

## Students' Dropout in Higher Education: A Study of Ghodaghodi Multiple Campus<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Despite the significant importance of higher education, student dropout is an issue of global importance that affects students, their families, labor organizations, universities, government agencies and therefore the countries' economy. Although varied definitions, share of students who did not complete a higher education program within the theoretical duration plus added additional years is termed as dropout. OECD member countries statistics indicates on an average approximately one third of university students do not complete their degree. This study was conducted at Ghodaghodi Multiple Campus, a QAA certified public institute of Kailali aims to explore the causes of dropout using phenomenological research design. In-depth interview was taken with four purposively sampled dropped out students from the campus. The result shows individual, economic, job related, lack of motives to study, marriage, family responsibility causes, lack of job market, waste of time, theory based curriculum, failed in multi years, not attended at examination are found the major causes of student dropout. All the ethical consideration is taken in the study including informed consent. It is suggested to conduct gender wise study on student dropout at the campus.

**Keywords:** Causes of dropout, Ghodaghodi Multiple Campus, higher education, student dropout, university dropout

### Introduction

Education is universally recognized as a milestone for individual and societal development. Student dropout is an issue of global importance that affects students, their

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families, labor organizations, universities, government agencies and therefore the countries` economy (Veliz, 2023). Despite the significant importance of higher education institutions, around the world are grappling with the challenge of student dropout. Astin (1975) has defined dropout as the phenomena where student discontinue their studies before completing their educational program resulting in a failure to obtain the intended degree or credential. Although varied definitions of dropouts, share of students who did not complete a higher education program within the theoretical duration plus added additional years is termed as dropout. According to Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD as cited in Aina, et al. 2022) tertiary education systems in recent decades have significantly grown in terms of both enrollment and graduation rates. However, recent OECD member countries statistics indicate that, on average, approximately one third of university students who enroll do not complete their studies to obtain a degree.

Nurmalitasari, et al. (2023) highlights the students` dropout, a worldwide severe problem in higher education that influence negatively not only individual but also on universities and socioeconomic sectors of the nation. In SAARC countries, higher education institutions have been facing the problem of poor infrastructure, substandard quality of education, heavy dropout rates and inadequate funding (Chauhan, 2008). According Veliz & Ortega (2023) dropout in higher education takes a decision making process includes, perception of unsuitability, thoughts of out/ change, deliberation, information search and a final decision. Furthermore, psychological predictors such as self- determination, self- efficiency, autonomous motivation, adaptability and resilience influence on dropouts (Manrique et al. as cited in Veliz, 2023) highlighted one of the main objectives for the universities to reduce dropout rates.

Causes of dropout differ by the status of the university and country. Lack of studies on dropout in higher education of Nepal, it`s my motivation to study the status, casus and preventing measures of student dropout in higher education in Nepal, especially located on Ghodaghodi Multiple Campus, one of the QAA certified community based campus of Sudurpaschim province of Nepal. To show the student dropout scenario of last two batches on the basis of enrollment and exam form fill up records, reasons for the dropout and policies to be implemented by the campus, university and nation to prevent the dropout, are the objectives of the study.

According to Mujika (2019) as cited in Veilz (2023) motivation is the most important individual variable affects dropout, it affects oppositely, motivation decreased increased dropouts and motivation increased decreased dropout. To prevent the students dropout, various reasons to be identified that motivated them in dropout. The objective of the study is to explore the causes of students` dropout at Ghodaghodi multiple campus and suggest policy measures for students` retention. Study is carried to unfold the factors determining the dropouts in higher education in Ghodaghodi Multiple Campus where study of this regards has not been conducted yet. The study findings are valuable insights for developing higher educational policies as well as helpful for the campus on developing strategies regarding dropouts.

### **Literature review**

#### **Policy review**

University Grants Commission (UGC) makes justifiable allocations and disbursement of grants to universities and higher education institutions to strengthen their operation and academic excellence, sets standard for higher education and formulates plans and policies regarding fostering quality education, good rapport and co-ordination among the universities in the country (UGC, 2022/23).

UGC undertook various program and policies focusing on policy formulation, quality enhancement, infrastructure, capacity development of faculties, scholarship, research and innovations, labor market driven program, quality accreditation, Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education Program (HEHEP) for the quality development of higher education institutions (UGC, 2022/23).

In the fiscal year 2079/80, the UGC supported 60 graduate disabled students for Master`s thesis, 22 students from Martyr`s and 64 from conflict victim family receiving scholarship for bachelor`s degree, 62 Muslim women, 25 Muktakamalaries, 122 with disabilities receives scholarship in different categories. Under HEHEP, 3534 students were provided with poverty targeted scholarship for equitable access to higher education. Similarly, in Master`s level program 5 students from Marty`s family, 21 from conflict victim, 3 Muslim women, one muktakamalari, 25 with disabilities , 55 Dalit`s and 467 economically deprived students received scholarship by UGC.

