Causes of Dropout in Higher Education: An Analysis of Student Dropouts in Bachelor of Education from Marsyangdi Multiple Campus

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Abstract

Student dropout in higher education institutions (HEIs) is a serious problem in many developed and developing countries including Nepal. According to the University Grants Commission (UGC) report, many campuses are at risk and have a low number of students due to the high dropout rate. This paper aims to analyse student dropout in B.Ed. programme at Marsyangdi Multiple Campus (MMC) and explores the main causes of high dropouts with some measuring strategies to mitigate the problem. Following a qualitative survey through telephone interviews with 30 dropout students, I collected information and analysed it thematically in a narrative way. The study's findings revealed that 65.47% of students left the campus before completing their degree. The study explored the major causes of high dropouts related to four indicators such as student, institutional, family, and community. Most students leave their studies due to financial constraints, socioeconomic factors, institutional insufficiency, employment opportunities, study abroad, and early marriage and pregnancy. The findings of the study apply to reducing the increasing number of dropouts from the university and other similar campuses. In addition to this, it implies formulating higher education policy and reforming the HEIs as per the demands of the time.

Keywords: Dropout, higher education, indicators, social inequality, social integration

Introduction

Higher education is regarded as the most important supporting pillar for national development throughout the world. HEIs have been established to produce qualified and productive human resources who can contribute with their expertise to local and global communities. The role of higher education is more significant in developing countries as it helps eradicate poverty and slow economic development and can become instrumental in solving various social problems such as social inequality and discrimination (Sihare, 2024). Considering the role of HEIs in development, many countries have developed necessary higher education policies and plans prioritising HEIs because they are the primary providers of higher education (UGC, 2021). However, dropping out of higher education has become a burning problem in many universities in developing countries including Nepal. Therefore, many higher education institutions (HEIs) need to carefully analyse the causes of dropouts from their institutions to prevent and retain them from dropping out and retain them. This paper analyses the dropouts in HEIs in Nepal in general and the causes of dropouts of Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) from Marsyangdi Multiple Campus, a quality-accredited HEI located in Lamjung district.

Students may leave their HEIs voluntarily or due to some factors, including institutional, sociocultural, financial, and personal problems. Kehm et al. (2019) argue that dropout in HEIs is a common global phenomenon, and is caused by similar factors including social integration, study environment, social integration, sociodemographic situation, motivation, and some other external conditions. Regarding dropout rates, about 50% of undergraduate students in Columbia drop out the second highest in Latin America (Arias et al., 2024). Considering the harm due to high dropout rates, the Colombian government, in collaboration with the local government, has developed several initiatives, including supporting students financially, finding various causes of dropout, and socioeconomic barriers to reduce the dropout rates from HEIs (Arias et al., 2024).

In the United States, Craft (2021) reported that 30% of college students drop out due to their financial constraints, whereas 28% of them leave college due to academic disqualification in the United States. Similarly, 13% of students find it hard to fit into university social life, 9% of them do not get adequate support from their families, and 3% of them drop out because of emotional stress (Craft, 2021). In the US, almost 40% of undergraduate students drop out due to financial issues and their inability to balance their college and work time (Vlasova, 2023). On the other hand, the dropout rate is low in the United Kingdom where about 6.3% of full-time first-degree students leave their universities before completing their studies (Vlasova, 2024). These students face problems such as financial crises and academic challenges resulting in dropout. Similarly, around 20% and 16% of undergraduate university students in Australia and Canada, respectively, drop out due to financial stress, lack of support, academic difficulties, and problems (Vlasova, 2024).

Student dropout in HEIs in developing countries is even higher. For example, in African universities, approximately 60% of students do not complete their degrees due to financial problems, low academic foundation, and socioeconomic challenges (Sihare, 2024). Similarly, in India, almost 30-40% of university enroled students do not complete their courses, whereas 25-30% of Pakistani students drop out (Sihare, 2024). The university dropout rate is higher in Brazil reaching approximately 49% (Sihare, 2024). Many developing countries, including Nepal, have

high dropout rates. Perhaps, they have some common influencing factors such as financial crisis, institutional issues, academic challenges, and the socioeconomic background of students.

