

Socioeconomic Status as a Predictor of School Dropout in High School Students

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KEYWORDS

school dropout, students, higher basic education, socioeconomic status.

ABSTRACT

School dropout among high school students is a complex problem that impacts communities around the globe. This article analyzes the relationship between socioeconomic status and school dropout among high school students. The methodology used was quantitative, with a hypothetical-deductive approach and a non-experimental design. A population of 270 students was identified, from which a representative sample of 200 students was selected from a public school offering extraordinary education. Two specific questionnaires were designed: the first addresses the social factors that may influence students' educational experience, and the second focuses on identifying the causes and patterns of school dropout. The results show a direct connection between the variables; applying the Pseudo R-squared, the Nagelkerke value indicates a high incidence value of socioeconomic level in school dropout, highlighting the importance of improving the conditions of these students to avoid school dropout. In conclusion, school dropout is significantly influenced by socioeconomic level highlighting the need to address this level affecting vulnerable youth to prevent school dropout.

1. Introduction

School failure in Latin America is a constant problem that deeply affects families. School dropout (D&E) represents a crucial challenge for the socioeconomic progress of the area. According to Chuquitaype and Beltrán, (2024) It indicates that factors such as financial problems, poverty, lack of access to educational resources, and family or social conflicts contribute to a considerable number of young people leaving school prematurely. These factors result in many students leaving their studies early, which has negative repercussions both individually and socially.

In Ecuador, ED has a significant impact on families, especially those with low incomes. Education is seen as a way out of poverty, but when young people drop out of school, their ability to contribute financially is reduced, often increasing the dependency and vulnerability of these families. According to (Torres et al., 2022), the SD rate was 4.1% at the primary level, 7.8% at the secondary level, and 15.4% at the higher level. These data show that many young people do not manage to complete their basic or higher education, which limits their opportunities for employment and civic participation. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the causes and effects of ED.

The description of the ED, (Bernal, 2013; Diaz, 2020; Macias et al., 2022) they define it as the abandonment of studies and the exit from the educational system. This may be due to several factors that limit the student's ability to continue learning, generating a lack of interest or motivation in their educational process. In addition, they point out that, if people cannot study and their economic development is affected, they do not manage to complete their education and have fewer opportunities to get well-paid jobs. This perpetuates poverty in communities, creating a continuous cycle.

In recent years, Ecuador's education system has had to face several challenges, especially in higher basic education (EBS), which spans from eighth to tenth grade, with students ranging in age from 11 to 16. This stage is crucial for the full growth of learners, as it allows them to strengthen fundamental skills, explore professional interests and prepare for high school. However, there are several factors that affect their academic performance,

motivation, health, and permanence in the educational system, one of these problems being ED.

Early school leaving is a significant problem because of its direct impact on families, society, a country's economy, and individuals who leave school (Rodríguez et al., 2019). This scenario negatively affects both individuals and the community. Young people who drop out of school face fewer employment opportunities, lower incomes and limitations in their social mobility, as well as a greater risk of falling into poverty, crime and violence. Sosa, (2021).

The factors that determine ED may vary depending on the context and individual characteristics of each student. However, according to (Moles-López et al., 2022), some of the common factors that often influence ED include socioeconomic, family, school, individual, and cultural factors. On the other hand Treviño and Maldonado, (2020) It points out that socioeconomic factors refer to the interaction between the social and economic aspects of a society, including variables such as income level, education, occupation, social class, indigence, social disparities, and economic ascent, among others. In the context of ED, these elements can affect the likelihood that students will drop out of school.

According to a study by Posligua Anchundia, (2019), the main reason for ED is the socioeconomic factor. The family's economic difficulties can force students to drop out of school to help with the family's livelihood, which directly impacts their educational continuity. Although other aspects such as lack of motivation, insufficient family support, academic problems and difficulties in the family environment also play an important role in ED, the author highlights that the economic precariousness of families is the most determining cause in the choice of students to stop studying.

Socioeconomic factors play a key role in ED. According to Heredia and Carcausto-Calla, (2024), lack of family economic support, low financing capacity, low income, and job insecurity are significant variables that affect the decision to drop out of school. In addition, economic crises such as the recent one can worsen the situation and increase ED rates. On the other hand Lechuga Rodríguez, (2022) points out that the economic causes of ED are related to poverty, social vulnerability, high mobility and marginalization, which can lead minors to child labor to contribute to the family economy. These factors external to the education system are decisive in the decision to drop out of school, especially in rural areas and among young people from families with nutritional deficiencies.

The reason for this study focused on finding a solution to a social and educational problem that affects many people, especially the most vulnerable areas of society, which may be linked to low levels of education. This study focused from a sociological perspective, which considers ED as a social process influenced by country-specific inequalities of opportunities, and from a psychoeducational approach, which focuses on personal and family elements that affect students' motivation, goals, and life projects.

