



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i9/14476> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i9/14476

Received: 12 June 2022, Revised: 16 July 2022, Accepted: 30 July 2022

Published Online: 06 August 2022

In-Text Citation: (Abdulrazaq et al., 2022)

To Cite this Article: Abdulrazaq, W. M. Al, Abdulmutalib, M. H., & Abdullah, A. B. (2022). Exploring the Social Implication of Male School Dropout in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(9), 272 – 283.

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Vol. 12, No. 9, 2022, Pg. 272 – 283

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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



www.hrmars.com

ISSN: 2222-6990

Exploring the Social Implication of Male School Dropout in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Education is crucial to the people and the development of a country. School dropout among male students has become one of the major problems in Saudi Arabia, despite the uniqueness of the free education system in the country, yet it has remained an issue of concern in recent times. This research paper explores the social implications of male student dropout on society. However, the purpose was to contribute to the current issue of dropouts and suggest an alternative that can curtail the problem. The study employed a qualitative method based on a case study approach. Purposive sampling was used to identify the total number of 14 informants for a face-to-face interview. The collected data are analyzed based on thematic analysis. The study reveals that illiteracy, unemployment, stealing, and child abduction are the major social negative impact of school dropout among male students. Based on these findings, the study recommends that the government should come up with or enact a law that would force the parents to enroll and maintain their children at school until their completion. Therefore, the study highlighted the social implication of school dropout among male students.

Keywords: Dropout, Male Student, Education, Implication and Illiteracy.

Introduction

Education is important to people, especially the young generation, and the development of a country. Despite the importance of education in human and nation development, some male student still shuns or stop going to school before completion without having the basic ingredients of education. According to UNICEF (2014), high school dropouts for boys who are mostly between the ages of 12 – 17 years old, constitute a major problem in many Arab countries including Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait, United Arab Emirate, Tunisia, Syria, and Saudi Arabia due to one reason or the other. Therefore, school dropout phenomena have become one of the major issues and concerns in many countries, and Saudi Arabia is not an exception. Saudi Arabia is one of the developing countries in Asia with an estimated population of 34,218,169 people (General Authority of Statistics, 2017). The education system in Saudi Arabia is unique compared with many nations. The Saudi government separates male and female schools right from primary to university level, all these levels of education are free to

all citizens in respective of their backgrounds. Though not all the levels are compulsory, only primary education is compulsory. With the free education, many male students refuse to attend or go to school to obtain basic education, especially elementary school.

To tackle the situation, the government went further to establish night schools to provide quality education to those who never attend or dropout from regular school at an early age. Night schools are normal schools and are free to everyone, but the emphasis is given to those who drop out of regular schools. Night schools have become part of the national policy and establish in every region of the country. Despite these giant efforts by the Saudi government, the number of school dropouts is increasing year by year, especially among male students. A statistic released by the Saudi General Authority of Statistics (GaStat) that in 2017 around 1.3 Saudi nationals discontinued their education (General Authority of Statistics, 2017). 279, 794 of the 1.3 million were from Riyadh alone (Khalife, 2017). School dropouts are accounted for several factors associated with an individual. Many studies (Commodari, 2012; Migali and Zucchelli, 2017; Robison et al. 2017; Yahia, Essid, and Rebai 2018) have also reported that certain factors such as finances, friends, family education background, and numbers in the family among others play a significant role in male school dropout in Saudi Arabia. These phenomena have become a serious issue of concern and have imposed a threat on the harmony among the people living within the society. With this serious matter of concern, it is imperative to conduct this study to explore the social consequences of such acts on the people, society, and the country as a whole.

Thus, very few studies (Commodari, 2012; Migali and Zucchelli, 2017; Robison et al., 2017; Yahia, Essid, and Rebai 2018) are conducted to understand school dropouts in Saudi Arabia and are conducted in a quantitative approach focusing on primary and university level. Therefore, this current study attempts to fill up the gap by exploring the social implication of male student dropout by concentrating in night schools. This is said to be the first of its kind in Saudi. The study would help policymakers, social leaders, teachers, and parents to understand the nature and implications of male school dropouts on society. Other countries with related issues can also benefit from this current study.

