

# 'RTE (2009) VS SCHOOL DROP-OUT: A CASE STUDY UNDER RISHRA CIRCLE, HOOGHLY DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL'

## Abstract

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 was passed on August 4, 2009, in an attempt to truly implement India's Fundamental Right to Free and Compulsory Education. This Act came into effect on April 1, 2010. After a decade of the enactment of this RTE Act, school drop out of school drop-out is not fertile for the development of our country. It is also not desirable for the implementation of the NEP 2020. India has made some significant commitments in constitution towards ensuring the basic rights of the children through Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009; there is a serious doubt about its performance. Though, considerable achievements are noticed through the flagship program of SSA and Mid-Day meal scheme, but after a decade, the ASER Report (2021) shows that a significant portion of the student remained out of school. This paper tries to find out the prevalence of school dropout among the children of 6-14 years in the studied schools along with its associated factors.

**Keywords:** RTE, NEP, Drop-Out, Out of School Children (OOSC), Never Enrolled, SSA.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The base of the pyramid and the future of the nation should depend on the primary education. Mahatma Gandhi said that the basic primary education should be free and compulsory for all. Education is a process of complete development of individuality. It is a continuous process to adjust oneself to the changeable world. It begins at birth continuous throughout the life, till death. Primary education constitutes an uneasy important part of entire structure of education. It is at this stage that child starts going to formal institutions. The education which the children receive from the formal institutions provides the foundation of his physical, mental, emotional, intellectual, and social development. Sound elementary education gives a fillip to sound secondary and higher education. In a developing country like India, elementary education is regarded as stepping to national educational superstructure. The directive principles of the Indian constitution had laid down the provision for making available the opportunity for free and compulsory primary education within ten years of adaptation of constitution for all children between the age group of 6-14years. The article '45' of the Indian constitution States that- "the state shall endeavor to provide within a period of ten years for the commencement of this constitution for free and compulsory education for all the children until they complete the age of fourteen years. But till now the constitution dire live has remained unfulfilled. In order to fulfill this constitutional liability primary education becomes the jointed responsibility of the central government, various state government, various local bodies as well as voluntary organization. The Constitutional 86th Amendment Act of December 2002 makes free and compulsory education a basic right under Article 21 A of the Indian Constitution<sup>39</sup>. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 was passed on August 4, 2009, in an attempt to truly implement India's Fundamental Right to Free and Compulsory Education. This Act came into effect on April 1, 2010. India became a proud country amongst 135 countries to provide free Education as a Fundamental Right.

It is indeed a matter of national concern that 54.6 per cent children (out of which 56.9 percent girls) drop out before they complete class VIII and 66per cent children (out of which 68.6 percent girls) drop out before they reach Class X (GOI, MHRD Website), provisional data for academic year 2001-02). (Source: DOEEL, MHRD, GOI Website, provisional data for academic year 2001-02). These percentages are unspeakably low in tribal areas, backward districts and among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The dropout rate of boys at upper primary level is double that of girls in West Bengal. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4, 2015-16), the dropout rate at upper primary level is 2.9 per cent for girls and 5.8 per cent for boys in the schools of West Bengal. In West Bengal drop-outs rates in boys are higher than in girls.

## **II. COMMITMENT OF THE RTE (2009), ACT**

The right of children to free and compulsory education, Act (2009) has been enacted to provide free and compulsory education of the children of age six to fourteen years. The state (central and state Govt. concurrently) shall provide all the support and facilities laid down in the Act. Chapter II, Section 3 (1& 2) and 4 that ensure that no child of 6 to 14 years belonging to the socially or financially disadvantaged group will be left out from elementary education. There is special provision for the children with disabilities (CWSs). So tolerance of out of school children (OOSC) or drop-out has been rejected under this Act.

According to Section 12(1c) of the RTE Act, private unaided schools must admit students from weaker and disadvantaged groups to the level of at least 25% of their class strength. According to Section 12(2) of the RTE Act, private unaided schools shall be paid for their expenses up to the lesser of the per-child cost incurred by the government or the actual amount charged for the kid.