Studies in various contexts (Arias, 2024; Dahal et al., 2019; Alban, 2019; Casanova, 2021) show that dropout has become an important issue of concern at all levels; however, the concern seems more serious in higher education because their student bodies often consist of individuals from various national and international backgrounds. This diversity can be a life experience living away from their parents for the first time and must quickly learn to manage their lives independently, a significant factor contributing to student dropout rates. One reason for this is that there are many students (de Oliveira, 2021). In this context, Spady (1970) suggested that social integration within HEIs influences a student's commitment or decision to drop out. Similarly, Tinto (1982) posits that most dropout decisions are voluntary and result from poor integration into the institution's social and intellectual environment. Therefore, dropout can be attributed to a variety of factors, classified as academic and non-academic risks (Migal et al., 2017).

In Nepal, most HEIs including public and private universities have an increasing number of dropouts that cause a great education loss (UGC, 2021). There can be different reasons behind the high dropout rates from HEIs. Many students may leave their universities due to socioeconomic factors, whereas a large number of students can be motivated toward studying abroad and foreign employment. The report published by the University Grants Commission (UGC) states that 62,800 students went abroad to 72 countries to study in Nepal in 2017-2018 through their self-financing (UGC, 2021). The number could be higher if the number of India-going students were added. Many students complain about the quality of education provided by HEIs in Nepal compared to the ranked universities abroad. The Beneficiary Satisfaction Survey (2018) conducted by the UGC shows that less than 64.2% of university students are satisfied with the service provided by their universities, while the satisfaction level in technical education decreased further to 37%. (UGC, 2018). These facts indicate that many students choose abroad to study as there may be high chances of study job opportunities which are lacking in Nepal, resulting in high dropout in HEIs.

The increasing dropout rate and the low retention in HEIs have created a crisis in universities in Nepal. To retain these students and reduce the dropout rate, the influencing factors must be identified so that the universities can implement the required policies and programmes. Taking into account this fact, this article has explored the causes of high dropout of B.Ed. students at Marsyangdi Multiple Campus (MMC) and the possible ways to mitigate these causes with the help of the following research questions.

a) What are the causes of high dropout of B.Ed. students at MMC?

b) What strategic measures are needed to mitigate the dropout rate in MMC?

Literature Review

This section presents the theoretical framework related to student dropout in HEIs. Similarly, I reviewed the previous literature related to the research problem and research questions and found the research gap.

Theoretical Review

Various models and theories of dropout aim to explain why students leave their university education before completing their studies. Among them, two dropout models have a significant influence on understanding the dropout phenomena. For example, Spady's model of dropout (1970) emphasises the role of social integration in influencing a student's decision to drop out which includes social integration, academic performance, normative congruence, and friendship support Spady (1970). Similarly, Tinto's model of student integration (1987, 1993) builds on Spady's work and incorporates both academic and social integration with emphasis on academic integration, social integration, pre-entry attributes, goals and commitments, and institutional factors (Tinto, 1987; 1993). This model differentiates between an academic and a social domain within HEIs and views students' dropouts as resulting from failure to integrate into either of these two domains. Furthermore, Kuh's theory of student engagement emphasises student engagement and its impact on retention with institutional support. Besides these models, various non-academic factors such as demographic factors, financial constraints, personal circumstances, and motivation and personality can also contribute to students dropping out of higher education.

Although different theories of dropout highlight different dimensions regarding dropout in higher education, the comprehensive framework for understanding dropout in higher education involves integrating these various theories and models. It recognises that dropout is a multifaceted issue influenced by a combination of academic, social, personal, and institutional factors. Effective intervention strategies should address these various elements to support student retention and success.

