AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENT DROPOUT RATES IN PAKISTANI UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the factors that impact student attrition rates in Pakistani universities through the utilization of a mixed-methods methodology. A total of 300 dropout students, 200 current students, 50 teaching members, and 50 administrative personnel were surveyed to collect quantitative data on socio-economic status, academic performance, institutional assistance, and personal obstacles. Furthermore, qualitative observations were gathered from 30 students who dropped out through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Each group consisted of 8-10 members. The quantitative data underwent analysis utilizing statistical methodologies, which unveiled noteworthy associations amongst financial matters, familial responsibilities, health concerns, lack of drive, and scholastic achievement. The qualitative data underwent thematic analysis, revealing economic limitations, familial obligations, health concerns, institutional influences, scholastic difficulties, and social context as significant themes. The results emphasize the necessity of implementing focused measures to decrease dropout rates, such as providing more financial assistance, enhancing academic and mental health support, and improving institutional resources and policies.

Keywords: Impact, student attrition rates, Pakistani universities, socio-economic status, academic performance, institutional assistance

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the factors that influence student attrition rates is essential for improving student retention and ensuring the successful completion of their educational pursuits. Multiple interconnected factors contribute to students' decisions to terminate their studies, including socio-economic, intellectual, institutional, personal, and social elements. Student dropout rates are mostly determined by socio-economic position. Students hailing from economically disadvantaged households have various obstacles that can hinder their capacity to pursue further education. These students typically have to juggle part-time jobs alongside their studies due to financial limitations, which might hinder their academic concentration and result in exhaustion. An illustrative instance is the research conducted by Salazar and Campos (2022), which emphasized the correlation between financial instability and elevated stress levels, as well as the subsequent decline in academic performance, ultimately leading to an increase in dropout rates. The presence of financial assistance and scholarships is essential in reducing these difficulties, but, the accessibility and sufficiency of such aid differ significantly. Zhang et al. (2020) discovered that financial assistance has a substantial impact on decreasing dropout rates. However, its efficacy is contingent upon prompt distribution and adequate covering of both tuition fees and living costs. Student retention is significantly impacted by academic success. Academically challenged students are more prone to dropping out of school because they are not adequately prepared for the demands of university-level courses, lack appropriate study habits, and do

not receive sufficient academic help. Nguyen and Nguyen (2021) discovered that students with poorer grade point averages (GPAs) face an elevated likelihood of discontinuing their education, especially if they do not receive prompt academic intervention. Efficient academic support services, including tutoring, mentorship, and academic advising, are crucial for enhancing students' academic achievement and maintaining their active involvement in their studies. Jones and Kim (2020) highlighted the significance of formative assessments and feedback in promptly identifying students who are at risk and equipping them with the essential resources to achieve success. Institutional assistance is crucial for maintaining student retention. Universities that provide extensive support services, such as academic guidance, psychological counselling, and career assistance, typically see reduced rates of student attrition. Liu et al. (2021) established that students who experience institutional support are more inclined to persist in the face of difficulties and successfully obtain their degrees. Furthermore, student retention is greatly influenced by institutional policies and procedures. Implementing adaptable academic rules that cater to students' individual and economic situations might effectively mitigate the occurrence of students leaving their studies prematurely. In their study, Garcia and Torres (2021) discovered that colleges that actively cultivate a friendly and inclusive campus climate have a positive impact on retention rates, leading to greater percentages of students staying enrolled. Students' capacity to pursue their studies is greatly affected by personal obstacles, such as health problems and familial obligations. In their study, Rivera and Lopez (2020) found a high prevalence of mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, among university students. These conditions can have a significant negative impact on both their academic performance and overall well-being. Family obligations, especially for female students, significantly contribute to the rate of students leaving school before completing their education. Students frequently face the challenge of balancing cultural expectations and household responsibilities, which often results in prioritizing family obligations above their education. This can lead to repeated absences from school and, ultimately, dropping out. Offering support services that specifically target these individual obstacles, such as psychological therapy and childcare

amenities, can greatly enhance student retention. Kumar and Singh (2022) emphasized the efficacy of these strategies in assisting students with significant familial obligations.

The social milieu within institutions can have a substantial impact on student retention. An optimistic social atmosphere, distinguished by robust peer connections and a feeling of inclusion, has the potential to amplify student involvement and perseverance. On the other hand, an unfavorable social setting characterized by bullying, harassment, or social isolation might result in higher rates of students leaving school before completing their education. In their study, Martinez et al. (2021) discovered a positive correlation between social integration and student retention, indicating that students who feel socially connected are more inclined to stay in school. Conversely, individuals who experience social isolation have an elevated likelihood of discontinuing their education. Peer mentoring programs, student organizations, and inclusive campus regulations are effective initiatives that can cultivate a supportive social atmosphere and mitigate dropout rates.