Section 13(1) of the RTE Act clearly prohibits any school or person from collecting any capitation fee and subjecting a child or his/her parents or guardians to any screening procedure in order to ensure that all children aged six to fourteen have access to quality primary education. Furthermore, Section 2(o) requires that only random techniques be used to accept a kid to a school. If the number of students applying to a particular school exceeds the available seats, a lottery mechanism will be employed to fill the seats under the random approach. After a decade of the enactment of this RTE Act, school drop-out of school drop-out is not fertile for the development of our country. It is also not desirable for the implementation of the NEP 2020.

**1. Dropout:** UNESCO (1970) has defined dropout as “Leaving school before the completion of a given stage of education or leaving at some intermediate or non-terminal point in a cycle of schooling”. In the present study we mean dropouts are those children who enrolled but do not complete and leave put at different levels of elementary education and whatever may be the number of years they spent in elementary schools. In this study dropout refers to those students who left the schools before arriving at the next higher class i.e., class IX.

It is the percentage of students who leave the system without completing the grade to the total number of students originally enrolled in the grade. The drop-out rate can, therefore, be calculated by the following formula:

Drop-out Rate for the grade 'g' in the year 't' =

$$= \frac{\text{No. of students dropping out from grade 'g' in the year 't'}}{\text{Total no. of students enrolled in grade 'g' in the year 't'}} \times 100$$

**2. Outline of the Study:** The plan of this study is carried out in a number of inter-related chapters. The relevance of elementary education with its commitments laid down in the RTE (2009) Act, concept of drop-out have been clearly developed in introduction part. The relevance of the topic has been discussed under rationality part. Chapter 3 highlights on a comprehensive survey of related literatures along with the research gap. Chapter-4 specifies the broad objectives of the study, while chapter-5 delimits the study and gives brief introduction about study area. Chapter-6 represents data source and research methodology that have been applied to explore my study. Chapter 7 describes the facts and findings of field survey that has been conducted in two schools of Hooghly district, West Bengal to explore the topic entitled of FER. Chapt-8 is devoted to a broad analysis on the concluding observations and policy recommendations. The reference or bibliography chapter is devoted for the acknowledgement of authors, books and reports that have used to shape the study.

**3. Rationale:** India has made some significant commitments in constitution towards ensuring the basic rights of the children through Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009; there is a serious doubt about its performance. Though considerable achievements are noticed through the flagship program of SSA and Mid-Day meal scheme. But after a decade, the ASER Report (2021) shows that a significant portion of the student remained out of school. In the mean time NEP-2020 has been enacted throughout country. The education system of any country is framed by levels of education, from early childhood education, primary and secondary education, to higher education. These sectors are complementary to each other. For example, primary sector is the feeding sector of the secondary and secondary sector is the feeding sector to the higher education levels. Now if a significant portion of the enrolled students became out of school or drop-out, the supply chain will be affected as a result. If this problem persists for longtime, then the desired goal of achieving 50% GER by 2030 would not be possible.

According to the National Sample Survey (NSS), the percentage of Out of School Children (OOSC) in September 2014 was only 3% of all children aged six to thirteen<sup>182</sup>. However, a significant number of such OOSC children have enrolled in schools but have never attended and finally became drop-out. Such data sheds light on the reality that, despite the fact that specific metrics have been touted as success indicators, the ultimate benefits have not percolated to society. Other social issues to address include the avoidance of child labor, which is a crucial aspect of delivering benefits to OOSC children who are enrolled in schools but never attend. This is essence of my study which tries to analyze the prevalence of school drop-out and its associated reasons of the children at the elementary level of education.

### III. OBJECTIVES

- To find out the prevalence of school dropout among the children of 6-14 years in the studied schools.
- To identify the selected factors of school dropout among 6-14 years old children.
- To analyze the nature and cause of such drop out
- To prescribe appropriate policy directives to resist the problem of school drop-out at elementary level.

### IV. DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

- The study is limited to two primary schools under Rishra Circle of Hooghly district, West Bengal.
- The study is limited to Elementary level (class VIII) only.
- The study is limited to respondents of school dropouts (HT/HM/Siksha Bandhu), who were sampled purposively and were readily available in study area.

### V. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. A report based on **Joint Review Mission (JRM)** of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the program for universalization of elementary education published by Shrinivasan R [3] states that nearly 2.7 million children drop out of school every year. The net enrolment

ratio for Classes VI to VIII was reported by the JRM as 54%, that is, just 54% of all children in the age group 11-14 years were actually enrolled. This means that approximately 44 million children in this age group do not go to school. For Classes I to V, net enrolment ratio of 97% was reported, leaving out nearly 4 million children.