Established as an autonomous statutory body under the university grants commission act, 1993 UGC aims to promote faculty, support and enhance the quality of higher education, enable educational institutions to meet the national need for the

educational workforce, develop Nepali academia as per the global standard, solve problems and challenges of quality higher education and make higher education inclusive and accessible to disadvantaged and marginalized community as per the national higher education aim (UGC,2022/23).

For the fiscal year 2079/80, UGC passed an annual budget of 180797lakh for regular program and 1490600 hundred for NEHEP. The budget focused on the development of university and community campuses, other higher education institutions, quality enchasing programs as well as scholarship and inclusion of economically deprived students.

### **Empirical review**

Higher education dropout is global issue in since couple of decades because most of the universities and colleges have been facing of dropping out problems. Approximately one out of five students dropout from college in Spain, public universities register greater dropout rate than private universities in Spain (Arce et al. 2015), dropout reduction is taken as a serious aspect in Spain, for 2020 the dropout reduction has been fixed at 15% and committed to increment by 44% the population between 30 to 34 years that complete higher education by ministry of education.

Multi-dimensional reasons are responsible for the dropout of students in the higher education worldwide but the causes may vary according to the situation of the nation. The study, factors influence dropout at private universities, Nurmalitasari et al. (2023) , Indonesia, Central, Java found various reasons to dropout of students include employment status, individual and parental income, relationship with lecturers/supervisors, study program interest, marriage and marital status, campus environment, students job status and simultaneous work, academic satisfaction and performance as well as health related causes. Furthermore, the study found 48% students dropped out due to busy work, 19% because of doing thesis work, 5% problem participating learning, 9% study programme moved to other university, 4% reported the study program did not matched to their interest, 5% due to marriage related reasons and others due to health related causes. In addition, Cabrera et al. as cited in Arce et al. (2015) showed six main variables responsible of drop out viz. psycho education factors, family factors, economic factors, social factors, evolutionary factors and institutional factors where as in Japan, four factors: gender, mother`s years of schooling, mother`s employment status and

educational aspirations at age of 15 years were found significant impact on dropouts (Miwa and Shimosegawa (n.d).

Aina et al. (2022) found university dropout results from a sequential process characterized by gradually decreasing uncertainty and increasing student awareness of education costs and future benefits. This decision is also influenced by the student's level of integration into the academic system. In summary, leaving university is a complex phenomenon where various factors play a role in the final decision.

According the experimental studies carried out in different universities by Consejero et al.; Davies et al. as cited in Arce et al. (2015) investigated the following reasons responsible for the dropout motives of the students who have abandoned their studies;

**Dropout motives**

- ) Entering the labor market
- ) Incapability with work
- ) Economic motives
- ) Too theoretical studies
- ) Dissatisfaction with teaching
- ) Lack of mentoring
- ) Insufficient prior knowledge or difficulty of overcoming studies
- ) University environment
- ) Failure to adopt the college life
- ) Health problems
- ) Lack of vocation
- ) Language difficulties
- ) Family difficulties
- ) Uncertain profession life
- ) Change of mind
- ) Change of residence

The experience of Spain shows the effect of evolutionary adaptation period, in which period young people experience massive changes in their physical, emotional and social maturity cause personal conflict influence in dropout. family`s strong pressure regarding their vocational choice and their qualifications lead to causing dropout. Spain

experienced the effect of economic variable, due to the current economic crisis in Spain many families faced financial difficulties influenced in dropout. Student not receiving scholarship abandoned studies. Institutional variables, responsibilities of teachers, methods used by teachers as well as evaluation methods plays a greater role in students dropout (Cabera et al. as cited in Arch et al., 2015).

### **Methodology**

This study design is qualitative in nature. I utilized Phenomenological research design in this study. Phenomenological research is a design of inquiry through which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon that the participants described (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study has focused on the experiences of dropped out students from Ghodaghodi Multiple Campus (GMC), thus fully based on primary data. Participants of the study are dropped out students' from GMC, four dropped out students, two males and two females were purposively selected and in-depth interview was taken to explore their causes of dropout. Ethical considerations are taken in this study. To analyze data, I read transcript multiple times to gain comprehensive insight, then I developed themes based on the experiences shared by participants to explore the causes of dropout. Students direct cotes are also presented in this study.

