analysis to inform strategic planning and campus policies aimed at lowering dropout rates.

At BMC, dropout rates by age group reveal a combination of socioeconomic, academic, financial, and personal factors that contribute to student attrition. Marriage and pregnancy were personal factors that contributed significantly to dropout rates among younger students (19–24 years old), as were financial difficulties, particularly in cases where students were unable to pay fees. For example, friends quit school at age 19, accounting for 44.4% of dropouts due to financial difficulties, and pregnancy accounted for 25.0% of dropouts at age 24. As students grow older, particularly when they reach 25 years, the major implicit reason behind their dropouts shifts to foreign employment, with students aged 23 (41.4%) and 27 (50.0%). This situation reflects the socio-economic background of Nepal, with foreign opportunities in labor markets generally considered far better than local opportunities. The effect of students feeling there is no need for further study is amplified with age, as more of those aged 25 years and older report feeling little motivation and unwillingness to continue their studies.

Table 4

Percent Distribution of Causes of Dropout Students by Age Factors

Age	Reason to Drop Out (%)												
	GM	GP	CNPF	TCC	ASP	AS	FE	NSVFS	Poverty	LICP	FP	Illness	Total
19	11.1	0.0	44.4	0.0	0.0	44.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	9
20	23.8	0.0	38.1	0.0	4.8	14.3	9.5	4.8	4.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	21
21	10.3	10.3	20.6	0.0	10.3	10.3	17.2	6.9	6.9	3.4	3.4	0.0	29
22	2.5	10.0	45.0	0.0	2.5	2.5	20	5.0	0.0	2.5	7.5	2.5	40
23	3.4	6.8	10.3	3.4	0.0	3.4	41.4	3.4	10.3	13.8	3.4	0.0	29
24	12.5	25.0	12.5	0.0	6.2	0.0	18.7	18.7	0.0	0.0	6.2	0.0	16
25	0.0	15.8	5.2	5.2	5.2	0.0	26.3	36.8	0.0	5.2	0.0	0.0	19
26	0.0	0.0	25.0	12.5	12.5	0.0	12.5	25.0	12.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	8
27+	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.7	0.0	50	16.7	0.0	16.7	0.0	0.0	6
Total	13	16	44	3	9	12	39	19	7	8	6	1	177
Chi-square (χ^2)													
Pearson Chi-square = 149.371 df = 70 Sig = 0.000 Likelihood Ratio = 124.372 df = 70 sig = 0.000													

(Source: Field Study, 2023)

Note: GM = Got Married, GP= Got Pregnant, CNPF = Could Not Pay Fee, TCC= To Care Child, ASP =Abroad Study Plan, AS = Abroad Study, FE =Foreign Employment, NSVFS = Not Seen The Value of Further Study, FP= Family pressure, LICP = Loss Of Interest In The Chosen Program.

The contrast of reasons for dropping out among the age groups of students at Baneshwor Multiple Campus (BMC), based on the 2023 field survey, shows very high correspondence between student age and reasons for dropping out from college. A Chi-square test has been applied to verify if reasons for dropping out varied significantly across eight age groups. The output returns a Pearson Chi-square of 149.371 with 70 degrees of freedom and the p-value as 0.000, indicating the association is statistically significant. This confirms that the causes of dropouts are not uniformly distributed in various age groups and that age plays an important role in explaining student attrition.

Pregnancy, early marriage, and financial difficulties are common causes of dropout among young students, particularly those between the ages of 19 and 22. For example,

at age 19, financial difficulties accounted for 44.4 per cent of dropouts, whereas at age 24, pregnancy accounted for 25.0 per cent. Additionally, some students stopped caring about their studies or looked for ways to study overseas. Foreign employment becomes a significant factor as students get older, especially after the age of 23. At age 23, 41.4 per cent of dropouts received job offers overseas; by age 27 and beyond, that number had risen to 50 per cent. Additionally, students aged 25 or older reported feeling unmotivated to pursue further education. They frequently believed they had lost interest in their programs or didn't need to learn anything more. These results are indicative of Nepal's socioeconomic circumstances, where students' decisions to quit college or drop out are heavily influenced by poverty, the availability of fulfilling jobs overseas, and the lack of local employment for young people. To lower dropout rates and increase retention at BMC, the analysis recommends putting in place particular support strategies for various age groups, such as financial aid for younger students, career counseling for middle-aged students, and re-entry options for older students. There are parallels and differences between the dropout causes at community campuses BMC, Kalika Multiple Campus (KMC), and Myagdi Multiple Campus (MMC). The pursuit of overseas employment was a major factor at BMC and MMC, but financial difficulties and a lack of academic support were more important at KMC. Family problems, such as pressure from family members and low socioeconomic status, were also more prevalent at KMC and MMC, underscoring the significant influence of family expectations and budgetary constraints on students' educational choices. Dropout decisions are also significantly influenced by academic support and the effectiveness of institutions. Feelings of loneliness and decreased retention rates can result from low academic engagement and inadequate institutional feedback. Academic, socioeconomic, and personal factors are the main causes of the dropout problem at BMC and other community colleges. Although they become more prominent as students get older, the main themes that cut across all age groups are financial difficulties, the desire for work abroad, and a lack of motivation for additional study. In order to help students make educated decisions, the findings suggest addressing these issues through interventions meant to address the unique needs of communities by offering financial aid, boosting academic support, and career counseling. Enhancing retention and lowering dropout rates in Nepal's community campuses would be greatly aided by bolstering institutional support, particularly for older students dealing with additional family and socioeconomic pressures.