Emperical Review

Various studies focusing on dropouts in higher education in various contexts indicated the reasons, factors, and consequences of student dropout including developed and developing countries. In a longitudinal study in Spain, Lassibille & Gomez (2008) reported that the academic preparedness of students for higher education influenced the completion of their university degree. Similarly, they suggested that financial support to students and family characteristics can contribute to reducing dropout students. Daley (2010) argues that higher education institutions in North America are in trouble due to the high number of dropouts from these universities. In this context, he identified the reasons why many students leave their universities before completing their education and also suggested improving the various dimensions, including students' academic state of preparedness to create a successful university student. In a different context, Paura & Arhipova (2014) analysed the causes of dropout of first-year university students in the engineering stream and revealed that students' low prior knowledge and low motivation have contributed to dropping out the university students.

In a qualitative study, Mestan (2016) investigated the reasons for dropping out of college to study for Bachelor of Arts. She reported that students left their universities for course-related or personal reasons. Course-related reasons include career direction, subject range, and teaching quality, whereas personal reasons cover reasons such as financial problems, employment opportunities, and health factors (Mestan, 2016). In a systematic review of various studies in

diverse contexts related to dropout and retention of students in higher education, de Oliveira et al. (2021) identified two characteristics responsible for student dropout in higher education. They categorised these features into student-related features including their personal data and academic performance, and external features including university, learning environment, and the support students received. Similarly, in an empirical review of student dropout in Europe, Kehm et al., 2019) distinguished formal dropout (in which students leave university before completing their degree) from transfer (students either migrate to other institutions or transfer subjects). They summarised their studies with nine dimensions including the study condition, academic and social integration, student motivation and administrative support, and academic achievement, personal characteristics of the students, and the sociodemographic background of the students.

Reviewing student retention and their engagement in HEIs systematically, Tight (2020) viewed that meaningful student engagement plays a significant role in retaining them in the HEIs. In a different context, Casanova et al. (2021) carried out mixed research to explore the situation of student dropouts in the engineering stream. They identified three reasons for dropping out such as their vocational skills, learning process and achievement, and reconciling roles for them. Raising the issue of social inequality in Germany, Muller & Klein (2023) used Tint's model and rational choice theory to quantify the relative contribution to explaining social inequality in dropouts from higher education.

After reviewing various literature in various contexts, Arias et al. (2024) listed the cause of student dropout in higher education into two major categories: institutional category and socioeconomic category. For example, inadequate school education affects performance in higher education (Orlandoni Merli et al., 2017) and they suggested reducing dropout by strengthening the basic education system. Similarly, providing academic tutorials, literacy skills courses, remedial courses, and technological support could support them in improving their academic performance (Alban & Maurico, 2019). Furthermore, implementing new teaching and learning methodologies such as gamification, increasing university welfare services, and flexible timetables (Zabala-Vargas et al., 2021) could be advantageous. To reduce dropout due to socioeconomic categories including low student income, family influence, gender, and demographic issues, increasing social responsibility of HEIs, financial support to needy students, and counseling are needed (Arias et al., 2024).

In Nepal, Dahal et al. (2019) reported various educational factors such as weakness in policy implementation that results in low motivation in teaching and learning, poor learning outcomes, and student dropout. Similarly, in a survey, Subedi (2022) investigated the influencing factors of dropout in bachelor's degree and found three indicators such as student-related, campus-related, and family-related indicators as determining factors of dropout rate. Furthermore, Lagun and Sah (2024) in their quantitative study discussed the factors including socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental factors responsible for dropout rates in rural Nepal. Some of the problems include poverty, lack of instructional materials, marriage, and sociocultural factors (Lagun & Sha, 2024).

The literature in various contexts shows that student dropout is a major issue of concern among HEIs including both developed and developing countries and facing this problem. Similarly, the causes of such increasing dropouts in many universities are institution-related,

socioeconomic, and personal. Identifying the causes of the problem can support to provide the ways of solutions in these universities. In Nepal, too, I have observed that many campuses including community, private, and constitutional campuses in urban and rural areas have high dropout rates due to various reasons; however, there are limited studies related to this issue in Nepal. So, this study has bridged this gap by exploring the reasons behind the increasing number of students dropping out of HEIs in Nepal.