2. A study of **Jalan J, Panda J [4], Kolkata**, did survey on 6 district of West Bengal and shows that in Birbhum dropout rate is 7% .
3. According to the **World Bank's Report (2007)**, the number of out of school children (OOSC) has decreased slightly from 1.9-1.8 million in the age group 6-10 years and from 0.64 to 0.2 million in the 11-13 years age group out of which 54 percent were girls, 28 percent belong to Schedule Caste and rest belong to Schedule There are various reasons for being out of school, such as household work (25%), earning compulsion (23%), lack of interest (14%), migration (9%), lack of access (8%). It appears from the report that poverty is the compelling factor of such high educational deprivation.
4. Education for **All Global Monitoring Report (2007)** also reported that the 13.5 million out of school children estimate for 6.9 per cent of the 6-13 age group children. the various socio-economic groups, Muslims are at the top of the list (10%) followed by ST (9.5%), 8.2 per cent for SC (6.9%), and OBCs (6.9%). In northern and eastern part of India states like Bihar has 17% OOSC followed by Jharkhand (10.9%), Assam (8.9%), West Bengal (8.7%), Madhya Pradesh (8.6%), Uttar Pradesh (8.2%) and 6.9 per cent in Rajasthan (6.9%). While in south India Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu account for the out-of-school rate between 0.5 per cent and 2.1 per cent.
5. **Brown Gordon (2012)**, in his paper indicated how low family income causes children out of school and compels them to be trapped in the worst form of child labor. This is not only the problem of India; it has now become the global epidemic. According to him, education has to be integrated into wider national policies for eliminating child labor through strategies that combat poverty, inequality and vulnerability including social protection and targeted support.
6. In a study related to the educational deprivation of children in Calcutta, **Nambissan (2003)** identified dropout and never enrolled children are the indicators of educational deprivation. This out of school children (OOSC) are mainly from poor and traditional social groups (such as dalits, adivasi and muslim). She emphasizes on the linkage between poverty, child labor and non-enrollment in schools. Though poverty is the main constraint in the education of children of Calcutta's poor, cost of schooling, unattractive school environment, inaccessibility of schools and parental negligence are critical factors standing in the way of universal elementary education.
7. In their article on "Extra cost of living with a disability" **Palmer Michael, Mitra Sophie et. al. (2017)** observed that disability causes extra costs for individual and households with disability. These extra-expenditures may arise for health care, food and the devices related with the specific disability. They also established the negative association between school attendance and disability. According to them, a total of 264 million primary and secondary school- age children worldwide were out of school in 2015 (UNESCO,2017).

- 8. The World Bank Report (2009)** pointed out that the people with disabilities are subject to multiple deprivations and that they are the mostly excluded from education. This results the deprivation of capability of living a standard of living. Limaye Sandhya (2016) mentioned the factors influencing the accessibility of education for children with disabilities as poverty, school fees, transportation cost, no perception of the guardians towards education and disability, lack of times to escort their child to school, lack of awareness of facilities, less priority of girls-children in education, social stigma due to several socio-religious beliefs and barrier free school environments.

After a comprehensive review of my study-oriented literatures, it has been identified that there are a number of such studies regarding school drop-out, but no single study has focused on school drop-out issue in connection with the commitments of the RTE Act (2009). There is hardly any study which tried to explain the high prevalence of drop-out among CWSN students and raised the question of performance of Inclusive Education (IE). The research gaps are supposed to be filled up in this study.

## VI. METHODOLOGY

The study is mainly based on primary data. The data are collected by surveying the schools. Simple random sampling has been used to select two schools out of 53 schools (Both primary and Upper primary) in Rishra circle. A data capture format for OOSC students prepared by the researcher in consultation with respected supervisor (attached as annexure) of age group 6-14 years has been used to collect the data from the studied school. Here mainly the respondents were the Head Teacher (HT) and Head Master (HM) of the selected schools. SikshaBandhu and Special educator (Stake holders of the SamagraSikshaAbhijan) attached with the schools were present during the data collection. They also helped to make compatible the data with the child register maintained by them. To make this study readily comprehensible, different tables and graphs are used.