The educational background and level of preparation of students also have a substantial impact on their probability of discontinuing their studies. Students who possess a solid base and well developed study skills upon entering university are more inclined to achieve success. Conversely, those who originate from schools with little resources or possess inadequate foundational academic abilities frequently encounter difficulties in meeting the requirements of higher education. Smith and Johnson (2020) emphasized the significance of bridge programs and remedial courses in facilitating the smooth transfer of academically unprepared students into university life. These programs offer essential academic assistance and training to enhance students' success, thereby diminishing the occurrence of kids leaving school prematurely. Student involvement and motivation are essential factors for achieving academic success and maintaining student enrollment. Students who demonstrate high levels of academic engagement and motivation are less prone to dropping out. Nevertheless, it can be difficult to sustain elevated levels of engagement and motivation, especially for students who are confronted with various stressors. According to Lee and Kim (2019), participating in extracurricular

activities and having a strong sense of purpose are linked to increased rates of staying in a certain programs or institution. Universities can cultivate engagement and motivation among students by offering avenues for them to integrate their academic pursuits with their individual passions and professional aspirations. Student retention is greatly influenced by institutional policies and practices, particularly those pertaining to assessment, grading, and academic development. Inflexible policies that fail to meet the different needs and circumstances of students can be a contributing factor to increased dropout rates. On the other hand, adaptable and encouraging policies can assist students in overcoming academic obstacles and continuing their education. A study conducted by Ahmed et al. (2021) revealed that colleges implementing adaptable grading practices and offering academic recovery options, such as second-chance exams, had reduced rates of student attrition. Retention can be effectively promoted by the implementation of policies that prioritize student achievement, such as early alert systems and proactive advising.

Societal attitudes towards education and gender roles are cultural elements that can have an impact on student dropout rates. Disparities in educational attainment might arise due to unequal valuation of higher education across different cultures. Gender norms and societal expectations can also influence students' capacity to seek and successfully finish their education. Ali and Hussain (2020) emphasized the influence of cultural attitudes on the rate at which students leave Pakistani colleges. They specifically pointed out that female students encountered substantial cultural obstacles that impeded their educational endeavors. It is crucial to implement specific treatments and policies that address these cultural elements in order to enhance retention rates. In the digital era, having the ability to use technology and being knowledgeable in digital skills are becoming more and more crucial for achieving academic achievement. Students who do not have dependable access to technology or are not skilled in using digital tools may face difficulties in keeping pace with their education, resulting in increased rates of dropping out. Garcia et al. (2021) identified that the possession of digital literacy skills and the availability of technology were strong indicators of student retention. Universities can assist students by granting them access to technological resources and delivering training in digital proficiencies, which is

especially crucial in the context of remote and online education.

Student retention can be influenced by external variables and life events, such as economic recessions, natural calamities, and political instability. These occurrences have the potential to disturb the lives of pupils and establish extra obstacles to their ongoing study. The COVID-19 epidemic has significantly affected higher education globally. According to Mehta et al. (2020), the pandemic resulted in higher percentages of students leaving school because of financial difficulties, worries about health, and the difficulties associated with transitioning to online learning. Universities must be adaptable to external variables and offer the essential assistance to aid students in overcoming these problems.

Research Objectives
1. To identify and analyze the socio-economic factors contributing to student dropout rates in Pakistani universities.
2. To evaluate the impact of institutional support and academic performance on student retention.
3. To explore the personal challenges and social environment factors affecting students' decisions to drop out.

Research Questions
1. What are the socio-economic factors that influence student dropout rates in Pakistani universities?
2. How do institutional support and academic performance impact student retention?
3. What personal challenges and social environment factors contribute to students' decisions to drop out?

