



Causes of Female High School Student Dropout in Bangladesh: An Exploration of the Pabna District in Familial, Economic and Institutional Contexts

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. During the 2017–18 fiscal year, the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), a wing of Bangladesh's Planning Division, Ministry of Planning, gave the authors a Fellowship Research grant. This project was finished in 2020. The article published in this journal is a part of that research. Author MMA, came up with the idea for this study, planned the research, gathered the data and wrote the text. Another author, MNH, revised the complete article. Both authors reviewed, read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/AJESS/2023/v39i2843

Open Peer Review History:

This journal follows the Advanced Open Peer Review policy. Identity of the Reviewers, Editor(s) and additional Reviewers, peer review comments, different versions of the manuscript, comments of the editors, etc are available here:

<https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/96254>

Original Research Article

Received: 12/12/2022

Accepted: 02/02/2023

Published: 06/02/2023

ABSTRACT

Since ancient times, women in Bengal have been poorly treated and left without most of their rights. Moreover, that continuity still exists in some areas, education being one of them. Male and female enrollment in primary and secondary schools has recently reached the expected level. However, the rate at which female students drop out of secondary school is still alarming. The goal of this study is to find out why so many female students in Bangladesh, and especially in the Pabna district, drop

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out of high school. In carrying out this research, qualitative and quantitative data have been used almost equally, and a mixed-method approach has been applied to reach the aims and objectives of the research. Findings show that female students drop out of Western-style secondary education mainly because of structural-level barriers. Poverty among parents or guardians is the root cause of dropout among economic issues. And all the structural-level issues are interlinked with poverty. Though child marriage is the immediate process of the dropout, it is not the leading cause. It is a process. Research shows that it is impossible to stop female students from dropping out of high school if the poverty of their parents or guardians is not alleviated and the immediate process is not stopped. It is suggested that needy and educationally disadvantaged students receive a special financial incentive. In addition to getting support from the government administration, the school management committee must play a decisive role in meeting the problems and supporting female students in all aspects.

Keywords: *Child marriage; dropout; economic status; educational institutions; family; poverty; women friendly.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Missionaries initiated the Western style of modern education in India and Bengal. However, in the beginning, there was no place for women. After the English East India Company got involved, the subcontinent's education policy started to change at a new pace. After that, women's educational status started to change gradually. When Calcutta University started functioning in 1857, female students were left aside. Only male students could enroll and sit for the exams (Entrance, IA, etc.). However, after many setbacks and hard work, Chandramukhi Basu passed the first entrance exam in 1876 [1]. Then, the university authorities made different rules about admitting women (female students), which made it easier for women to get an education over time. In this way, the women of India, including East Bengal, began to be included in this western style of education at an increasing rate by 1947. However, after the country's partition, the then-Pakistani government discouraged women in many ways in East Bengal (East Pakistan). However, after the Great Liberation War in 1971, which gave Bangladesh its independence, women in this country continued to make more and more progress in modern western education. However, even in the twenty-first century, their achievements are not desired. Behind this, there were many obstacles, some of which still exist. With the passage of time and the transformation of our country's culture and society, the approach and manner of addressing the problems of female students have changed. Due to these problems, almost half of the girls in secondary school (from class six to SSC level) still need to drop out. This study attempts to analyze the familial, economic, and institutional factors that compel girls to drop out of their high school

education. The personal, social, and cultural perspectives of dropout have been excluded from this study.

1.1 Objectives and Rationale of the Study

This study aims to find out why so many female students in Bangladesh and the Pabna district drop out of high school. To this end, the research was conducted with the following specific objectives:

1. To investigate the family-based, economic, and institutional barriers to dropout among female secondary school students in the Pabna district.
2. To illustrate how the mentioned barriers influence the dropout rate of female students.
3. To find out if existing theories about why students drop out of school can be used in the chosen research area.

1.2 Research Questions

This research has been conducted based on the following research questions:

1. What are the familial, economic, and institutional problems that face the high school girls of Pabna district?
2. How do the problems become interrelated and affect the female high school students?
3. Do the issues truly represent the dropout-related theories?

1.3 Literature Review

There have been few studies on high school dropouts within and outside the country. In most cases, the causes of dropout are almost the same, but the degree of intensity of the cause is

different. However, there has not been much research done to find out if family, economic, and institutional factors affect student dropout rates in different ways and if they do. Sabates et. al [2] wrote a research monograph in which the reasons behind the dropout of female students in secondary education in Bangladesh were analyzed through a longitudinal study. Here, the reasons why female students drop out of school are talked about and analyzed using predictors from households. However, the present study focuses on more than just familial issues. It also focuses on economic and institutional issues.

UNESCO [3] compiled a report on the causes of primary and secondary school dropouts among female students. It analyzes the causes from a broad standpoint. But almost entirely ignoring the contemporary dimensions and nature of dropout causes. Even though some specific variables have been talked about, it looks at all variables at a level that is not structural.

Rahman MA [4] explored factors leading to secondary school dropout in Bangladesh. He identified the causes of students dropping out of secondary school. The primary data were collected from 790 former secondary school level students and 1580 parents/guardians, enabling an in-depth and systematic analysis of the issue. The method used in this study was quantitative with logit analysis. However, qualitative data was missing in his research. Only statistical analysis has been done. However, the present study emphasizes both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Moreover, some variables are the same in domestic, economic, and institutional issues, and some different variables have been analyzed in the present study. So, the study of Rahman is helpful in this study. However, considering the analytical method, the current study is better suited to understand the issues of female students' dropout in Bangladesh in general and specifically in Pabna.

Shahidul [5], in his study, explored the issue of school dropout by considering the issue of the marriage of girls in Bangladesh and their choice of husbands. His study presented the idea of the socio-cultural landscape of the country, which has helped build the framework for the research already carried out.