## VII. STUDIED AREA

In this part, I have tried to measure the school drop-out in the age group of 5-18 years taking two schools from Rishra Circle of Hooghly districts, west Bengal. First school is Bamunari High school and its primary section. This school is located in Rishra Gram Panchayat. Bamunari is a village of Rishra Gram Panchayat (GP) under Serampur-Uttarpara Community Development Block of Hooghly district. According to 2011 census, the village has 6006 population out of which 3074 are males and 2932 are females. Population of 0-6 years age group is 698 and the sex-ratio of this village 958 higher than the state average (950) and child sex-ratio is 983 far better than state average (956). Literacy rate of this village is 78.58 percent higher than the state average (72.26 percent). While the male literacy is 85.38 and female literacy is 71.42 percent. There are one primary school and one high school in Bamunari. This village is situated beside the NH-2 highway. All households are covered with 100 percent supply of electricity, water supply of drinking water (tap, well, tube well, hand pump). All of the students are enrolled in government school. Both primary and secondary sections have sufficient number of students.

Second school is Rishra Vidyapith along with its primary section. It is a Hindi medium school. This school is situated under Rishra Municipality. It is an industrial belt. A number of small, medium and large-scale industries are there. A number of families are migrated from different parts of India. So, this school fulfils the local demand of non-Bengali language. This school did not face the problem of student deficiency. According to census-2011, the village has 8772 population comprising of 4511 males and 4261 females. Population of children of 0-6 years is 802. The sex-ratio of the village is 945, a little short of the state average (950). Literacy rate of this village is 88.31 percent higher than the state average (72.26 percent). While the male literacy is 92.29 and female literacy is 84.07 percent. From the last census, it appears that 99.16 percent of population are Hindu community out of which 29.70 percent represents schedule caste (SC). Out of the 8772 population, 3318 are engaged in the jobs like small business activities, industrial workers, cultivators and different service sector in adjacent state capital, Kolkata. Previously a major portion of the population of this ward were employed in the different industries of Rishra and Konnagar, such as Laxmi cotton mill, Joyashree Textiles, Britannia Biscuits company. Due to factory lockout and technological upgradation, they have now become unemployed and marginal workers. All households are covered with 100 percent supply of electricity, water supply of drinking water (tap, well, tube well, hand pump).

## VIII. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1: Nature and Reasons of School Drop-Out in Surveyed Schools**

Name of school	Out of School Children (OOSC)									Proper reasons for drop out
	Gender		Social Category					OOSC		
	Male	Female	Gen	OBC	SC	ST	CWSN	N. E	Drop-Out	
Bamunari High School	4	3	0	5	2	0	3	0	7	All of the drop out students are not interested in study
Rishra Vidyapith	6	5	2	7	1	1	4	0	11	6 students are drop-out due to poor financial condition and 2 students are not interested in continuing studies

Source: Primary Survey

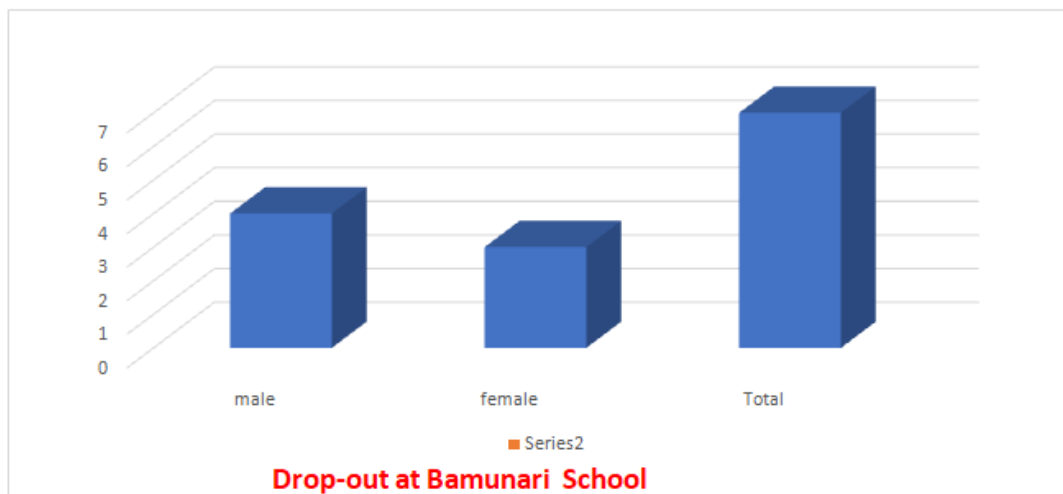
Table 1 shows the extent of drop-out of the surveyed school according to gender and social status. The children are accounted as out of school if they do not have any exposure to school in their school age (6-14 years). They can be categorized into two- a) never enrolled in