Significance of the Study
This study is important because it offers a thorough comprehension of the elements that contribute to the rates at which students at Pakistani universities leave their studies without completing them. By combining quantitative and qualitative data, the research provides a comprehensive perspective of the issue, emphasizing crucial areas that require attention. The findings can provide valuable insights to legislators, educators, and university administrators regarding the specific areas that need to be addressed in order to enhance student retention. To mitigate these

obstacles, it is crucial to implement focused interventions, such as augmenting financial assistance, bolstering academic support services, and upgrading institutional resources. These measures can effectively diminish dropout rates and guarantee higher completion rates among students pursuing higher education. This study emphasizes the significance of taking into account students' individual obstacles and societal contexts, which can greatly influence their academic achievements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on student attrition rates have repeatedly emphasized the substantial influence of socio-economic determinants. Chen's (2020) study revealed that financial hardships were the main factor leading to students dropping out of their education, especially among those belonging to low-income households. These students frequently encounter difficulties in meeting the costs of tuition fees, textbooks, and other educational obligations, resulting in heightened stress and eventual withdrawal from school. The importance of financial aid and scholarships in addressing these difficulties has been recognized, but their availability and accessibility are still restricted in some contexts, including Pakistan. Student retention is significantly influenced by academic success. Johnson et al. (2019) found that students with lower GPAs have a higher likelihood of dropping out compared to their higher-achieving counterparts. The association between academic hurdles and students' struggles is due to the cumulative nature of these challenges. When students face academic difficulties, it often leads to a loss of confidence and motivation, which in turn worsens their problems. Interventions including as tutoring, academic advising, and remedial programs have demonstrated potential in assisting students who are at risk, although their execution differs significantly among institutions. Student retention is significantly influenced by institutional support. Tinto's (1993) thesis highlights the significance of both academic and social integration in deterring student attrition. Universities that offer comprehensive support services, including counselling, academic advising, and extracurricular activities, typically see lower rates of student attrition. Research conducted by Brown and Holloway (2021) has demonstrated that students who experience a sense of institutional support are more

inclined to persist in the face of academic and emotional difficulties.

Personal obstacles, such as medical conditions and familial obligations, often hinder students' capacity to pursue their academic endeavors. The study conducted by Singh and Sharma (2022) reveals that students who have chronic health illnesses or mental health disorders face an elevated likelihood of discontinuing their education. These students frequently encounter obstacles while trying to acquire suitable healthcare and support services, which might additionally impede their academic advancement. Family obligations, especially for female students, present significant difficulties, as cultural norms and household chores sometimes clash with academic obligations. The social milieu within institutions can either facilitate or impede student retention. Smith et al. (2020) found that students who encounter bullying, harassment, or social isolation had a higher probability of quitting their education. On the other hand, having a supportive group of peers and feeling a sense of belonging might strengthen a student's determination to continue. Peer mentoring programs and inclusive campus policies have successfully cultivated a favorable social atmosphere, resulting in a decrease in dropout rates. Student dropout rates are significantly influenced by economic restrictions, as extensively established. In a study conducted by Hussain et al. (2019), it was discovered that financial hardships were a notable indicator of students from Pakistan abandoning their studies at the university level. These findings are consistent with international research, emphasizing the importance of financial support structures. The insufficiency of sufficient scholarships and financial aid programs intensifies the economic difficulties encountered by students, rendering it arduous for them to maintain their education.

The correlation between academic difficulties and dropout rates is seen in multiple research investigations. A study conducted by Kahu and Nelson (2020) revealed that students who face academic difficulties are prone to a dearth of motivation and engagement, resulting in elevated rates of dropout. Efficient academic support services, such as tutoring and academic advising, are essential in assisting students in overcoming these difficulties. Nevertheless, the accessibility and caliber of these services differ greatly among institutions. Institutional elements, such as the caliber of

professors and the accessibility of academic resources, are essential in determining student retention. Lee and Choi (2019) found that students who consider their faculty as encouraging and competent are more inclined to continue their studies. The availability of academic resources, such as libraries and study materials, has a substantial influence on student retention. Universities that allocate resources towards faculty of exceptional quality and academic resources of high caliber generally experience reduced rates of student attrition. Individual obstacles, such as medical conditions and obligations to one's family, are strong indicators of students leaving their studies prematurely. A study conducted by Khan and Qureshi (2020) revealed that students who encounter health issues or have significant family responsibilities exhibit a higher propensity to discontinue their education. These obstacles frequently necessitate students to juggle their academic responsibilities with personal obligations, resulting in heightened stress and diminished academic achievement. Customized support services designed to meet these individual problems can greatly enhance student retention.