### **Findings**

Four participants were selected for this study including two male and two female dropped out students form Ghodaghodi Multiple Campus. The age range of the participant was between 25 to 35 years, among then three participants were married and one with single. Two respondents found engaged in job. The respondents interviewed were from various geographical, socio-cultural and family backgrounds. Various causes of dropouts reported by the participants are presented in some thematic sections.

#### **Causes of students' dropout**

##### ***Economic cause***

The study found economic factors as major cause of dropout from GMC. The 100% participants reported lack of money was the primary cause of dropout. Participant A# reported an experience of feeling of insulted due to unable to pay even exam fee in the collage. Participants B, C, and D also stated economic causes one of the main cause of their dropouts.

### ***Family related cause***

The study found family related factors influenced negatively in the dropout of respondents. Student A expressed the responsibility taken of the family influenced his retention whereas the participant D had same experience of taking care as a head of family.

Participant A said, "when I joined campus, suddenly my father died, my elder brother was the care taker of my family after father's death unfortunately, death of my elder brother took all the family responsibility in me finally I decided to leave the study."

### ***Job related cause***

Students joining job along with learning likely to dropouts, in this study two participants A and participant D stated it was difficult to work simultaneously as a student and as a job holder whereas participant B expressed no any hamper of job in their college study.

Participant D stated, "my poor family background compelled me to search for job, I also decided to join the collage, I filled up final exam form in first and second year but could not join the exam, and finally I leave the collage."

### ***Area of interest and faculty change***

Students` interest area and switching of faculty might lead to students` dropout. Participant A shared the experience of faculty change from humanities to education that made very difficult getting the content whereas participant C expressed the cause of dropout was because of the lack of interested area of study. Furthermore, participant D conveyed the effect of faculty change from science background to education faculty made difficulty in learning and cause of dropout.

Participant C articulated, "My interest was becoming a health personal and wanted to invest my study time in health sector since I was studying in grade 10. After completion of SEE I shared my interest to my father and family member but family signaled they cannot afford on me because my elder brother was studying MBBS, I had witnessed my father's struggles to finance his education, he sometimes used to frustrated and sleepless due to the crisis of money for brothers fee so I cannot press my family on my study target and joined collage without entire motivation finally lead to dropout".

### ***Curricular aspect***

Participant A and participant C argued theoretical curriculum had less significance. Participant C# added, their friends were working at private sector,

especially in boarding schools with ill paid, no job guarantee can be taken with curriculum. Participant D stated they had no even seen the syllabus of the subject and unaware about curricular aspect.

Participant A claimed, “designed curriculum is poorly structures, I studied health and physical education subject in class 11/12, I could not found the specialization health subject at bachelors‘ degree in health and physical subject in humanities.”

#### ***Marriage related cause***

Existing literatures shown marriage related causes has a massive influence in dropout rates. In this study three respondents were married; two out of three expressed marriage was the most influencing cause of their retention. This study showed female most likely to leave collage after marriage than males. Participants B and participant C reported they could not manage the time for study after married, collage was far from home, they became bust at home after married lead to leave the study.

#### ***Health and disability related cause***

Participant C explained, "I was sick during may study time; sever stomach pain affected on my regular schedule of the study". Participant B had also the health related complication, treated stone problem that affected on education.

Participant B said, “I am disabled person. Although collage provided me regular scholarship, I could not complete my study, collage was far from my home town, collage bus was crowed, I have an experience of missed my examination cause of geographical distance.”

#### ***Failed in examination many times***

Most of the respondents experienced having failed in examinations in most of the years. Three participants out of four failed in exams in multi years. Respondent D never attended the final examination.

Participants B and participant C said,” we failed in almost all years so we felt hesitation to come to fill exam up form even yearly.

#### ***High expectation***

Participant D explained his expectation was high. I joined the collage in order to acquirer competent education to cope in this advanced but I could not manage the time accordingly finally dropped out.



### ***Institution / teacher related cause***

Participant A conveyed, “My intermediate education was related to humanities, now I decided to enroll in education faculty that made me to change the subject. I found some difficulties in learning English. Teachers’ demotivation also made me dropout the institution, one day one of my teacher told me that I can never pass in the examination, made me surprised that also demotivated me for the study. I joined tuition class to the same teacher whom I have to proof, I could pass the subject, I passed the examination and visited the teachers who wonder me to pass and told how it could be? The demotivation of my teacher made me frustrated and decided to drop out.

### ***Lack of proper guidance***

Proper guidance enables student to cope different problems. Participant A explained lack of proper guidance was the cause completing the enrolled level where as respondent C also agreed lack of guidance to leave study.

All respondents reported they were fully satisfied with Ghodaghodi Multiple Campus with regards to teaching delivery and well experienced teachers. However, participants B and Participant C expressed their dissatisfaction with administration.