Methodology

This paper explores the main causes that influence the dropout in HEIs. To explore the causes, I employed a qualitative survey design suggested by Lichman (2023) under an interpretive paradigm. Through semi-structured telephonic interviews (Jones, 2020), I collected information from the participants focusing on the influencing factors responsible for their dropouts. I selected MMC for the study because this is the first and leading community campus in Lamjung district and the only QAA-accredited campus in the district where the dropout rate was higher in the Bachelor of Education. Of the 349 dropout students in B.Ed. from MMC in four academic years, I selected 30 participants purposively with a 2:1 female and male ratio due to a high number of female dropouts. I have used both primary and secondary sources of data (records of the campus, related books, and previous research reports) guided by the research questions.

After establishing a good rapport with the participants, and obtaining consent from the participants, I took telephone interviews with them and recorded their opinions in a diary. The collected information was transcribed, coded, and changed into various themes based on the research questions. Then I analysed the data thematically and presented it in narrative form as suggested by Braun et al. (2021). I have used the pseudonyms of the participants while presenting the data. Moreover, I have presented some related data in the table for further interpretation along with the narration.

Results and Discussions

This section presents the results based on the available information from the participants involved in this study and the discussion of the results.

Structural Overview of Students' Dropout

MMC, one of the QAA-accredited community campuses, was established in 2047 B.S. in affiliation with Tribhuvan University. It has been offering various academic programmes such as Master of Arts, Master of Business Studies, Master of Education, Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Business Studies, and Bachelor of Arts. The administrative record of the campus in the last four years shows that there is an increasing dropout rate in B.Ed. every year. Table 1 shows the student dropouts in different academic years at MMC. The number has been taken based on their enrolment in B.Ed. first year at different times, and their dropout rates in the first, second, third, and fourth years.

Table 1

Number of Enroled Students and Dropouts in B.Ed.

Year	Academic Year	Enrolled Students	Exam Form Filled up	Dropout Number	Dropout Percentage
B.Ed. Fourth	2076/077 B.S.	178	52	126	70.78
B.Ed. Third	2077/078 B.S.	157	42	115	73.24
B.Ed. Second	2078/079 B.S.	105	49	56	53.33
B.Ed. First	2079/080 B.S.	93	41	52	66.91
Grand Total		**533**	**184**	**349**	**65.47**

(Source: MMC Administrative Record, 2080/081)

Table 1 shows that in 2076/077, 178 students were enroled in B.Ed. first year. The number dropped out gradually up to the fourth year and reached 126 dropouts in the 2080/081 academic year. Only 52 students filled up the exam forms in the fourth year. As a result, there was 70.78% dropout rate in the fourth year. Similarly, in 2077/078, 157 students were enrolled in the 1st year but 115 students left the campus by the end of the third year. As a result, there was 73.24%. dropout rate in the third year. Likewise, in 2078/079, 105 students enrolled in B.Ed. first year. However, 56 students left the campus by the end of the second year and only 49 students filled out the exam form. There was a 53.33% dropout rate in the second year. Finally, out of 93 enroled students in first year 2079/080, only 42 completed the exam form. As a result, 52 students dropped out reaching a dropout percentage of 65.47.

The structural overview shows the dropout crisis of MMC in B.Ed. According to the administrative record, there were more dropouts in the student election year as many students enroled only for election purposes in the first year and left campus after the election. However, the dropout rate from the first year to the second, third, and fourth years was also high while calculating the overall dropouts after their enrolment, not the dropouts of a year.

Causes of High Dropout Rates in the B.Ed.

Various factors influence student dropouts in HEIs. The semi-structured interviews with the participants involved in the study informed various causes of dropping out of their higher education. Following Will et al. (1989), I have categorised their responses within their framework which comprises four indicators, student-related indicators, institution-related indicators, family-related indicators and community-related indicators which align somehow with nine dimensions investigated by Khem et al. (2019).