The impact of the social environment on student retention is of utmost importance. In a study conducted by Martinez et al. (2021), it was discovered that students who feel a strong feeling of belonging and social integration are more inclined to continue their studies. On the other hand, kids who experience feelings of isolation or marginalization are more likely to be at a greater risk of leaving school before completing their education. Efforts focused on cultivating a welcoming and equitable campus environment are crucial for enhancing student retention. Financial considerations, such as the expenses associated with tuition fees and the cost of living, provide substantial obstacles to student retention. A study conducted by Ali and Ahmed (2019) emphasized that the exorbitant expenses associated with education serve as a primary factor contributing to the high dropout rate among students in Pakistan. Financial limitations not only hinder students' capacity to cover tuition expenses but also have an adverse effect on their total standard of living, encompassing access to housing, sustenance, and other fundamental necessities. Efficient financial assistance programs are crucial for tackling these economic obstacles. Academic success and retention are intricately interconnected. Newton and Smith (2020) conducted a study which revealed a positive correlation between higher GPAs and degree completion among students. Academic success is impacted by multiple aspects, such as the caliber of teaching, availability of educational resources, and students' study practices. Universities that successfully deploy efficient academic support programs have the potential to greatly enhance student retention rates.

Academic advising and counselling, which are part of institutional support services, are essential for ensuring that students stay enrolled in their educational programs. A study conducted by Taylor and Francis in 2021 found that students who receive consistent academic advice and counselling are more inclined to remain enrolled in their educational programs. These services offer students the necessary guidance and assistance to handle both academic and personal difficulties. Investing in a wide range of support services is crucial for enhancing student retention. Individual obstacles, such as medical conditions and obligations to one's family, pose substantial hindrances to the ability of students to continue their education. According to a study conducted by Patel and Singh (2022), students who encounter health issues or have substantial family obligations are more prone to withdrawing from their studies. These obstacles frequently necessitate students to manage numerous duties, resulting in heightened stress and diminished academic achievement. Offering assistance services that specifically target these individual difficulties can greatly enhance student retention. The social milieu within institutions is of paramount importance in ensuring student retention. Robinson et al. (2021) conducted a study which revealed that students who have a sense of social integration and support are more inclined to continue their education. On the other hand, pupils who feel socially isolated or marginalized are more likely to quit school. Efforts focused on cultivating a nurturing and all-encompassing school environment are crucial for enhancing student retention.

RESEARRCH METHODOLOGY

A mixed-methods approach was utilized to examine the factors that contribute to student dropout rates in Pakistani universities. This approach integrated both quantitative and qualitative methods of gathering and analyzing data to achieve a thorough comprehension of the matter at hand. A representative sample of 300

former students, 200 current students, 50 academic members, and 50 administrative staff from different universities were surveyed. The surveys encompassed inquiries on socio-economic status, scholastic achievement, institutional assistance, and individual obstacles. Furthermore, a series of comprehensive interviews were carried out with 30 students who had dropped out, and group discussions were organized with 10 groups comprising 8-10 participants each, which included students, faculty, and administrative staff. These activities were conducted to collect qualitative information on the personal experiences and perspectives of these individuals involved. The quantitative data was subjected to statistical analysis in order to discover relevant features and correlations, while the qualitative data was analyzed thematically to reveal underlying themes and patterns. The integrated approach offered a comprehensive perspective on the dropout problem, facilitating the creation of focused interventions aimed at decreasing dropout rates in Pakistani higher education institutions.

DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter outlines the data analysis carried out to examine the factors that impact student attrition rates in Pakistani universities. The analysis integrates both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to offer a full comprehension of the matter. The surveys' quantitative data were analyzed using statistical techniques, while the interviews and focus group talks' qualitative data were thematically analyzed. The results are displayed in tables and explained thoroughly.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data were gathered via surveys distributed to 300 students who had dropped out, 200 students currently enrolled, 50 faculty members, and 50 administrative staff from different universities. The surveys encompassed inquiries regarding socio-economic status, scholastic achievements, institutional assistance, and individual obstacles.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
-Male	360	60
-Female	240	40
Age Group		
-18-22	250	41.7
-23-27	200	33.3
-28 and above	150	25
Socio-Economic Status		
-Low Income	200	33.3
-Middle Income	300	50
-High Income	100	16.7

Description:
Table 1 displays the demographic traits of the individuals that participated in the survey. Male respondents constituted the majority (60%) while the age range of 18-22 years accounted for 41.7% of the total. The distribution of socio-economic status revealed that 50% of the respondents were from middle-income households, 33.3% were from low-income households, and 16.7% were from high-income households.