Conceptual Clarifications

School Dropout

There are several definitions and meanings for school dropouts. Every scholar tends to define the concept based on their area of research or environment. For instance, Mahoney (2018) school dropout is as simple as any person who fails to earn a high school diploma. To him, any person who failed to obtain a grade A that is certificate after elementary school is regarded as a school dropout person. School dropout is defined in this study using what Alvarez and Pedro (2013) categorized as a functional definition of school dropout. The functional definition of school dropout defined school dropout as the basic compulsory level qualification deemed necessary for an individual's successful social and professional integration (Alvarez & Pedro 2013). School dropout is therefore operationalized in this study as the early school leaving by individuals before attaining the certificate of compulsory minimum schooling of secondary school.

Night School

According to Groves (1998), a night school is an adult education school that offers evening or night courses to support persons working through the day. A course, usually used for continued education purposes, with classes conducted mainly in the evening to fit students

with normal work schedules for day shifts. In this study night school refers to the special school established by the Saudi government for students who drop out of the regular morning school due to a reason, to support them to continue with their education.

Methodology

A qualitative method based on a case study approach was used in the study to collect and analyzed data. The study was conducted in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Riyadh is one of the regions in Saudi, the region is the capital with the highest number of populations 8 million. Riyadh also has the highest number of night schools with many cases of school dropouts compared with the other regions of Saudi. A total number of 11 informants are identified using purposive sampling. The figure below represents the informants of the study and the number interviewed.

Table: 1.1

Informants and Number of Interviewed

Informants	Number	Identification code
Social leaders	3	SL
Parents	3	P
Teachers	3	T
Academics	2	AC

The table above present the categories of informants, number, and their codes in the study. After the informants are identified an email, SMS, and WhatsApp are sent to seek their willingness to participate in the study. Those who agreed were sent another message to confirm their availability and convenience in time for the interview, while for those who turn down the invitation, a letter of appreciation was sent to them to appreciate their reply. Data are collected one-on-one based on semi-structured interviews. The interviews lasted between thirty to one hundred and twenty minutes in cafés, restaurants, and offices. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. Saturation was observed and reached in the cost of data collection. All the informants interviewed have contributed based on their experience and knowledge of the phenomena.

The data obtained from the interview are analyzed using the thematic analysis through the six phases. These processes were done on the traditional methods to identify the codes, themes, and sub-themes, and the themes and sub-themes emerged from the interview result. However, the results have gone through many stages to test the reliability and validate the information gathered. The first stage was the triangulation method as suggested by Creswell (2013), of using multiple methods to confirm the interview data. As such this study uses the primary data, the literature, and observation to test the validity of the results. In the second phase, the data were then sent to a professor who specialized in the field to confirm and validate if the data conform to research objectives and it was validated. The last stage is the rigorous checking between the researchers to ensure that the data are not shifted in meaning. However, as the study involves human experience, the researcher respected the ethical considerations. The informants were told about the research objective and their role in the research. Their information was confidential and guaranteed, that none of their information would be revealed in the study as it is for academic purposes only. Moreover, the informants

are fully aware that their participation is voluntary, they have the right to withdraw at any time they wish. Informants who agreed with the explanation and accept to partake in the study are given a consent form to sign.

Findings and Discussion

The essence of this research was to explore the implications of male students' dropout of school on the society of Saudi Arabia. The following themes and sub-themes emerged from the data obtained from the informants' interviews. The figure below represents the summary of the themes and sub-themes;

Table 1.1

Thematic Mapping of Interview Analysis

Themes	Sub-themes
Social implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Illiteracy ▪ Unemployment ▪ Involvement in child kidnapping ▪ Stealing

Social Implications

Social implications in this study explain the consequences of events or actions of male students who drop out of school in society or part of society. Social implications can be either beneficial or harmful. The term "social implications" can be used as a euphemism for "big social problems". Therefore, social implications in this objective of the study are a set of consequences caused by school dropouts on society. Below are the issues identified by participants as social implications.

a. Illiteracy

Illiteracy is one of the sub-themes under social implication emphasized by the participants and has implications on the societies due to male student school dropout. Most of the participant agrees that illiteracy has a direct impact on society and is highly connected with school dropout. Therefore, Illiteracy means the failure to write or read. It also indicates the real or suspected condition of uneducated or inadequately qualified. Therefore, illiteracy in this study explains the social problem caused by dropout students in society due to their ignorance, because many have been influenced to take part in other crimes without knowing the effect on them, family, and society in general.