After coding the interviews, I systematically analysed the causes of the participants' dropout and grouped them into Will et al.'s framework. Under the student-related indicators, I have included reasons such as learner's interest, willpower, learning proficiency, job opportunity, health problem, desire for abroad study, preparation for foreign languages, marriage, childbearing, and foreign employment. Similarly, institutions-related indicators include the causes related to the enrolled campus, and it covers the reasons such as level of institutional counseling, institutional information system, teaching-learning environment, services available at the campus,

available courses, level of teachers' motivation, behaviour of administrative staff, fee structure, and the duration of the academic session, exam, and result publications. Likewise, the family-related indicator includes the socio-economic status of the family, family pressure and responsibility, motivation and encouragement from the family, migration, learning environment at home, and some family obligations. Moreover, under community-related indicators, I have included society's perception of higher education, the socioeconomic status of the community, community support for education, cultural attitudes and norms, and access to opportunities.

Student-related Indicator

The participants involved in the interviews explained their causes of dropout from the campus. Most of them explained that the job opportunities in their village, motivation towards studying abroad, and foreign employment in Japan, Korea, Portugal, Qatar, and Dubai were the major causes of dropout. Similarly, students' low interest and motivation to higher education due to the economic crisis and their regular poor exam results pushed them out of the campus. Furthermore, some female students said that their marriage and immediately their pregnancy and childbirth prevented them from continuing their studies. For example;

> *I was a regular student in the first year. I was married when I was studying in my second year. Even after marriage, I continued my studies even though I could not attend class regularly. But how could I continue my studies after having a child? I spent the whole time with my baby and family and quit my studies. (Jenny Gurung, 2/1/2081)*

Jenny was a representative participant; many dropouts have similar experiences of leaving campus before completing their studies. The trend of early marriage in some communities such as Gurung and Chhetri in the study area may encourage them to early marriage and to become mothers, which becomes a cause of dropout in higher education. Awareness programmes focussing on these communities and motivational programmes on the value of higher education for women's empowerment can help to reduce dropout rates.

Similarly, Bel Bahadur Tamang explained;

> *I was a below-average student. I barely passed the Grade 12 exam. When there was no job, like other friends, I joined this campus. But I intended to go to a foreign country and earn money. I knew that I had to go to a foreign country for a job after completing my B.Ed. Why should I spend my time on the campus? So, I left it after a year and now I am working at Qatar Airport. (3/1/2081)*

> *Nowadays we have foreign language preparation classes around the campus. Many friends decided to join the Korean and Japanese language courses. They offer free language classes on the condition that we have to process for abroad from their consultancy. We thought that could be a good option for us because there is no guarantee of getting a job after completing our studies. (Hem Bahadur Ale and Bhumika Thapa from Korea, 9/1/2081)*

The above remarks indicated that foreign employment and study abroad motivated many students to leave their university education. Young people did not see opportunities in their home country due to nepotism and political influence and related higher education for only earning money. This psychology may divert them towards money-making jobs instead of completing their higher education. Moreover, some of them might have financial problems with higher education and look for job opportunities, and they become despair after disqualifying at every opportunity. This situation may drag the youths out of the country which causes high dropout rates in higher education in Nepali universities. These findings resonate with the findings of Paura & Arhipova (2014) and de Oliveira et al. (2021), who reported that many university students leave their higher education due to personal reasons such as a low level of motivation, and lack of job opportunities and interest. The results may be similar in most of the developing countries where university students face similar problems and leave their studies frustrated.