Yancey's master's thesis [6] on the causes of school dropout among female students in rural Bangladesh has identified various factors behind it. Due to not analyzing the socio-economic

context of this country, it was not possible to go deep into the subject. But the present study can get some ideas from the field-level research on the issue.

Zaman wrote a master's thesis [7] on the causes of student dropout in primary and secondary education in Bangladesh with the help of several independent and dependent variables. However, because both students are included in his works, only the issue of female dropouts came up broadly. Even so, this country's society, culture, politics, etc., came up in his research. As gender plays a significant role in dropping out of high school in Bangladesh, especially for girls, this does not fit the study. Nevertheless, it has been indirectly used in the present research.

The discussed articles have generalized the reasons why female students in Bangladesh drop out of secondary school. However, these factors are only present in certain regions of the country. The economic situation of the people in a particular region may be favorable, but it was discovered that the social situation of that region could be more conducive to female education. Again, the economic situation of the people in some regions could be improved, but the existing social environment is conducive to the education of women. In addition, additional factors contributing to the female student dropout rate vary by region. Therefore, it is essential to determine the interrelationships between the factors and whether or not these interrelationships influence the entire process. Moreover, since the reasons for the secondary school dropout of female students in the Pabna district had not been thoroughly uncovered, it was necessary to conduct basic investigative research to uncover the truth. If the true causes of female high school dropouts in Pabna are not identified, the girls in this area drop out and become victims of child marriage. They ultimately suffer in the long run. So, for the well-being of the womenfolk of Pabna, the dropping out of female students from high school must be stopped.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frameworks are essential for all of the work we do, whether we use quantitative, qualitative, or a mix of the two. A theoretical framework explains why their work is meaningful and essential [8]. Pearson et al. write an essay [9] in which they try to prove that some theories about why students drop out of high school are true. These theories are relevant and effective all

over the world. Bangladesh is not an exception. Because of this, these universal theories may cause girls in Bangladesh to stop going to school at the secondary (SSC) level. These theoretical frameworks can largely account for why girl students at the SSC level in this country drop out of institutions. In this regard, the researchers talked about five theories: (1) the academic mediation theory, (2) the general deviance theory, (3) the deviant affiliation theory, (4) the poor family socialization theory, and (5) the structural strain theory. However, all five theories still need to match up with why people drop out of school in Bangladesh. In this study, we have tried to determine why female students drop out of high school in Bangladesh.

Ungureanu [10] also mentioned the same theories and tried to prove that they fit all countries. Therefore, after interpreting the field-level data collected through empirical research, it has been observed that the mentioned theories have played a significant role in the dropout of female students at the SSC level in Bangladesh. Therefore, the theories mentioned in the articles discussed in the current research work have been used as theoretical frameworks in constructing and analyzing the structure.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study has used qualitative and quantitative data almost equally. The qualitative case study method and field investigation have uncovered some vital information. As a result, practical methods have also been applied appropriately and effectively. The decision to use mixed methods in the research was reasonable. However, secondary sources were used to figure out what the research was about, build the theoretical framework, plan the research methods, and analyze the primary data.

2.2 Participants and Sampling Technique

The study utilized 160 students from four high schools in Pabna, a district in Bangladesh. When the data was collected, there were 1, 92,693 students at the secondary level in Pabna. Among them, 1, 02,890 students are female [11]. The schools were chosen on purpose, and the students from grades six to ten were chosen at random. Though the sample size seems insufficient, it was representative. Besides, the district town was chosen based on the judgment

that all people living there live according to their income, profession, and class. Bera Upazila was also chosen because it has the lowest rate of literacy in the whole district [12]. Two schools are taken from rural areas, and the other two are from the district town of Pabna. Key Informant Interviews (KII) were conducted with 13 (thirteen) key informants. Furthermore, four focus group discussions (FGD) were held in four different schools, with over forty (40) participants attending and sharing their thoughts, comments, and observations.

2.3 Research Instrument

The study utilized a structured research questionnaire with close-ended and open-ended questions. The students filled out a questionnaire about their family situations, economic status, and where they were in school. Key informant interviews (KII) were conducted face-to-face with a checklist. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted in person using a checklist.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

After pre-testing, the questionnaire were surveyed among the students in person. Before that, consent was received from the students, key informants, and FGD participants. Heads of the relevant educational institutions, class teachers, women education researchers, and gender education experts were interviewed in depth.

2.5 Data Analysis Procedure and Presentation

The qualitative analysis method has been applied to analyze the qualitative data collected through documentary analysis and fieldwork. At the same time, qualitative and quantitative data collected at the field level have been analyzed through descriptive statistical methods such as frequency distribution and correlation. The results are presented through tables, graphs, charts, diagrams, or mathematical equations.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Family Oriented Issues

A family is a small unit of human society, and family organization is a universal aspect of the

human social system. A “family” generally refers to a group of people living together. According to some, a family is a social group bound together by kinship ties. It is not just an organization (Sangha). It is a mix of customs and institutions or a set of customs and institutions that work together [13]. However, Henslin believes a family consists of people who consider themselves related by blood, marriage, or adoption. The family is the unit in which parents are responsible for disciplining children and providing for their material needs [14]. So a family is formed in society with parents and children. It can be formed through the social institution of marriage and sometimes through adoption.

However, the concept of family in Islam is a little different. The basic philosophy of the Islamic way of life is “Hayate Tayyib,” i.e., a pure, prosperous, just, orderly, and peaceful life. Regarding this, Allah says, “Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer- We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do [15].” Moreover, the main field for implementing this philosophy is the family, which starts with marriage. The elements of family in Islam are mainly two: blood ties and matrimonial ties. According to the Qur’an, the first human being was Adam, and the first family of the human race was formed around Adam and Eve (Hawa). Though the name was not directly mentioned in the Quran, but it was mentioned as the company of Adam. This has been discussed in six places in the Quran [16]. Later, this family life prevailed in full scale and with full dignity among their children [17]. What kind of relationship (mutual responsibilities and duties) should exist between family members has been described in various places in the Quran and Hadith.