In this regard, when young people stop going to school, the level of literacy would drop and the illiteracy rate would increase. One of the participants stated that with the high rate of illiteracy in the country the government provides free education, but most males wish not to attend school which will virtually increase their ignorance. The statement was noted during the interview; "The state has sought to find various solutions for free education, yet the student's failure to complete their education is reflected in the increase of ignorance and the high illiteracy rate. You know it's quite terrifying" Source: SL 1. For this participant illiteracy increase as a result of school dropout which leads to ignorance. Another Participant stated that school interruption affects student cognitive development;

"Yea, student dropout phenomena among male student it is on alarming rate, you know is something that needed urgent attention in

addressing it... hmmm because of its negative implication on them the student, their family and the society in general. One of the greatest challenges especially for the student is ignorance. What do I mean by this... the student's interruption of education affects his cognitive development, thus leading to widespread ignorance. The student will continue to live in ignorance about his life and the society his living. This type of people can be easily convinced. This is harmful to society"
Source: AC2

The above participant believed that school dropout can affect a child's cognitive development such as the way they think and act about their life and society in general. He further that this type of child can easily be influenced due to high ignorance about things. This widespread ignorance among young males has a direct impact on society. Another participant was of the view that one of the reasons for the high rate of ignorance in society is as a result of students dropping out of school: "I think one of the leading reasons for the widespread of ignorance among the members of society, especially male youth is their inability to complete their studies. Most of them drop out of education before completion... sure, ignorance can harm society." Source: T1. The participant emphasis that one of the key factors to widespread of ignorance which threatens the society is link with school dropout.

It was concluded that school dropout does not implicate the student alone as it can extend to society as a whole, as noted below; "The student's interruption from school does not only depend on him, that its impact extends to society, and that ignorance can become a feature of society due to the deposition of large numbers of students quitting schools". Source: AC1. From the foregoing analysis, the consequences of illiteracy are many and damaging in many aspects. This phenomenon has a huge effect on society, both socially and economically, as well as impacting illiterate people themselves in their daily lives and sometimes endangering their future. These findings are in line with a study conducted in Pakistan by Gaffar et.al (2013) who argued that illiteracy is one of the factors which pave the way to primary level drop-out in male students. Another study shows that illiteracy was concentrated in rural areas or populations and seaport cities with large numbers of immigrants. For this, illiteracy was somewhat less detrimental to family and individual security. Abadzi and Llambiri (2011) added that students dropping out early may lead them to change their life into illiteracy life. World Literacy Summit (2018) another study reveals that globally; it is estimated that 1 out of 5 people is completely illiterate with a further three billion people struggling to read and write at a basic level. Low-level reading and writing skills cost the global economy around 800 billion dollars every year. In 2018, illiteracy is estimated to cost UK economy approximately 80 billion dollars. The study further showed that there are often-hidden costs of functional illiteracy that possess even more significant costs to the economy and long-term personal and social impacts on a person's quality of life.

b. Unemployment

Unemployment is the second subtheme that emerged from the interview under social implications related to the effect of school dropout on societies. This refers to the participant admitting that the high rate of unemployment among male students causes a series of problems in the societies as a result of school dropouts. Since these young students cannot be able to complete school, they find it difficult to secure a job in government or a strong private organization. As such, they were left moving around society. Unemployment in this direction explains a situation where someone of working age is not able to secure a job. This

aspect is emphasized by most participants. For example; one of the participants stated during the interview that he always encourages the student to complete their studies or else their future ambition cannot be fulfilled;

"let me tell you something...something I do almost every day...as a teacher who takes oaths. I always tell students that they can't fulfill their career dreams unless they complete their education. Unfortunately, some of such students that I advise whom I know personally have been out of school for years and are still unemployed. So why quit school for a job? Very bad"

Source: T1.