Institution-related Indicators

The result of the study shows that the academic programmes, courses, ways of counseling the students, the behaviour of administrative staff and their services, and the effectiveness of the information centres of higher education institutions have an important role in the high dropout rates of university students. Participants involved in the interview expressed their views that they shifted to foreign universities comparing the courses and facilities and the scope of the job market. For example:

> *I was a regular and good university student at MMC. Until I got another opportunity, I was thinking of completing B. Ed. from MMC. However, when my friends informed me about the new courses in foreign universities and the teaching-learning system, I was motivated towards it and joined a university in Japan. (Bishnu Shrestha, 2/2/2081)*

> *The student counseling system is not effective at MMC. When I had a course problem, I was depressed by the behaviour of the administrative staff and some of the teachers. The students might make mistakes, and they need good counseling, but I did not receive any support. (Devi Tamang, 2/1/2081)*

> *You know what one of my teachers usually used to say, he always expressed his tension and complained about the teaching profession. Since teachers are not satisfied with their profession, why should I study B.Ed. and be a frustrated teacher? This indirectly motivated me to leave the campus and find a new option in a new place. (Binita Gurung, 3/2/2081)*

The above remarks highlighted the significant role of education institutions in controlling dropout rates and showed how ineffective counseling, teachers' and administrative staff's irresponsible behaviour, and updated courses and pedagogy became a cause of high dropout rates in HEIs including MMC. Arias et al. (2024) and Dahal et al. (2019) also explained the institutional roles of motivating students to reduce dropout rates and increase the retention rate in higher education in developing countries. Implementation of job-centered courses as per the demand of the market, improving the academic staff and teachers' behaviour, and updating with

the latest technology and pedagogy can be effective ways to reduce the high dropout from the HEIs including MMC.

Family-related Indicators

The family has an important role in providing education to children in developing countries like Nepal. The participants involved in this study also explained some family-related indicators as the responsible factors for the high dropout rate in higher education. They reported that due to the low socioeconomic status of their family, higher education was never the priority and they suffered from a financial crisis resulting the dropouts from the campus. Similarly, some family obligations such as caring the children and elderly people, migration, and low motivation for higher education also contributed to leaving campus before completing their B.Ed. For example:

> *Everything was normal until I was studying this second year of B.Ed. Unfortunately, my father-in-law died. My husband was in Qatar and my mother-in-law was ill. I had to bear all the responsibilities of my family. My husband suggested I quit the study and I did as I had options. (Shobha Pandit, 1/1/2081)*

> *The economic condition was the main reason for dropping out of my studies. My house is four hours away from my campus. I had to live in rent. My expenses were at least 15000-20000 per month including the campus fee. My family managed for some months. I tried to find a job around the campus to support my studies, but I could not get a job. So I decided to drop my studies and support my family in agriculture. Now, I have goat farming. Maybe I will join the campus in the future. (Belu BK, 12/1/2081)*

The above remarks indicated that socioeconomic status and family obligations discouraged the students from completing their higher education. Since the students have no way to manage their monthly expenses and the regular pressure to quit their studies due to family responsibilities, they sacrifice their studies for family purposes. In addition to these, some married students had to face lots of questions from their husbands and family members as their freedom has been limited after marriage. For example, Maya Thapa expressed, "*My husband always suspected my character, and I had to face psychological torture. I was not allowed to speak with my male friends at the campus. Understanding his intention, I left campus although I was interested in completing my studies.*" These examples show how female students are compelled to leave their studies despite their keen interest due to sociocultural reality and gender discrimination. These findings align with the findings of Muller & Klein (2023) who pointed out social inequality as one of the factors of high dropouts in HEIs.

Community-related Indicators

The social psychology guided by sociocultural beliefs on higher education has increased the dropout rates in higher education. The participants narrated how social belief contributed to students and their parents to make a mindset of spending for higher education. It was visible from their responses that society gives value to the persons who send more remittances from foreign

countries rather than those who earn degrees from universities. For example, Ben Bahadur Ghle from Korea explained;

> *Since the person who earns more money has more prestige in the society and family, the educated persons have less value in my Gurung community. Due to the social pressure. I dropped my studies and processed for Korea. Now, I have good prestige in my society. (11/1/2081)*