According to the analysis of Muslim sociologists, the institution known as the family has evolved in various contexts from Adam (A.S.) to the present day. As a result of individuals’ distorted religious beliefs and customs, this institution has witnessed a number of deviations. Bu according to the functionalists, the family fulfills six needs that are basic to the survival of every society. These needs, or functions, are (1) economic production, (2) socialization of children, (3) care of the sick and aged, (4) recreation, (5) sexual control, and (6) reproduction. To make certain that these functions are performed, every human group has adopted some form of the family [18]. However, the role of the family in Islam is not judged in such a narrow way. Nevertheless, it is thought to be the most important institution for the growth and well-being of human life as a whole. It is shown how the role of the family as an institution in Bangladeshi society (for people of all religions, but mostly Muslims and Hindus) affects the number of female students who drop out of school at the SSC level. The first question was whether or not family issues paved the way for them to drop out of SSC-level education. To this question, 94.4 percent, or 151 respondents, said “yes,” and only 9, or 5.6 percent, said “no.” According to this opinion, family-oriented issues are pushing female students out of this level of education. The matter is presented in detail.

3.1.1 Discriminatory attitudes of parents toward daughters

Parents have a particular soft spot for their sons in patriarchal societies like Bangladesh. In contrast, this viewpoint is not supposed to exist in households that adhere to and uphold Islamic values. In the way things are now, parents are just as loving toward their sons as they are not toward their daughters. The problem adversely impacts the opinions of female respondents.

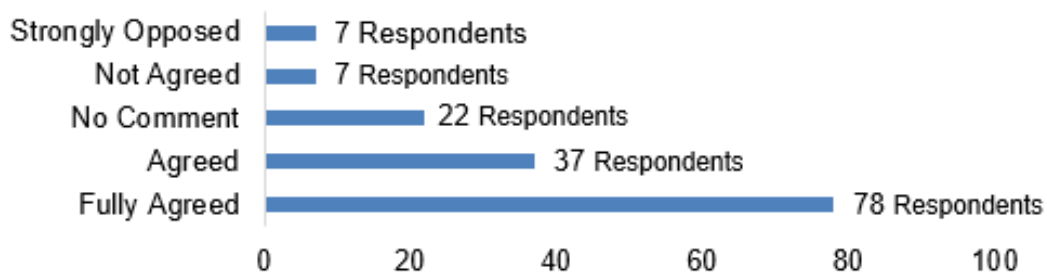


Fig. 1. Respondents’ views on parents’ discriminatory attitudes towards their daughters

The above figure shows that out of 151 respondents, 115, or 76.2 percent, agreed or strongly agreed, fourteen disagreed or strongly opposed, and 22 had made no comment. In Islam, boys and girls have the same rights except for inherited wealth. However, the way things are in this country right now, girls almost enjoy limited rights in all aspects of life. In this context, a key informant interviewee noted, "If a family has a boy and a girl, then the family sends the boy to school, and preparations are made to send the girl to her in-laws' house. There is a problem with the cost of all purposes for the daughter. Because many of the guardians feel that a son needs a job to earn, which can be obtained through education, while a daughter needs to be married at the right time. Here, favoritism towards the son is easily seen [19]."

3.1.2 Parental educational backwardness

A parent's educational attainment broadens his or her perspective on a child's education. If the parents are educated, they try to educate their children at a higher level and with better quality than themselves. However, in Bangladesh, parents send their daughters to secondary school, but many cannot keep them there until the SSC exam. There are many reasons for this, such as changes in socioeconomic conditions, changes in people's attitudes, etc. The data from this study shows that many daughters whose

parents did not get a proper education drop out of high school. This may be clearer from the Table 1.

In this context, experts think that, "If the parents are educationally backward, it can be challenging to overcome this problem. Because educationally backward parents generally think about the financial well-being of their children, especially daughters. Observations have shown that if a girl is offered marriage during her secondary school years by a family whose financial status is much better than her parents', then the parents arrange her marriage without a second thought. They do not care that this girl can learn and stand on her own two feet one day. However, due to educational backwardness, they could not become visionaries [20]."

3.1.3 Relatives' pressure on parents to marry their children

Relatives often pressure parents in various ways; most of those who do this are uneducated and believe in various superstitions. The world has moved forward or is moving forward, and women from the bottom of society do not know they are part of this trend. Some relatives believe that marrying off a girl when she reaches a certain age is the best thing for parents. The respondents expressed their views on this as follows Fig. 2.

Table 1. Educational backwardness of parents paving the way for students to drop out

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly Opposed	9	5.6	6.0
	Not Agreed	16	10.0	10.6
	No Comments	8	5.0	5.3
	Agree	54	33.8	35.8
	Fully Agreed	64	40.0	42.4
	Total	151	94.4	100.0

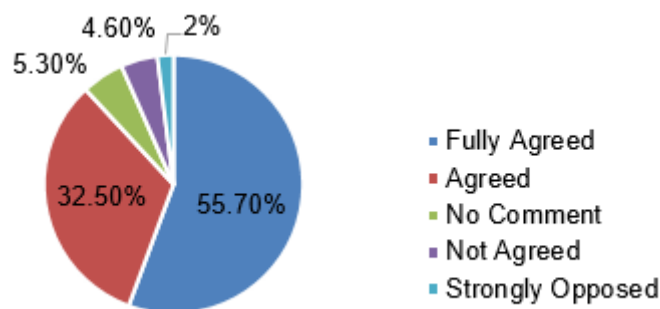


Fig. 2. Respondents' opinion about pressure exerted on parents for the marriage of their daughter by relatives

The analysis of the above figure shows that 151 respondents have given their opinion on this issue. In contrast, only two have opposed, seven have disagreed, and eight have refrained from giving their opinion. On the other hand, 133 people, or 88.2 percent, have agreed and strongly agreed that relatives pressure parents for a daughter's marriage. According to a key informant in this regard,

Relatives keep constant contact with parents, wish them well, and offer various pieces of advice. Sometimes they scare the parents by portraying the negative image of society, and sometimes they bring up the issue of protecting their honor. Sometimes, they remind them of the suffering and consequences of delaying the daughter's marriage. At one point, the parents lost patience and decided on the daughter's marriage [21].