The above participant believed that most students who drop out of school are still living without a job for many years. The participants link unemployment with school dropout. However, another participant also stated that students' school dropouts lead them to have insufficient qualifications thereby living without a job.

"These types of students are deceived by their thinking. They have the belief that if they quit school, they can secure a job, you know there are a lot of opportunities out there so they think. But the reality, things are not as they think it was. Therefore, the students who drop out of school with the thinking of securing a good job left with no job due to their lack of sufficient qualifications and skill."

Source: AC1

The participant connects the issue of school dropout to insufficient qualifications leading to unemployment. He believed lack of qualification as a result of school dropout leads to many students without jobs thereby causing harm to society. Another participant believed that the current high rate of unemployment in society is a result of school dropout and the lack of interest by many students to continue with their education. This was noted during the interview as stated

"There is no doubt that the high rate of unemployment in the society has a direct effect on the society, as we all know, is as a result of the dropout of students from school and their lack of interest in the necessary qualification for a job. A good job can only be obtained if the seeker has a qualification to get that job... true or not?"

Source: AC2

The participants link unemployment with a lack of interest to complete studies among the students leading to school dropout. Another participant the father of one of the students who drop out of school expresses his anger over his son's decision to leave school without completion. He says:

"My son dropped out of school almost five years now, and he was expecting to get a job like that. Now, his colleagues and friends have graduated and found good jobs. While is still expecting to get one. To be sincere, we fill somehow in the society as we know such things can harm the society in the future."

Source: P2

The participant emphasizes that most child's decision to leave school without completion is a serious issue of concern. And most of them regret their decision especially when they see their friends who completed their studies with a good job. The participant gave an example of his child who drop out of school until this the son couldn't secure any job.

From the above analysis, school dropout leads to unemployment which has consequences on society. Therefore, the high rate of unemployment among youth is a serious issue of concern as it has implications for societies. Such a situation can lead the youth to involve in other jobs that can harm the societies. This result is also consistent with the literature, for example, according UK essay (2020) documented that unemployment is an economic condition in which individuals actively seeking jobs remain un-hired. The problem of unemployment is a worldwide reality, the developed countries, as well as developing countries, suffer from it. It was further shown in the essay that unemployment has become a threat to social development in most societies. The various effects of unemployment include financial, social, and psychological problems. Unemployment has become a major problem that affects our life, health, economy, and community. low educational attainment is linked with unemployment and underemployment. Among this group and the substantial number of unemployed and underemployed workers aged 2544, illiteracy, or the functional equivalent of fewer than 5 years of school, constitutes a substantial barrier to income and job security. Shang (2016) further that unemployment can affect aspects of the economy such as fiscal policies in the community. The unemployment rate is used by policymakers to measure economic activities and social stability.

c. Stealing

Another sub-theme that emerges under the social implication is stealing. Stealing in this direction connotes Taking the properties of another party without consent or lawful right and without planning to bring them back. Stealing is identified as one of the major issues harming society. As these young people engage in drugs and are unemployed as a result of school dropout, they lack sufficient money to carter for their drugs activities. To have that they engage in stealing. At this position, three participants have shown their concern over the issue of stealing among the young male and believed it has a connection with school dropout and drug. For example, a participant narrated that student's ignorance leads them to participate in stealing because their parents are tired of them in terms of supporting them financially;

"Yes, when you seek a job, the motive behind was to be receiving something in kind (money) at the end of the month. So, the problem arose when they couldn't secure any job. The student's lack of job resort to theft and illegal gain is due to his family not giving him support and losing other chances of gaining allowance."