> *A few people have higher educational qualifications in my community. People in my community believe in early marriage rather than completing the degree on campus. They want to spend the money on their daughter's education rather than on their higher education. (Bhakti Maya Ghale, 12/1/2081)*

The above remarks are some examples of how social perception helps people to make their mindset about higher education resulting in high dropouts in higher education. Thus, the neoliberal economic ideology has indirectly motivated people to start money-making businesses instead of completing their degrees. Mestan (2016) and Arias et al. (2024) also found that socioeconomic factors guided by financial pressure caused high dropout rates in developing countries. The social psychology regarding the value of higher education relating to income needs to be changed to reduce the high dropouts from universities including MMC.

Ways to Mitigate the High Dropouts

The participants involved in the interview suggested some ways to mitigate the high dropout rates from the campus. Many of them viewed that there should be a change in social psychology viewing the value of higher education because society has a belief that education is for getting a job and making money. For example, Maya shared, "When they don't find a job or are unable to make big money compared to those who earned in a foreign country without higher education, many students drop their studies and go searching for a job in a foreign country." Therefore, reform in these social beliefs guided by neoliberal ideology is needed. Similarly, they suggested reforming the HEIs and the courses offered in these institutions. For example, Bel Bahadur explained: *"What is the use of getting a degree without skill?" Does this degree ensure job opportunity in the global market?"* This means that many students are looking for courses which can support them in making their good career in the future.

They complained about the behaviour of the campus administrative staff and the counseling for students to reduce the high dropouts. *"When students have problems, the campus counseling desk should support them in finding a good way to continue their studies, and the behaviour of the staff can divert the students' mindset."* The campus should make the counseling desk active and motivational training to the staff and teaching faculties can be supportive in addressing the problem raised by the participants. The major problem facing many students from low socioeconomic background is the financial crisis. Coordinating with the local government, funding agency and the University Grants Commission for scholarships can support them financially, which may reduce the possible high dropout rates.

Since most of the students at MMC come from communities where there exists early age marriage which is a major cause of high dropout rates. "*Many girls get married when they study*

the first year, become pregnant in the second year, and have a child in the third year. It is difficult to manage their studies in this situation" (Rita KC). This requires an awareness campaign for parents and girls against early marriage and early pregnancy. The campus should initiate such projects focusing on needy communities. Similarly, to motivate the students with poor learning achievement and improve pedagogical aspects, the participants suggested that the campus should initiate remedial classes, technical support, and updates with the latest pedagogies and technology on the campus.

For mitigating ways to reduce the high dropouts from the campus, Alban and Maurico (2019) suggested that some student support programmes improve the learning proficiency of slow learners. Likewise, implementing new teaching and learning methodologies and flexible timetables helps to continue their studies (Zabala-Vargas et al., 2021). Furthermore, Arias et al. (2024) suggested financial support to needy students and counseling to reduce dropouts due to socioeconomic categories, including low student income, family influence, gender, and demographic issues.

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Conclusion and Implications

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The high student dropout rate in higher institutions throughout the world is a genuine subject of study. This article explores the causes of high dropouts and some measurement strategies to mitigate this problem at MMC through semi-structured interviews with dropout students on campus. Although this study is focused on MMC dropouts, the findings of the study can be applied to various HEIs in Nepal and global contexts because many HEIs have had similar problems in the last couple of years. Following the Will et al. (1989) framework, the causes reported by the participants have been categorised into four indicators related to student, institutional, family, and community because they are the main influencing factors for causing high dropout rates in HEIs. The study explored the main causes of high dropouts including financial constraints, socioeconomic factors, institutional insufficiency to motivate and counsel the students, lack of employment opportunities in and out of the country, motivation towards study abroad, and early marriage and early pregnancy. The study suggests some mitigating ways to reduce dropout rates by analysing the participants' perspectives. The findings of the study reported in this study are applicable to deduce the increasing number of dropouts from the university and other similar campuses. Besides this, it can be applied to formulate higher education policy and reform HEIs as per the demands of the time.

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