In addition, it will make it possible to understand and determine whether socioeconomic status contributes to school dropout and will help to identify the root causes of the problem. Addressing the causes of ED can improve student retention in schools. Faced with this scenario, the problem was raised: Socioeconomic factors affect ED in EBS students.

2. Methodology

The research was framed under a quantitative approach of correlational scope, cross-sectional and non-experimental design. This allowed the data to be collected in a systematic, precise and objective way, arriving at a descriptive and inferential analysis. In addition, the objective was to describe the correlation between socioeconomic status and school dropout in students of basic higher education. At the same time, the hypothesis was proposed: Social factors affect ED in EBS students; the specific hypothesis is also outlined: The factors that affect ED in EBS students are those of socioeconomic level.

A. Population and sample

The research was carried out with the total population of 270 students of 8th, 9th and 10th grade of Basic General Education (EGB) and 1st, 2nd and 3rd year of Unified General Baccalaureate (BGU) for people with unfinished schooling (PCEI) at night, from a public school in district 09D03 of Guayaquil. On the other hand, the sample studied was composed of 200 students from the 1st "A" and "B" courses, 2nd "A" and "B", and 3rd BGU "A" and "B" courses.

B. Data collection techniques and instruments

In order to collect information, the questionnaire instrument was chosen due to its ability to collect information uniformly, facilitate access to data, and generate reliable information by using the same specific questions for all participants, which allows comparing answers and quantifying the results.

Social factors questionnaire: An evaluation instrument composed of 24 items was developed in detail to measure three key dimensions of social factors: socioeconomic level, educational level of parents and family environment. Each item was assessed with a five-point Likert scale, ranging from NEVER to ALWAYS. The reliability of the instrument was verified by a very high Cronbach's alpha of 0.9221, which demonstrates strong internal consistency and indicates that the items consistently evaluate the construct of interest. This level of reliability indicates that the instrument is accurate and well-structured, capable of capturing the nuances of social factors. The questionnaire was validated by five experts in the field, ensuring its relevance and comprehensiveness to capture the essence of the concept in question. This validation process is crucial to ensure that the results are reliable and applicable both in practice and in future research.

School dropout questionnaire, In the study presented, an instrument was developed to assess ED in a public school. This instrument consists of 18 items that examine two crucial dimensions: the causes and consequences of ED. The evaluation was carried out using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 to 4, allowing detailed answers. The instrument showed high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.9252, suggesting that the two dimensions evaluated offer a consistent and reliable measure of ED. This indicates that the instrument can be a valuable tool for understanding and addressing school dropout. In addition, the questionnaire was validated by five experts, ensuring its content validity.

C. Procedure

Data were collected following a step-by-step process as shown in Table 1.

Board 1 Protocol for the development of the research by phases

Stages	Category	Related activities
Stage 1	Revision to the documentary	The existing literature in scientific articles from databases such as Scopus, EBSCO, Dialnet and Redalyc, as well as in other digital platforms, was reviewed to establish the theoretical and conceptual definition of the variables investigated. This stage is critical to identifying current knowledge and gaps that new research could fill. Finally, it was concluded with the selection and documentary analysis of two variables: socioeconomic level and school dropout in secondary school students.
Step 2	Linking the sample	The focus of the fiscal educational establishment in the city of Guayaquil was carried out, contact was made with the rector and the participants of the extraordinary offer were located in the night shift, composed of 200 students of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd courses of BGU.
Step 3	Instrumentalization	2 questionnaires were applied, social factors and school dropout that were validated by 5 experts. In addition, he used informed consent to communicate and obtain the acceptance of the collaborators who participated in the sample studied. Also, the anonymity of the participants was guaranteed by processing the data in encrypted form, thus protecting their identity. The integrity of the data was kept intact, with no manipulations made to any records. Finally, the questionnaire was administered to the study participants
Phase 4	Analysis of results	Once the data was collected, the information was ordered and analyzed using the SPSS version 22 statistical program, which allowed evaluating the reliability of the instrument and revealing a high reliability. A descriptive analysis was performed to detect patterns, trends, and significant aspects in the data, without making assumptions or extracting findings beyond what the information supports. The frequencies of the variables were calculated with the application. Likewise, an inferential analysis was carried out, focused on deducing conclusions about a complete population based on the data obtained from a representative sample. Using the same program, normality, independence, goodness of fit tests were performed and the Nagelkerke value of the Pseudo R squared was calculated
Phase 5	Return	Finally, the findings were shared with the authorities, teachers and study participants, thus completing the research cycle and enriching the existing knowledge. Subsequently, it was disseminated to the scientific community through the publication of an academic article.