Source: AC2

This participant sees stealing as a result of a lack of support from the family due to one reason or the other. Such act always leads the children to involve in stealing other people's property within society. To fortress further another participant added that students drop out of school to secure a job that can make them earn more money, in a situation where they couldn't find any then they resort to stealing;

"Honestly, society is facing a series of threats in a form of stealing. Almost everyone is complaining to us about missing of their properties either kept in the shop or house. This is a very serious matter. In most cases of arrest, the victims turn out to be a student who drops out of school. Therefore, when a student breaks out of school, it's usually because he's looking for a job, and when he can't find it because of his inadequate qualification, sometimes because of his young age, he goes to steal to get money."

Source: SL2.

The participant agrees that stealing happen when young people have no job to do due to their inadequate qualification. Another participant argued that most of those participating in stealing are well-known people, and most of them drop out of school;

"It always disturbed me seeing those I work for complain about stealing. Such an act tarnished society's image. Do you know that... let me give you an instance, there was a time when the governor calls us for a meeting? During the meeting, he called my name and said to me why is it that most of the time your people complain about stealing.... this tarnishes my prestige and that of the society I am presenting. Though, some are with us while others are from the neighborhood and surprisingly are from people, we know who dropped out of school and went to the robberies to take advantage of the lack of people in the house in the morning"

Source: SL1

From the above assertions as noted by the participants, it has shown that stealing occurs in the society as a result of lack of financial support from the family, unemployment due to inadequate qualification and school dropout. Such act of stealing is normally carryout by most of young people who drop out of school. Young male involvement in stealing is a problem to the family, neighbors and the society as a whole, because many people lost their valuable things and hard labor earnings. Lyness (2021) when a person takes something that belongs to somebody else without permission, that is stealing. The stolen object can be as small as a piece of candy or as big as a car. It can be taken from someone a person knows or from a stranger. It can be taken from a store, a kind of stealing called shoplifting, or from someone's home. But either way, it's stealing (Shaw et.al., 2015)

d. Participation on Child Kidnapping Crimes

This is another sub-theme that emerges from the interview. Three participants emphasized the effect of school dropout on society and one of such effects was kidnapping. Kidnapping is an act in which a certain group took a member of a family and asks the family to pay ransom for his released. Some even threaten to assassinate if the family failed to pay the ransom. It is argued by the three participants that male students who drop out of school usually engage in stealing and gradually advance their activity to child kidnapping for ransom. This was noted by one of the participants who says;

"To be honest with you, the time we have is not enough to mention all the harmful things done by such types of people in society. But another thing connected to their act is child abduction. Yes... there have been some cases of abduction of children in schools and after the arrest of the kidnapers it turned out to be students who were school dropouts. My brother, these young people are pushing the society to something else."

Source: AC1

The participant believes that most of the people involve in child abduction are the same people who drop out of school. A teacher as a participant also shows his concern when he stated that school dropouts who engage in crimes in society including child abduction were seriously a bad decision they make as such can implicate society. The participant had this to say;

"The participation of students who have been cut off from school in various crimes, including the abduction of children, which is very bad to the society. Their inability to complete their education lured them into a such habit. Because I have the belief that those with deep education cannot put themselves into such activities because of the orientation they received in their respective schools."

Source: T2

One of the parents interview further that his son was once kidnapped by the kidnapping group, and called him to pay for ransom. After verification by the police, it appears that most of the kidnapped members are young males who drop out of school. The participant portrays this:

"One of my children was once kidnapped by a set of kidnappers using a vehicle, on his way to school, and after the investigation by the police and other intelligence agencies involved, the result turned out to be the victims are school dropout students desperate to earn money like their friends who are doing well in government. This type of people needs to be punished to serve as a lesson to the younger ones and to save society."