3.1.4 Parents' irrational backward thinking regarding marriage, which guarantees all kinds of security to the daughter

In general, marriage between the immature boys and girls is permissible in Islam. Nevertheless, performing such child marriages is not Fard, Wajib, Sunnah, Nafal, or Mustahab. Based on a hadith, however, parents in the social setup of Bangladesh strongly believe that getting a daughter married off early is a sacred act. They always trend to refer to a hadith. The meaning of the hadith is, "After the birth of the child, the responsibility of the parents is to give him a beautiful name, to teach him deen (religion), and to get him or her married when he or she reaches adulthood. If the child does not get married after reaching adulthood and commits a crime, then the responsibility will fall on the father [22]." Most of these orthodox parents do not know that avoiding child marriage is not against Islamic Sharia and is not a sin. When it comes to girl marriages, parents frequently overlook a few factors. They do not understand the meaning of adulthood ('Baleg' or 'Sabalak/Sabalika'). In the case of girls, their menstruation is considered puberty. However, they may not know that menstruation is just a part of puberty not adulthood. They do not judge whether the girl has the physical and mental capacity required for marriage, childbearing, and childrearing. It should be noted that both performing and avoiding child marriage are permissible in Islamic terms. Islam says that if there are two legal things to do, you should choose the one that is

better for you. This principle is called 'Istihsan.' But parents in Bangladesh consider the overall safety of girls and put their daughters' lives at risk by marrying them off in many cases, which is noticeable in the opinions of the respondents.

The Fig. 3 shows that out of a total of 151 respondents, 118 or 78.2 percent, opine that there is an attitude among parents that marriage ensures the overall security of a girl child. However, they do not consider post-marriage complications. "Parents mean a person's basic (food, clothing, shelter, education, and medical) rights by the security of a girl child," a social analyst explains [23]. In reality, "though, she is usually not safe in her husband's family or with her in-laws if she does not feel safe in her own family before or after marriage. However, in many cases, the girl feels more insecure than before [24]." It is difficult to eliminate the superstitious beliefs about marriage in Bangladeshi society. In this context, a social worker said,

Three types of people cannot sleep in Bangladesh. First, those who have much wealth, i.e., the rich. Secondly, those with no wealth, i.e., the destitute, and thirdly, those who have young daughters at home. Moreover, the most worried among these three classes are those who have daughters in their homes. The parents then went almost insane trying to arrange their daughter's marriage. In this case, the penniless (the destitute) are in the most danger because they know that if the girl goes beyond the marriageable age, she will not be married. This is not the case with Muslims; it applies to people of all religions in this country [25].

3.1.5 Carrying out housework duties by the daughters

It is clear from the following figure that the pressure of housework is knocking girls out of education at the SSC level.

This problem is quite old, as it was mentioned during the preparation of the sixth five-year report in 2011 that, due to gender bias, Bangladeshi girls are still kept indoors or at home instead of being sent to educational institutions to do housework. So they have trouble in higher education. Higher education means post-primary education, including all forms of education, including a modern western education [26].

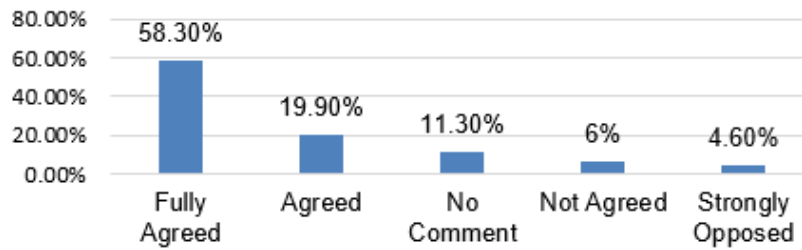


Fig. 3. Respondents' views on parents' attitude on marriage and daughter's safety

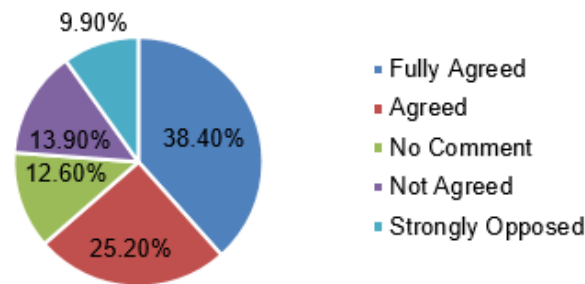


Fig. 4. Girls drop out of high school to take care of housework

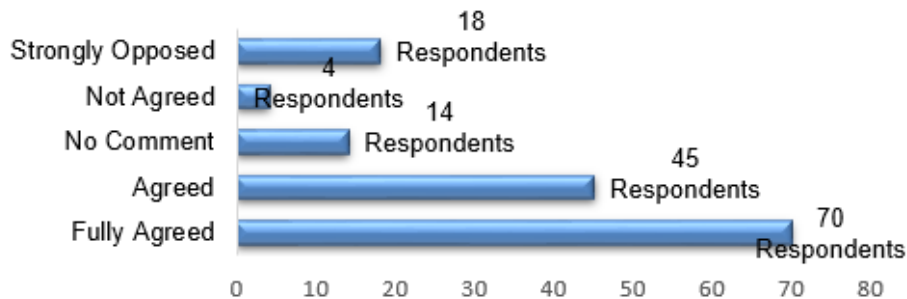


Fig. 5. Students drop out due to a poor family background

3.1.6 Poor family background

Family background is important for any person. Because a child's first educational institution is his or her family, family plays an important role. Also, the child's growth can be affected by his or her family, depending on the child's family background. In Bangladesh, family background is considered depending on many factors. What is meant by social stratification is also accounted for by family background. According to Henslin, "Social stratification is a system in which groups of people are divided into layers according to their relative property, power, and prestige. It is important to emphasize that social stratification does not refer to individuals. It is a way of ranking large groups of people into a hierarchy according to their relative privileges. However, every society stratifies its members [27]." In this

case, the family background is evaluated by considering several indicators. Among these are the ancestors' economic status (wealth), educational qualification, professional status, monthly income, monthly expenditure, social status in terms of power, political power etc. Experts feel that a female student drops out from the secondary level of education due to poor family background, which can be evident in the respondents' views.