The MMC study relied on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Tinto's model as its theoretical basis. According to Maslow's theory, students with unmet basic needs may not fully utilize their potential and may not reach the dropout point. Financial hardship element identified in both the MMC study and BMC study is basically recognized as

being involved with basic physiological and safety needs. In conjunction, the integration model alluded to as Tinto suggests that a student's capacity to persist at school pivots on integration with the academic and social fabric of the institution. The stated paucity of academic and social support in all three campus studies is consistent with Tinto's paradigm, suggesting that institutions have to promote greater student belongingness and engagement. The Kalika Multiple Campus study was grounded in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Motivation and Engagement, and Cognitive Load Theory. The indications of low motivation and engagement speak to the heart of the Motivation and Engagement theory, one which insists upon intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and a whole host of different types of engagement, academic, behavioural, psychological, and social, as essential to student success. Connected with motivation theory, Glasser's (1998) five basic needs-love and belonging, survival, freedom, power, and fun-were also linked with the dropout causal factors. Cognitive Load Theory suggests that new learning in a scale and scope can overload the working memory of a learner; this may lead to feeling incapable of dealing with academic requirements, as some dropouts cited, thereby indicating the need for learner-centered teaching techniques and adequate support.

The high rates of dropout from higher education seen in campus studies from Nepal conform to the global trend of dropouts. A report from the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD, 2019) indicates that, of those commencing tertiary education, 20 percent do not complete their programs. The reasons behind dropout from BMC in the form of finance stick to Breier's (2010) re-conceptualization of finance's role in higher education student dropout, with the transition from 'financial consideration' to 'poverty'. Socio-economic factors influence dropout raised by Choy (2001), also support the same. The effect of foreignness on the tendency of third-culture college students to drop from the perspective of the BMC also reflects the bigger issue of student mobility and brain drain out of Nepal that the UGC Annual Report (2018/19) mentions in the Kalika study. Educational factors identified by Dahal et al. (2019) responsible for student dropout in Nepal include inefficient policy implementation, and this resonates with the campus-related challenges in our study. Designating their study to socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors related to student dropout in rural Nepal, Lagun and Sah (2024) add another dimension to the family and community-related factors established through MM and Kalika studies.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on the reasons and trends behind student dropout from Baneshwor Multiple Campus in Kathmandu, Nepal. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that financial issues, namely, inability to pay the tuition fees, and the pulling desire

of foreign employment are the most important push factors causing students to leave BMC. Concerns regarding curriculum relevance and student motivation are indicated by some other equally significant factors that have to do with students' perceptions of the value of continuing their education. BMC's high dropout rates are a reflection of a larger problem facing community colleges. Students face a difficult situation as a result of the confluence of economic pressures, expectations for jobs abroad, and opinions on the value of higher education. Various approaches must be used to address this issue at the institutional, governmental, and social levels. The results highlight the necessity of acting quickly to develop focused strategies. In the face of financial difficulties, the perceived value of academic programs, and societal and cultural factors that prioritize employment abroad over higher education, these tactics ought to help students get better value for their money. Suppose BMC and similar institutions can understand these general reasons for dropout. In that case, they can implement stronger measures to ensure that admitted students have a good chance of completing their education and contributing to national progress.

Recommendations

Based on the research's findings, the following suggestions are made to improve student retention at higher education institutions and address the issue of student dropout:

Recommendations for Policy Makers

1. Increase in scholarships, grants, and financial aid packages directed at economically vulnerable students.
2. Strengthening career counseling so that students are well informed about the worth and relevance of their selected programs in the local and national job market. Establish job placement cells that place graduates in jobs within the country; jobs should be identified to minimize foreign employment allure due to the perceived lack of local options.
3. Review all graduate programs to update academic curriculum based on new job market needs and student interests. Each concerned department organizes a comprehensive interaction involving stakeholders such as students, alumni, faculty, and potential employers at the national or college level. Document the findings and recommendations of such interactions and submit them to the respective Dean's office in the form of policy recommendations and advocacy reports in order to push for curriculum change.

4. Raise awareness among students about the long-term benefits of higher education. Educate community members, especially parents and youth, about the personal, economic, and social benefits of higher education, rather than focusing only on immediate foreign employment opportunities.
5. Ensure flexible learning opportunities such as distance learning and open learning. Create an environment where students can fulfill their financial responsibilities along with their studies. Ensure study while earning opportunities.

Recommendations for Further Research:

This study focuses on finding out the reasons why students drop out of Nepali colleges and universities. Most of the past researches were done in the western context, and although some studies were done in the context of Nepal, since they only focused on the context of school education, this study tries to address the lack of studies in this regard by searching for the reasons why students drop out without completing their studies in community colleges in urban areas like Kathmandu.

This research has been done within the scope of limited resources, means, and time, so it may not have been able to thoroughly analyze all the causes of dropout from college and university education. Therefore, it seems necessary to find more reasons for college dropout in future research. Similarly, since this study was done based on only one community campus in Kathmandu, future studies should focus on finding out the root causes of dropout in community and government, and private campuses all over the country, and find better solutions.

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