### **Discussion and implication**

This study aimed to explore the causes of student dropout at Ghodaghodi Multiple Campus, focused on lived experiences of students who had left the campus program prematurely. I collected information from four dropped out students through in-depth interview focusing on several causes influencing their dropout, economic, individual, family related, job related, marriage, curricula aspect, education expectation and achievement, health related causes, area of interest and proper guidance. The findings of the study are presented on the basis of the lived experiences shared by participants, as social structure and contexts varies, findings of the study may not be generalized in large context. However community campuses of Nepal have similar experiences, the findings might be applicable in the context. Findings of the study are presented and discussed on the basis of previous literatures.

The result of the study also indicates economic factors as a major cause of student dropout at Ghodaghodi Multiple Campus. All participants reported the underlying cause of the dropout was lack of their monetary status. However in Spain, economic crisis is not the main cause of student dropout, dropout is concerned with the grants factors. If student do not receive scholarship they have to work for educational tuition fee which

may lead leaving the study (Cabrera et al. as cited in Arce et al., 2015). However, study of Ghodaghodi Multiple Campus found student received full scholarship in every year abandoned study prematurely. Similarly, the study of Nilkantha Multiple Campus revealed the economic factor have a leading role in the decision of student dropout, included in family related causes (Subedi, 2022). The study of current status and future possibilities of higher education of SAARC nations shows heavy dropout rates and inadequate funding are the problems facing by the countries of the region.

The result of the study also indicates family related causes affected in the decision of dropout. These factors are not related with family economy only but also the broad areas. Participants reported the experience to lead the family as a head member and fulfill the desires of the members of family, death of responsible family member, and work for family even working in the agriculture sector lead the dropout. The study of Guzman et al. (2021) supports the findings under individual determinants of dropout, the study shows the effect of family type in making decision for dropout. The student with single parents and extended family has the risk of drop out. Deaths of family members, pressure to work are related to dropout decision these reasons supports my study findings.

Student simultaneously having worked and study have high risk of dropping out and if the program did not matched to the respondents interest lead to dropout, four percent student dropped out due to lack of their program of interested (Nurmalitasari et al. 2023). Similarly, this study also explored respondents who were engaged in work dropped out because of the difficulty in simultaneous task of job and study. Some participants responded interest regarding study program was not in their interest where as some responded faculty change made them difficult to adjust in subject matter especially from other areas to education faculty.

Content of the curriculum is one of the reasons for making decision of dropout (Nishat, et al. as cited in Guzman et al., 2021). In support this some participants criticize the curriculum having no significance, theory based where as other participant support the curriculum content as life situation based, even the content studied helping educating their family elder children. The study of Nilkantha Multiple Campus shows the irrelevancy of programs offered as one of the cause dropping out (Subedi, 2022).

The study of Nurmalitasari et al. (2023) explored after got married, respondents were busy taking care of their household and did not had time to go university caused dropout. This study found marriage had significant effect on dropout decision of student,

especially for female students. All female participants reported marriage was the one of the cause of dropout. The study of Nilkanth Multiple Campus (Subedi, 2022) shows the similar conclusion of effect of marriage on dropout as individual factor affecting dropout.

The study of Nurmalitasari et al. (2023) shows 33% respondents reported the quality of lecture unsatisfactory and 67% expressed the campus administration was intricate whereas this study found students satisfactory with collage delivery but some responded administration was not supportive. Some students said health problem and physical disability was also the cause of dropout similarly the study of Nurmalitasari et al. (2023) shows health problem influenced in dropout of students.

Miwa and Shimosegawa (n. d.) highlighted the aspirations of student shows the risk of dropping out, the risk increase if student have no aspirations. This study also shows students without defined goal had the risk of dropout. But one respondent said the aspiration was to gain competent knowledge that they could challenge the competitive world but this high expectation became one of the causes of dropout. Similarly the study found lack of proper guidance from teachers, parents and other sectors was the cause of dropout. Proper guidance on the selection of study areas focused the interest of students' plays the pivotal role in the students' retention. The study found failed in examination many times one of the cause of dropout.

### **Conclusion**

In- depth interview was used to collect information of the participants in this phenomenological study to explore the causes of students' dropout of Ghodaghodi Multiple Campus, Sukad, Kailali. The study explored various factors influenced students dropout based on students experiences that are summarized in economic, family related, job related, area of interest and faculty change, marriage, health related, failed in examination, high expectation, institution and teacher related causes and lack of proper guidance. The most influencing cause was economic and other factors found marriage, failed in various examinations, job or service related factors, not related to their interest and faculty change.

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Full text can be downloaded: <https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/craiaj> & <http://www.craiaj.info/>

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