Considering the respondents' opinions, girls drop out of SSC education due to poor family backgrounds. In this context, an in-depth interviewee said,

It is generally seen that the children of families with a sound background advance in various fields of education. A strong family

background gives them the privilege to some extent. So children from poor family backgrounds have to struggle to advance in education. This is where the differences between children of different family backgrounds arise. However, sometimes there are exceptions, but they cannot be examples [28].

3.2 Economic Issues

Money is necessary to acquire an education. Although there is debate about how much money is needed for which level of education, many students in Bangladesh drop out of the process due to a lack of money. Residents of lower-middle-income countries like Bangladesh cannot afford to pay for their children's education. Therefore, the extent to which economic factors are responsible for the dropout of female secondary school students in this country can be analyzed as follows.

3.2.1 Parents' or guardians' Poverty

Before determining the poverty of a parent or guardian, it is necessary to know what poverty is. There are different methods of measuring poverty. For example, the Direct Calorie Intake (DCI) method, Food Energy Intake (FEI) method, and Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) method. However, since the CBN method has some benefits, the World Bank recommends that it be used to measure poverty, and all countries, including Bangladesh, have done so. In this method, two poverty lines are determined, a. Lower Poverty Line and b. Upper Poverty Line. But recently, the World Bank has started using the term Higher Poverty Line in lieu of Upper Poverty Line. Lower Poverty Line indicates International Poverty Line or IPL. The World Bank used the purchasing power parity rate, which began in 1979, to develop this international poverty line. Those who earn less than \$1.90 a day are extremely poor. Bangladesh's extremely poor population rate was 12.9 percent in 2016, 12.1 percent in 2017, and 11.3 percent in 2018. Moreover, the rate of poor population in 2016, 2017, and 2018 was 24.3 percent, 23.1 percent, and 21.8 percent, respectively [29]. The term "lower poverty line" in Bangladesh refers to extreme poverty. The "lower poverty line" definition refers to extremely poor households whose total expenditures are equal to the food poverty line; the "upper poverty line" refers to moderately poor households spending at or below the poverty line on food.

The World Bank classifies the world economy into four income groups. These are high-income, upper-middle-income, lower-middle-income, and low income countries. The World Bank measures national income per capita using the Atlas method. This classification is updated every year on 1 July for 12 months. According to 2019 estimates, low-income countries are those whose per capita national income (GNI) is < \$1,025, lower-middle-income countries are those whose per capita national income is \$1,026 - \$3,995, and upper-middle-income countries are those whose per capita national income is \$3,996 - \$12,375 and high-income countries are those with per capita national income > \$12,375. As Bangladesh's national per capita income is now \$1,750, it is now a lower-middle-income country. However, the national poverty line should be determined based on the category in which the respective country falls. In 2016, D. Jolli and E. B. Prydz presented an estimate [30] of the Higher Poverty Line. He calculated that the national poverty line of Bangladesh should be set at \$3.20. Those who earn between \$1.90 and \$3.20 are also poor, but the upper level is \$3.20. And those who earn less than \$1.90 a day are extremely poor. The researchers made this calculation with data from 126 countries. There, they made this calculation based on the PPP of 2011, considering each person's daily needs. The Higher Poverty Line rates for high-income, upper-middle-income, lower-middle-income, and low-income countries are determined to be 21.70, 5.45, 3.20, and 1.91 (median), respectively.

Common people do not want to know or understand the definition of poverty. Their main concern is whether they have enough money to live their daily lives. Based on the study's findings, the average number of brothers and sisters in a family is about three (2.94). If parents are added, the total number of people in the family is five. If one person spends \$3.20 per day (84 Bangladeshi takas per dollar), a family of five will spend 40,320 Bangladeshi taka monthly. However, the average household income in the study is Bangladeshi Tk 13,407.50 per month, which is far below the upper poverty line in lower-middle-income countries. Only two students' families or parents have income above BDT. 40,320. With this economic ability, the question of how the parents will pay for their child's education. For very good reasons, this issue was rightly raised by the respondents.

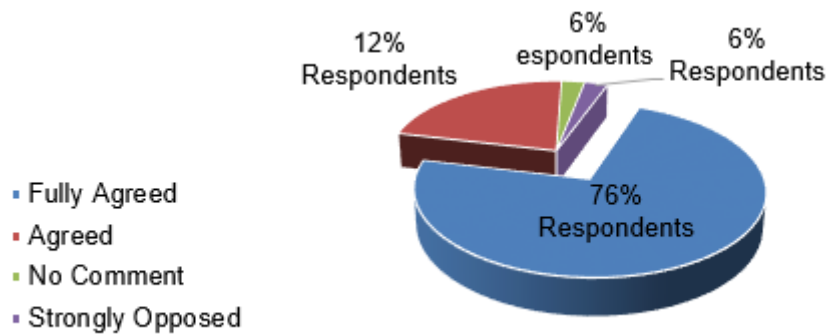


Fig. 6. Students drop out due to their parents' financial inability

The data presented in the above figure shows that the children are well aware of their parents' financial incapacity. Persons engaged with field-level educational institutions said,

Now the era has changed. Education costs a lot of money right now. It is difficult for most parents to bear the cost of a high school-going boy or girl (but sometimes the cost for girls is comparatively higher than for boys). Many families cannot afford it when all the costs are added, like school fees, supporting guides (even though the government gives free textbooks), notebooks and pens, travel costs, tuition fees, etc. So, the parents have no choice but to give their daughters away to cut costs and keep their families going [31].