Table 2: Academic Performance and Institutional Support

Variable	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
GPA	2.8	0.7
Availability of Scholarships	3.2	0.9
Quality of Faculty	3.5	0.8
Access to Academic Resources	3.0	0.7

Description:

Table 2 displays the average scores and standard deviations for characteristics pertaining to academic success and institutional assistance. The respondents displayed moderate academic performance, as evidenced by an average GPA of 2.8. The mean score for the availability of scholarships was 3.2, although the caliber of teachers obtained a comparatively high mean score of 3.5. The mean score for access to academic materials was 3.0, suggesting a modest level of satisfaction.

Table 3: Personal Challenges Faced by Students

Challenge	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Financial Issues	180	30
Family Responsibilities	100	16.7
Health Issues	70	11.7
Lack of Motivation	150	25

Description:

Table 3 highlights the specific challenges faced by students. The primary obstacle, constituting 30% of instances, was associated with financial affairs. Subsequently, there was a dearth of motivation, accounting for 25% of the obstacles. Family responsibilities constituted 16.7% of the cases, and health issues were recorded in 11.7% of the occurrences.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix of Factors Influencing Dropout Rates

Variable	Financial Issues	Family Responsibilities	Health Issues	Lack of Motivation	GPA
Financial Issues	1	0.48	0.35	0.52	-0.42
Family Responsibilities	0.48	1	0.30	0.32	-0.38
Health Issues	0.35	0.30	1	0.28	-0.32
Lack of Motivation	0.52	0.32	0.28	1	-0.48
GPA	-0.42	-0.38	-0.32	-0.48	1

Description:

Table 4 displays the correlation matrix that illustrates the connections between several factors that impact dropout rates. Strong positive associations were observed between financial concerns and lack of motivation ($r = 0.52$), as well as between financial issues and family duties ($r = 0.48$). Significant negative relationships were seen between GPA and financial concerns ($r = -0.42$), GPA and lack of motivation ($r = -0.48$), and GPA and family responsibilities ($r = -0.38$).

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data were obtained by conducting in-depth interviews with 30 students who had dropped out, as well as by organizing focus group talks with 10 groups. Each group comprised 8-10 people, including students, faculty, and administrative personnel. The qualitative data underwent thematic analysis to reveal underlying themes and patterns.

Identified Themes:

1. Economic Constraints:

Economic limitations surfaced as a prominent subject. A significant number of participants emphasized that financial challenges were the main factor leading to their decision to withdraw. Students hailing from economically disadvantaged backgrounds faced difficulties in meeting the costs of tuition fees and other educational expenditures, resulting in heightened levels of stress and ultimately

leading to their decision to discontinue their studies.

2. Family Responsibilities:

Family obligations, especially among female students, were identified as a notable factor. A significant number of students had the challenge of juggling their academic responsibilities with domestic obligations, leading to subpar academic achievements and ultimately dropping out of university.

3. Health Issues:

Recurrent occurrences of both physical and mental health problems were observed. Students indicated that their ability to complete their education was negatively impacted by chronic illnesses, mental health difficulties, and limited access to healthcare services.

4. Institutional Factors:

The level of assistance provided by the institutions had a significant impact. Students voiced their discontent with the limited accessibility of academic resources, insufficient counselling services, and the apparent absence of support from professors and administration. These issues contributed to a sense of being alone and disconnected, resulting in increased rates of students leaving school before completing their education.

5. Academic Challenges:

Academic challenges, such as subpar academic performance and a lack of enthusiasm, were commonly cited. Students encountered difficulties with the demanding academic burden and experienced a sense of inadequacy in relation to the challenges of university education. The insufficiency of academic counsel and support worsened these difficulties.

6. Social Environment:

The dropout rates were also affected by the social environment present at institutions. Factors such as bullying, peer pressure, and absence of a supportive peer network were found as contributing to the problem. Students who experienced social isolation or marginalization were more prone to withdrawing from their studies.

Thematic analysis:

1. Economic Constraints:

The interviews and focus groups consistently revealed the presence of economic limitations as a prominent subject. Participants recounted their involvement in part-time employment to finance their schooling, which had an impact on their academic achievements. The financial assistance and scholarships provided were inadequate, resulting in a significant number of students being forced to interrupt their studies or withdraw completely due to financial constraints.

2. Family Responsibilities:

Female students, specifically, discussed the difficulties of balancing home obligations with their academic pursuits. They were often compelled by cultural norms and traditional gender roles to prioritize household responsibilities over education, resulting in frequent absences and ultimately leaving school.

3. Health Issues:
Health-related difficulties were a prevalent topic. Students engaged in a conversation regarding the influence of medical ailments and psychological conditions, such as depression and anxiety, on their academic achievements. The challenges were further exacerbated by the limited availability of mental health services and the negative social perception surrounding obtaining assistance.