Source: P1

The above analysis shows that most kidnapping cases recorded are carried out by young males who drop out of school. They abduct a child and request the family to pay for ransom and use the money for other things. It is disheartened to see a future generation involved in such an act. These findings were in line with existing literature which reveals that child abduction (kidnapping) has several consequences on people, society, community, and country as a whole. For example; Ibrahim and Ahmad (2020) viewed that the incessant incidences of kidnapping in developing countries have grown into a severe national threat to their society and are ravaging the country's socio-economic wellbeing. The study also reveals that child abduction in a form of kidnapping has many implication aspects including economic, psychological effects, and socio-economic effects. Concannon et.al (2008) the approaches used by these abductors to subdue their victims are through the use of force, verbal threats, and persuasions or deceptions. The majority of victims of child predatory kidnappings survived their abduction. It reveals that victim age and gender are critical variables in child victimization cases. Neonates, infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are found to be equally likely to be abducted by males or females for emotionally based reasons or with the intent of keeping the child. Predatory kidnappers use persuasion or deception as a means to approach their victims. Lack of success in developing assertiveness has been implicated in the development of depression, anxiety, social phobias, and increased risk of victimization for a child between 11 and 13 years old. The American Psychological Association (2013) added that hostage and kidnap survivors can experience stress reactions including denial, impaired memory, shock, numbness, anxiety, guilt, depression, anger, and a sense of helplessness.

Conclusion

Social consequences associated with male dropout are related to illiteracy, unemployment, stealing, and child abduction. Thus, these implications are directly linked with one another affecting the people, community, society, and the county as a whole. The study further understands that such actions by the dropout student are a result of their low level of literacy which affects the ability to secure a good job thereby luring them into any form of a job for

survival. Dropping out of school is never a solution to social issues but rather a problem to the person and also to social development in the community. Therefore, when students stop going to school without completing there is every chance, that they will end up being illiterates because they were unable to acquire the basic education that can help them to write or read. This affects their skills in production and pursuit of a meaningful job. That is, since these students are illiterate, they found it very difficult to secure any good work that can sustain them comfortably rather they end up with pity jobs or without any. This also affects their behavior thereby pushing them to stress and frustration. As a result of unemployment leading to frustration, this group of students can lure themselves into any form of work or activities for survival such as criminal activities like stealing and child abduction. Their act in the form of stealing and child abduction has become a serious threat to people, the community, and society in general. There is a need for policymakers, students, parents, and teachers to understand the harmful consequences of male dropouts to save the country for the betterment of future generations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the study suggests the establishment of a monitoring mechanism, by the ministry of education where the teachers and the parent can monitor their child's attendance in school. Providing such monitoring mechanism can help the government and parents to track children present in school. If such monitoring mechanism is provided then the government would be aware of the number children going to school and parent would know if the child is in school or not and once a child has proper enrolment in school the literacy rate would increase. Since lack of education can lead to ignorance and underdevelopment, therefore, parents and children should be given proper orientation on the importance of education in our contemporary world, meaning, the globalize world where you have to interrelate with different people, culture and languages.

The government should make it mandatory for all parents to make sure they enroll and maintain their children in school. This can be achieved if the government can provide a law that will enforce the parents to enroll their children in school and if any found violating should be punished. The punishment would make the parent to ensure that their children are properly enroll in school. This would help the parents to train and prepare their children for the future and against anything bad to the society.

There is also a need for the education policymakers to introduce technical and entrepreneurship classes, this will attract the student to remain in school and engage with some work after school. Technical class such as carpentry, mechanical skills, welding and business orientation should be mandatory courses in schools, obtaining such skills would help the student to be self-reliance in terms of self-employment, and would not depend on the government for job opportunities. Moreover, the government should also provide incentives to less privileged families and the students who acquire the basic skills to start with small business for self-reliance. These activities would engage them and put them away from stealing or child abduction.

The teachers have a significant role to play, the teachers should also contribute by signing attendance of the students and reporting the absentees to the parents or authority concern thereby making sure the student is punished. The students should also understand the value

of education in their life, their family, and community which would play a significant role in the future. If these recommendations are properly implemented then the issue of school dropout would reduce and social implication connected to it such as unemployment, ignorance, stealing and child abduction would be history or reduced drastically.

Acknowledgement

A special thanks to everyone who participated in the study, especially the informants who provided the information needed without any biased. The study further acknowledges Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for providing a good atmosphere for research. Saudi government and Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University are also acknowledged for sponsoring the research project.

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