3.2.2 Any expenditure on women's education is generally regarded as a waste

Not all who enter modern western education in Bangladesh go to school with an understanding of the importance of education. He may be in this education stream, depending on how things are going at home and abroad. However, some students drop out because they need clear and specific goals. A major reason behind this dropout is that any expenditure on a daughter's education still needs to be considered wasteful

by many parents. Even though more than 90 percent of the country's total population is Muslim, they do not have the mentality to judge boys and girls on the same scale or spend an equal amount of money for their education. People who have been associated with the school management committee for a long time noted,

People (mostly uneducated parents) no longer send their daughters to school. People send their girls to school so they can spend that time (usually from thirteen years old) in school until they are of marriageable age, which is what to do at home. Many parents still believe spending money on girls' education means watering other people's plants. Because there is no exact address where the girl will go after marriage, if she earns it, her husband or her family will get it. So parents try to keep such expenses as low as possible. They wait for the marriage; if the proposal matches, the cost ends [32].

From the following statistical analysis, it can be understood that although the parents' financial status is good, the parents are not very interested in spending money on their daughter's education.

Table 2. Correlation analysis between group-wise income of parents and group-wise expenditure of respondent students

		Parents' Group Income	Students' Group Expense
Parents' Group Income	Pearson Correlation	1	.239**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	160	160
Students' Group Expense	Pearson Correlation	.239**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	160	160

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

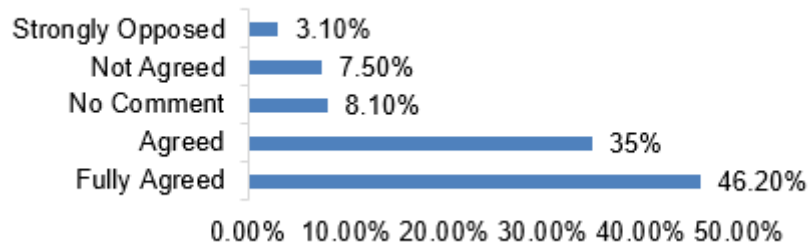


Fig. 7. Parent's aversion to spending money on their daughter's education to blame for student dropout

By observing the above-mentioned Pearson correlation output matrix, there is a partial or weak positive correlation between the group-wise income of the parents of the female students and the group-wise expenditure of the female students. If parents earn more, it is natural that the expenditure on their daughter's education will be more. It is reflected in the discussed research. However, according to the parent's income, their education expenses differed from what was expected. Parents bear the educational expenses but have yet to be as expected. This means parents need more time to be ready to spend on their daughters according to their means. Thus, there is a positive correlation between parents' earnings and their daughters' education expenditure, but it is weak. If it is expressed mathematically, the correlation is $r = .239$, $N = 160$, $p < 0.10$.

From the above figure, it is clear that only five students opposed it, 12 disagreed, and 13 did not comment. On the other hand, 81.2 percent or 130 respondents agreed or strongly agreed. In Bangladeshi society, spending resources on girls' education is still considered as wasteful as 'watering the neighbor's tree.' It is assumed that when the girl gets married, she will contribute to that family as a member of another house. So for her, such expenditure is considered wasteful.

Another thing is very important here. That is, the head of families in this country is male. So they make the spending decisions. However, if the women were the head of the family, the burden of financial expenditure would also be in her hands. Therefore, household headship can also be considered a factor in female dropout from SSC education.

3.3 Institutional (School) Considerations

The educational institutions of a third-world country like Bangladesh have various limitations,

which have been gradually solved since independence. However, these restrictions are not stopping the country's students from dropping out. However, even though the goal of preventing kids from dropping out of primary school has been met, secondary schools need to catch up. So, these limitations and school-centric problems do not stop female students from dropping out of SSC-level education. The reasons why female students drop out of school have been presented below.

3.3.1 Lack of women friendly educational environment

In Bangladesh, there needs to be more clarity among the public about educational institutions. Not only are there problems for women, but boys also face various problems. However, the issues that girls face differ from those that boys face. If there is a separate educational institution for women only, there is one type of problem; if it is a co-educational institution, the problem is of another type. Women need their own sanitation system because their biological system is different. However, not all educational institutions in the country have that system. The condition of co-educational secondary schools is comparatively worse. In response to the question, "Is female student dropout caused by a lack of a female-friendly educational environment?" Most (51.9%) of the respondents opined that a female-friendly environment really matters. In this context, one of the educational researchers said, "Due to the biological differences of women, female students are deprived of such facilities in many cases where safe sanitation systems are required to meet their physiological needs [33]." "Sanitation rooms are so unsanitary that they are unfit for use, and schools do not have the necessary allocation." In this case, the fact that female students have common rooms can be seen as a big factor. A

student generally stays in school from 9 or 10 a.m. to 4 or 5 p.m. During this period, they spend a portion of time outside the classroom. But since most co-educational schools do not have separate common rooms for female students (schools without separate common rooms cannot ensure the privacy and safety of female students or the teachers), this is a major problem in this study.

3.3.2 Weak school administration

In Bangladesh, many head teachers (head masters) of secondary schools need adequate training. There still need to be more skills and competencies needed to run schools. Another big problem with this is that the members of the school's management committee tend to take advantage of the head teacher. As a result, if there is a need to decide on any matter related to the school's law and order, the managing committee members give a decision in their favor. Here questions of interest (economic, political, ideological, etc.) are involved. In Bangladesh's changing social system, education experts agree that people who are dedicated to working for students impartially above all other interests do not get a place on management committees of educational institutions. There are various questions, dissatisfaction, and anger among teachers and parents of students studying in the institution regarding the educational and other qualifications of those who get places on the managing committee. So, like most educational institutions, secondary schools have a weak, biased, and corrupt administrative system instead of one that works well and protects the interests of the privileged and vested interests. In their opinions on this issue, almost half (76) of the respondents informed us that, due to poor school administration, a significant number of female students drop out of school. In this context, the words of the guardians are important:

If the girls tell about any problem (such as exam fee reduction, stipend-related issues, or harassment by classmates) to their teachers, then the teachers inform the managing committee without solving it. As a result, the problem became more challenging to solve than it used to be. This demonstrates that the school has so-called administration. Moreover, the management committee members often make political

calculations, which is completely undesirable [34].