Source: own elaboration 2024

Each of these stages is fundamental and requires meticulous attention to ensure the comprehensiveness and solidity of the scientific work.

3. Results

After performing the descriptive analysis, we present the findings obtained from the questionnaire.

The analysis of a sample of 200 cases shows a predominance of moderate situations, representing 74% of the total, which indicates that most of the cases are at an intermediate level on the evaluation scale. This suggests that while they are not ideal, they also do not pose a serious risk or problem. On the other hand, a small percentage, 7%, is classified as inadequate, which could point to specific areas that need immediate attention or significant improvements. In contrast, 19% of cases are considered adequate, indicating that a considerable portion meet the established criteria or expectations. Although not the majority, this segment is significant and could serve as a model or reference to improve the cases that are in the categories of moderate and inadequate. In summary, the sample reflects a trend towards moderate results, with evident opportunities for improvement in the minority of inadequate cases and a standard of effectiveness demonstrated by the appropriate cases.

The distribution of socioeconomic levels in the sample reveals a predominance of moderate socioeconomic status, with 54% of the total cases. This suggests that more than fifty percent of the sample is in an economic situation that, although not ideal, is not precarious either, indicating that a large part can satisfy their fundamental needs without major surpluses. On the other hand, the adequate level, which represents 34%, suggests that a third of the population has sufficient resources for a comfortable life, with access to goods and services beyond the essentials. In contrast, the inadequate level, which covers 12% of cases, reflects a significant minority facing serious economic challenges. This segment of the population could be struggling to meet their basic needs, indicating the presence of economic inequalities within the group studied

The information provided in Table 2 reveals a distribution of ED frequency levels into three categories: inadequate, moderate, and adequate. At the 'Inadequate' level, 14 cases are registered, representing 7% of the total, indicating that there is a minority of situations where ED is more severe. On the other hand, the largest of the cases is located at the 'Moderate' level, with 103 cases that constitute 51.5% of the total, which reflects a worrying trend of desertion that, although not extreme, needs attention. On the other hand, the 'Adequate' level covers 83 cases, representing 41.5% of the total, indicating that there is a significant group where ED is less common. This suggests favorable conditions for school retention in about fifty percent of the cases analyzed. However, the high proportion in the 'Moderate' level points to the importance of improving prevention and support methods to reduce ED and increase the number of cases that are in the 'Adequate' level. See table 2.

Board 2 Frequency Levels

Levels	Social factors		Socioeconomic level		Dropout	
	Fr	%	Fr	%	Fri	%
Inadequate	14	7,0	24	12,0	14	7,0
Moderate	148	74,0	108	54,0	103	51,5
Adequate	38	19,0	68	34,0	83	41,5
Total	200	100,0	200	100,0	200	100,0

Source: own elaboration 2024

After carrying out the inferential analysis, we show the results obtained from the questionnaire.

A. Hypothesis (socioeconomic level)

Ho: The factors that affect ED in EBS students are NOT those of socioeconomic status

Ha: The factors that affect ED in EBS students are those of socioeconomic level

Table 3 Test of independence between socioeconomic status and SD

Model	Likelihood Log -2	x2	Gl	Sgf.
Interception only	172,920			
Final	14,170	158,750	2	,000

Source: own elaboration 2024

According to the result of the X2 statistic, which is 158.750, and the p-value of 0.000, compared to the statistical significance level $\alpha = 0.05$ ($p_valor\ 0.000 < 0.05$), Ho is declined and Ha is admitted. This indicates that the factors that affect SD in EBS students are related to socioeconomic status, see Table 3

Table 4 Pseudo R squared

	Socioeconomic level and SD
Cox and Snell	,548
Nagelkerke	,658
McFadden	,444

Source: own elaboration 2024

The Nagelkerke value in the Pseudo R² is a measure that indicates how well a logistic regression model fits the analyzed data. According to Table 4, this value is 0.584, which means that the logistic regression model specifies that 58.4% of the variations observed in social factors, attributing them to ED.

The Pseudo R² (0.658) indicates that the logistic regression model used, which includes the SD variable and socioeconomic factors, explains approximately 65.8% of the variability in the ED. In statistical terms, this demonstrates a high capacity of the model to explain the variability observed in the ED. This means that although the model is not perfect in prediction, it is quite robust and shows a significant influence of socioeconomic factors on this educational phenomenon. The figure suggests that more than half of the causes of ED can be understood through this level.

4. Discussion

The results support the hypothesis that socioeconomic level influences the school dropout of these students.

These results denote on a well-established basis. According to Pachay-López and Rodríguez-Gómez, (2021), social factors have a significant impact on ED, a complex issue that affects communities around the world. The reasons are diverse and can include lack of financial resources, inadequate educational infrastructure, dissatisfaction with the education system, and lack of government support. Early identification of the factors that lead to ED and implementing preventive measures is essential to reduce this phenomenon in Ecuador.