4. Institutional factors:

A prevalent topic was dissatisfaction with the help provided by institutions. Students emphasized the insufficiency of academic resources, such as libraries and study tools, along with insufficient counselling and mentorship services. The perceived absence of assistance from professors and administration exacerbated sentiments of isolation and exasperation.

5. Academic Challenges:

Academic difficulties were commonly cited during the interviews. Students expressed challenges in maintaining pace with the curriculum, comprehending intricate topics, and efficiently organizing their time. A significant number of individuals experienced a sense of inadequacy in their readiness for higher education and were deficient in the essential scholarly abilities.

6. Social Environment:

The social milieu within universities exerted a substantial impact on dropout rates. Students who encountered bullying, harassment, or social isolation exhibited a higher tendency to discontinue their academic pursuits. The absence of a supporting peer network and a feeling of belonging had a detrimental effect on their academic experience.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The amalgamation of quantitative and qualitative findings offered a comprehensive perspective on the factors that impact student attrition rates in Pakistani universities. The quantitative data revealed notable links among financial concerns, familial obligations, health challenges, lack of drive, and academic achievement. The qualitative data offered a more profound understanding of the personal encounters and perspectives of students, emphasizing economic limitations, familial obligations, health concerns, institutional influences, academic difficulties, and social surroundings as significant topics.

Economic Constraints:

Economic restrictions were identified as a prominent component based on both quantitative and qualitative evidence. The quantitative data demonstrated a robust positive association between financial concerns and a dearth of motivation, whereas the qualitative data unveiled that financial hardships were a predominant factor contributing to the decision to discontinue.

Family Responsibilities:

Family obligations were also recognized as a substantial element in both datasets. The quantitative data demonstrated a direct relationship between family obligations and the likelihood of students dropping out, whereas the qualitative data offered in-depth narratives on how family responsibilities affected students' academic achievements.

Health Issues:

Health concerns were frequently reported in the qualitative data, and the quantitative data revealed a detrimental relationship between health difficulties and GPA. Students afflicted with chronic illnesses and mental health difficulties encountered substantial obstacles in their pursuit of academic endeavors.

Institutional factors:

Both datasets emphasized the need of high-quality institutional support. The qualitative data indicated that there was discontent with the academic resources and counselling services. On the other hand, the quantitative data demonstrated that the availability of these resources and services had moderate mean scores.

CONCLUSION

The inquiry into the determinants of student attrition rates at Pakistani colleges unveiled an intricate interaction of economic, social, institutional, and personal obstacles. The analysis revealed that financial hardships were the primary determinant, exhibiting a robust association between economic limitations and diminished drive, resulting in elevated rates of discontinuation. A significant number of students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds, faced difficulties in meeting the costs of tuition fees and other educational expenditures. This often resulted in their taking up part-time employment, which had an adverse effect on their academic performance. In addition, female students faced significant hurdles due to cultural expectations and traditional gender roles, which compelled them to prioritize domestic obligations above schooling. Health difficulties, encompassing both physical and mental health ailments, were also recognized as crucial determinants impacting students' capacity to pursue their studies. Chronic ailments, psychological issues, and restricted healthcare accessibility were factors that led to increased rates of students leaving school. Students expressed discontent with the availability of academic resources, inadequate counselling services, and perceived lack of support from faculty and administration, highlighting concerns about the quality of institutional assistance. The presence of these institutional deficiencies resulted in a sense of seclusion and lack of involvement, which worsened the rates at which students left school without completing their education. Commonly academic difficulties were subpar academic performance, insufficient motivation, and inadequate preparation for higher education. Students expressed challenges in effectively managing the academic workload and comprehending intricate courses, underscoring the necessity for improved academic advising and support services. The social milieu within universities also exerted a pivotal influence, as problems such as harassment, social coercion, and absence of a nurturing peer community detrimentally affected students' university encounters. Individuals who experienced social isolation or marginalization were more prone to discontinue their participation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to tackle these concerns, it is advisable for colleges to enhance financial assistance and scholarship options to alleviate budgetary limitations for students. Implementing academic support services, such as tutoring and mentoring programs, can assist students in properly managing their assignments. Universities should enhance their mental health services and promote awareness to mitigate the stigma around help-seeking. Enhancing institutional support by improving counselling services and promoting a nurturing social atmosphere helps decrease feelings of isolation and disengagement. Universities should implement adaptable policies to support students who have substantial family responsibilities, enabling them to properly manage their academic and personal obligations.

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