3.3.3 Poor results in examination

One of the flaws in Bangladesh's education system is that, in most cases, students are evaluated only based on exam results. There is a huge difference between real knowledge and good results in exams, which most people need to realize. Education experts have said more than once that the country's current social and economic structure needs a better way to evaluate the process [35]. On the other hand, many poor girls in secondary school need help following the strategies to get good exam results. In such a situation, getting good results becomes difficult, and sometimes students fail the exams. For a good reason, many get frustrated and eventually drop out of the educational process. However, the students have different opinions about whether or not this is a reason to drop out. Half of the students admit that some drop out of the learning process if they do not perform well in exams. Moreover, the other half disagreed with the idea, did not comment, or opposed the idea. However, they are not directly to blame for this. Many things going on behind the scenes cause students to do poorly.

3.3.4 Weak incentive systems for female students in secondary schools

When we look at the incentive system of secondary schools in Bangladesh, we can see a local incentive system for schools back when modern education started in Bengal. Local philanthropists used to come forward, especially for the weak and talented students. However, since the introduction of the universal and international education systems, the local population has started to think that domestic and international development agencies are sufficient to provide incentives to educational institutions. For this reason, educational institutions, especially modern schools, do not provide incentives locally (but in religious, educational institutions, local pious and philanthropic individuals provide various incentives). However, if there is a learned or intellectual person in the leadership of the schools, i.e., the managing committee, he can arrange some incentives locally. For example, the example of the District Commissioner of Pabna District [36] can be presented. He has established hygiene corners in many secondary schools of the district (especially in the district headquarters) with the

help of local people, which studies have shown to be of great benefit to the girl students. Schools' authority could keep many students from dropping out if they offered some incentives, like scholarships for likely students.

While there are mixed reactions among students on whether female students drop out of SSC-level education due to poor incentive systems in schools, many educationists are vocal on the issue. However, female students have the most right to get incentives. Because the parents are reluctant to spend the necessary expenses for their daughters. However, females need more money than their male counterparts for other reasons, including security.

3.3.5 Geographical location of the school

According to those who responded, the location of the school, or how far it is from where the students live, is to some extent responsible for female students dropping out. However, when we examine Bangladesh's social and economic situation and compare the number of Western-style schools to the number of Alia-style madrasahs, we discover that the country has 20,465 Western-style secondary schools (663 public and 19,802 private). On the other hand, there are 9,294 (3 public and 9,291 private) institutions [37] for all levels of madrasa education. In other words, a madrasah student must travel twice as far as a western type of school student to attend a madrasa. Therefore, secondary students are in a relatively advantageous position in western education.

Field-level data analysis revealed that 53 out of 160, or 33.1 percent, of respondents, faced problems due to the distance to the school, i.e.,

the school's geographical location. However, 48, or 33.1%, of respondents did not comment, while 38 disagreed and 21 opposed.

Analyzing the data obtained in the discussed study, it can be seen that out of the total of 160 female students studied, 40 gave the distance to the school in kilometers and 120 gave the distance on foot. It can also be seen that girls from a maximum distance of 9 kilometers are admitted to the school. Those who have calculated the kilometers need someone's help for safety on the way to and from school. On the other hand, the 120 people who walk to school take an average of 1 to 80 minutes (those who come across rivers or canals take longer). Moreover, if we consider their mode of transportation, it can be seen that out of 160 people, 68.8 percent, or 110, travel on foot, 49 people, or 30.6 percent, travel by auto rickshaw, and one person travels to school by bicycle. Among those who reported walking to school, some travel by auto rickshaw. Whether in an auto rickshaw or on foot, their safety is involved. In recent times, the safety of women has been threatened in various ways. One hundred nine students traveled to school alone (without parental assistance), 44 with parents, 2 with brothers, 3 with sisters, and 2 with some other person (uncle, uncle). So students may drop out of SSC-level education due to the school's geographical location. However, most people associated with the school's management feel, "It is not credible that the students drop out because of the school's geographical location or the distance." A country like Bangladesh does not need more secondary schools. There is a need to strengthen security measures for female students on their way to school. Here, women's safety is the main issue, not the distance to the school [38]."

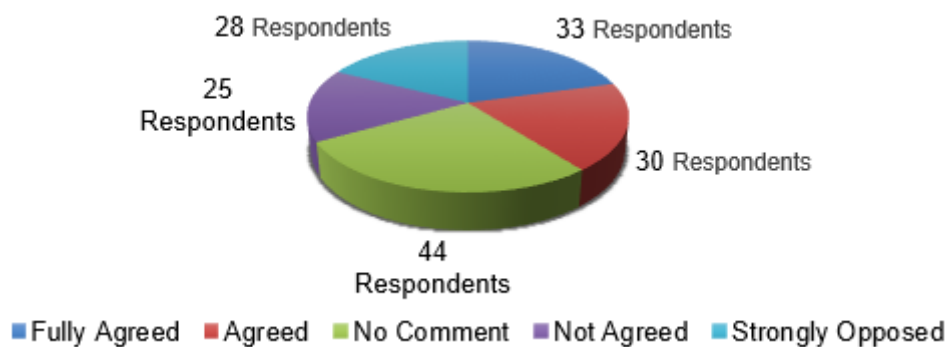


Fig. 8. Poor school incentives responsible for student dropouts

3.3.6 Lack of respectful and loving relationship between students and teachers

In the context of the increasing economic development of the country and as a result of various immoral and social crimes, a word is often heard in public, "People of Bangladesh are rising above the poverty line day by day but falling below the character line." Is this happening to everyone? Of course not. Then, why are teachers, the nation's backbone, treated so poorly? If the financial status of secondary school teachers could be better, what about them? Is this idea correct? Why is this happening? Different people are giving different arguments. Some of the persons associated with school management and supervision say,