In turn, (Rivera et al., 2023) explains that there are numerous social factors that influence ED. These factors, which are often interconnected, can restrict access to educational resources or increase responsibilities that compete with the time and energy devoted to studying. Disparities in educational resources, poor infrastructure and lack of trained teachers, especially in rural areas, which create an environment conducive to school dropout, can also be pointed out. In addition, family difficulties, such as internal conflicts, can influence a learner's choice to leave school. These are just some of the causes identified in the study.

On the other hand, these results of the research coincide with the study of Posligua, (2019), which argues that socioeconomic factors play a crucial role in education. This concept includes not only economic capacity, such as income and working conditions, but also the economic position of each family.

These aspects, which can be assessed both individually and collectively, directly affect people's standard of living and affordable opportunities. Although other elements such as low motivation, insufficient family support, academic problems and family problems play a role in ED, it can be highlighted that the economic precariousness of families is the most determining cause in the choice of students to stop studying. For its part, Cedeño Mendoza and Mantilla Vivas, (2022) They used evaluation items such as income, economic position and housing conditions, among others, to measure the socioeconomic level of individuals or families. They used a scale of 5 to 33 points, which allowed for detailed differentiation within the population studied. This leads to the conclusion that this level has an impact on ED in secondary school students.

Additionally, the results obtained in the present research in the existing correlation of both variables corroborate a study carried out by Noboa and Santillán-Lima, (2023), which identify several key factors that affect students' choice to drop out of school and impact on students' resolve to drop out of school early. Among these factors, the importance of family economic resources stands out, since having sufficient means at home can provide the necessary support for students to concentrate on learning without worrying or being distracted by the lack of financial resources. This interpretation suggests that this Limitation in academic and professional training not only affects personal well-being, but also reduces their ability to contribute effectively to the labor market. Therefore, it is crucial that education policies focus on preventing ED and implementing strategies that promote retention and academic success in EBS.

In accordance with the study of Damyanov, (2023) He noted in his findings the relevance of socioeconomic elements in school dropout. Aspects such as family income, socioeconomic status, access to educational

resources, and economic stability have a significant influence on the probability that a student will drop out of school. These factors directly affect students' lives, their motivation, and their ability to take advantage of available educational opportunities. In addition, they influence their ability to stay committed to their studies, which can increase the risk of dropping out of school.

Treviño and Maldonado, (2020) they also support the results of this study by indicating that socioeconomic status plays an essential role in ED, affecting students in various ways. In environments of poverty, both family and among classmates, the likelihood of dropping out of school can decrease if students receive the necessary support.

In the context of ED, these elements can affect the likelihood that students will drop out of school. In the same way Suberviola, (2021) supports these results by highlighting that economic difficulties can increase the inclination of students to drop out of school. When families face financial problems and insufficient income, students are often forced to work to contribute to the livelihood of the household. Understanding these elements is essential to understanding the educational and social inequalities that can lead to early school leaving and to designing effective interventions that address these disparities.

Likewise (Benítez et al., 2021; Cedeño Mendoza & Mantilla Vivas, 2022), agree with the results of this research, indicating that there are several common reasons why people drop out of school. These include socioeconomic situations, such as lack of money in the family, absence of family support, or the obligation to work from an early age; personal circumstances, such as lack of interest, motivation or concentration; and aspects of the education system, such as lack of preparation, the absence of a meaningful connection with teachers or counselors, and the feeling of helplessness on the part of the institution.

5. Conclusions

1. A large part of the cases are in a moderate situation, both in social factors and in socioeconomic levels and the frequency of school dropout (SD), these data underline the importance of focusing on improving the conditions of moderate cases to prevent them from worsening and help them to advance towards adequate levels.
2. Social factors have a considerable impact on SD in EBS students, as evidenced by the value of the X2 statistic and the p-value, which show a statistically significant relationship. It highlights the complexity and interconnectedness of these factors, which can restrict access to educational resources and increase responsibilities that compete with the time and energy devoted to studying.
3. The logistic regression model used in the analysis explains that more than half of the variations observed in the social factors that affect the ED, according to the Nagelkerke value in the Pseudo R2. Having sufficient means at home can provide the necessary support for learners to focus on their studies without the worry of lack of financial resources.
4. Socioeconomic factors significantly impact dropout (SD) among EBS students. Statistical analysis reveals a close link between socioeconomic status and the likelihood of dropping out of school, suggesting that improving the economic conditions of families could decrease the dropout rate.
5. The logistic regression model used in the study is quite robust, which specifies that, although it is not perfect, the design is effective in identifying and predicting the factors that contribute to ED. It highlights the importance of taking socio-economic factors into account in the formulation of educational policies.

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