This trend of weakening character can be seen in many people, from young children to older adults. Why should teachers be left out when the entire social system is affected? Teachers have no strong status in society, and now whoever has more money has a stronger status. This frustration, deprivation, and sadness now make the teaching community sad and angry. Moreover, teachers are now resorting to unethical activities like private teaching, setting up coaching centers, and selling notes. Moreover, this kind of incident is not new. It has happened before. Many people understand the advantages of media (including social media). Moreover, most of the school teachers possess good character. So any scar on them is easily visible, which is not the case with others [39].

In this regard, 74 out of 160 people, or 46.3 percent, think that if the relationship between students and teachers does not improve, SSC-level students will continue to drop out. Here, the female students are not only sexually abused by the teachers, but they are

also abused in many other ways. Many parents have tried to say that "how students are abused includes selling notes to certain companies, emotional abuse, the desire to get private tuition (competition and rivalry among teachers), neglect in teaching, and bias in examination results [40]." If we want to see an improvement in the dropout scenario, the teachers must improve their affectionate relationship with the female students.

3.3.7 Repetition in the same class makes the students inferior

A repeater is a student who stays in the same grade the next school year because he or she did not move up to the next grade or finish an educational program [41]. Most of these repeaters drop out of SSC-level education after passing some time. Their number may be a little. 51.3 percent of the students, or 82 respondents, agreed or strongly agreed that continuous repetition results in a very small number of students dropping out. In this context, a head teacher said, "As a result of continuous repetition, students lose confidence or trust in themselves. Moreover, if she is a girl, then there is no question. Because a girl of this age is more emotional than a boy, when she loses interest in studies, her parents force her to work as a housemaid and at the same time look for a husband [42]."

3.3.8 Risk of physical, emotional and sexual harassment by classmates

Because schools in Bangladesh are not friendly to women, girls in secondary schools have to deal with many environmental and mental problems. Among these, the risk of physical, emotional, and sexual harassment by classmates is vital. This is not because they do classes or

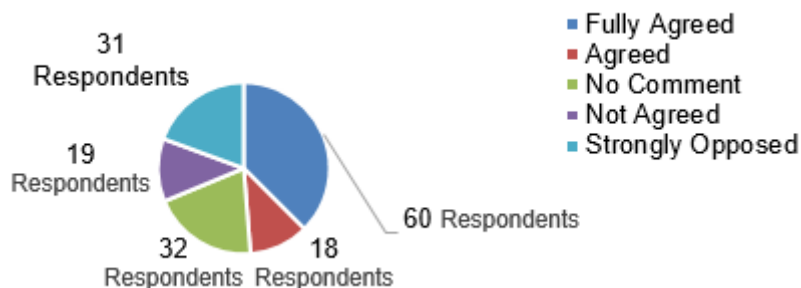


Fig. 9. Risk of bullying by peers to blame for student dropout

other extracurricular activities together, but because of the changing, unstable social order and the moral decay of the youth. A survey by a non-governmental organization found that 77 percent of school-going students in Dhaka city watch pornography. The government shutdown 560 porn sites at the beginning of 2017, but many still exist. Moreover, they are very easy to access. However, the outcomes (etiquette & manners, exam results, etc.) of students who enjoy pornography are extremely negative [43]. "A boy in a patriarchal society does not receive any education from the family on how to talk to a female counterpart or respect her [44]." The attitudes of the respondents in this regard are presented as follows Fig. 9.

It is observed in the above figure that almost half of the respondents felt that the risk of bullying by classmates was responsible for students dropping out. Because all forms of abuse (physical, mental and sexual) can eventually lead to death for a girl, with countless examples before our eyes, no parent will knowingly push their daughter to such a fate.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the above analysis, the family, economic, and educational institution-based barriers that cause female students to drop out of high school can be called structural-level barriers. Personal, social, cultural, and religious issues are not in the framework, but they have a direct effect on the family, the economy, and educational institutions. Data collected on the ground showed that almost all of these factors are directly linked. It is found that child marriage is the direct or immediate process of dropout among classmates [45]. However, in most cases, this is not the real cause; it is a process through which a female student drops out. The leading cause is the family's financial incapability, which was identified by 114, or 71.7 percent, of the respondents. Then they mention some family-centered and educational institution-centered problems. However, they referred to the economic crisis as a complicated web or cycle. So from here, it is difficult for a girl from a poor family to break through this web. On the other hand, a girl from a financially well-off family has little chance of getting caught in this web or cycle. From a theoretical point of view, the dropout scenario at Pabna fits the poor family socialization theory and the structural strain theory.

5. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study, there have been recommendations made to keep Bangladeshi girls from dropping out of high school, especially in Pabna:

- I. Making a provision of special financial incentives for girl students whose parents' financial condition is very poor, making a list;
- II. Identifying educationally backward families and arranging to counsel those family members;
- III. Creating a provision of sub-scholarships for all poor girl students;
- IV. Taking effective measures to stop or prevent eve-teasing. In this case, the formation of an "Eve-teasing Prevention Committee" consisting of representatives from all levels of the area adjacent to the educational institution (school). Setting up education police posts around educational institutions (schools) if necessary;
- V. Strengthening of the school managing committee; and
- VI. Ensuring more transparency in the recruitment of teachers in schools.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to thank the participants who directly responded to the research questionnaire, to the key informant interviewees and FGD participants who gave their valuable comments, suggestions and observation. We also thank to the school authorities and committees for their co-operation.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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