school as students and b) dropout who have dropped out before completing their elementary education. The study shows that all of the children drop-out. This means that primarily they enrolled and finally they became drop-out. The table reflects that Bamunari school has 7 drop-out students among which 5 are from OBC, 2 From SC and 3 are Children with Special Needs (CWSN). While Rishra Vidyapith has 7 from OBC and 4 from CWSN category. The table points out that drop-out in both schools mainly from the families of other backward classes who are mainly living below the poverty line. This indicates the low financial status of the family. The study reveals that all of the drop-out students are not interested in their studies as per their guardian's view. They left the school to support their family. Similar result is also found in case of Rishra Vidyapith as 7 students are drop-out from BPL family. This low capability of the family is mainly due the factory lock-out. The main concern is that in both school, a significant percentage of CWSN students are being drop-out. This drop-out mainly owing to the low family income, absence of escort facility and lack of parents' awareness.

**Table 2: Drop-Out at Bamunari School Gender Wise**

Bamunary	School
Gender	<b>Drop-out</b>
Boys	4
Girls	3
Total	7

Source-Primary Survey



**Figure 1:** Drop-Out at Bamunari School according to Male and Female Students

The figure depicts the level of drop-out among boys and girls in Bamunari School. It shows that the rates of drop-out among boys' and girls' students are more or less same.

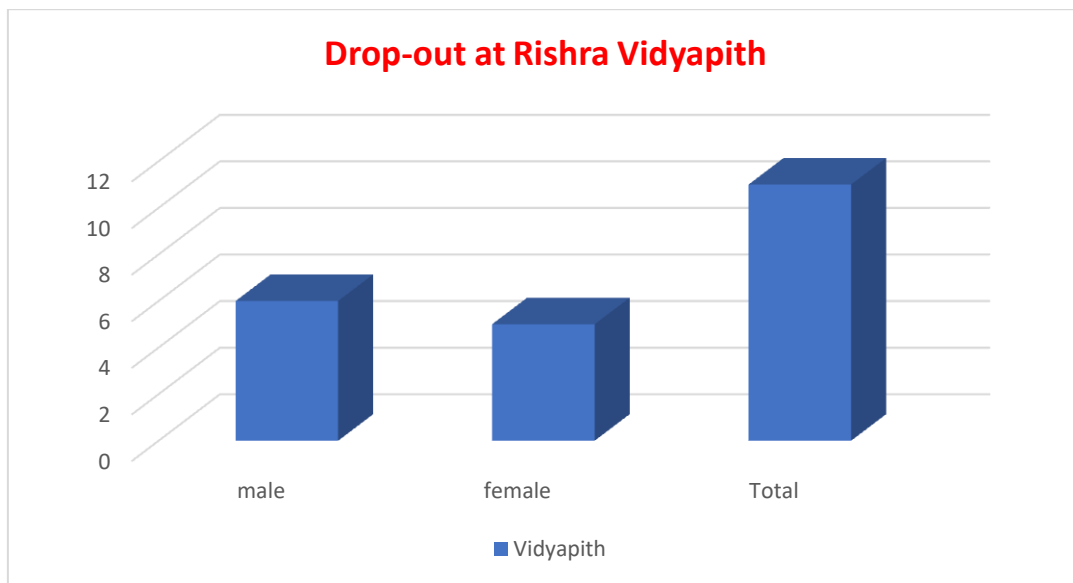
Table 3 delineates the extent of drop-out among boys and girls. This reflects the Figure-2. It is obvious from the figure that the problem of school drop-out is severe for both boys and girls.



**Table 3: Drop-Out at Rishra Vidyapith Gender Wise**

Rishra	Vidyapith
	<b>Drop-out</b>
Boys	6
Girls	5
Total	11

Source: Primary Survey



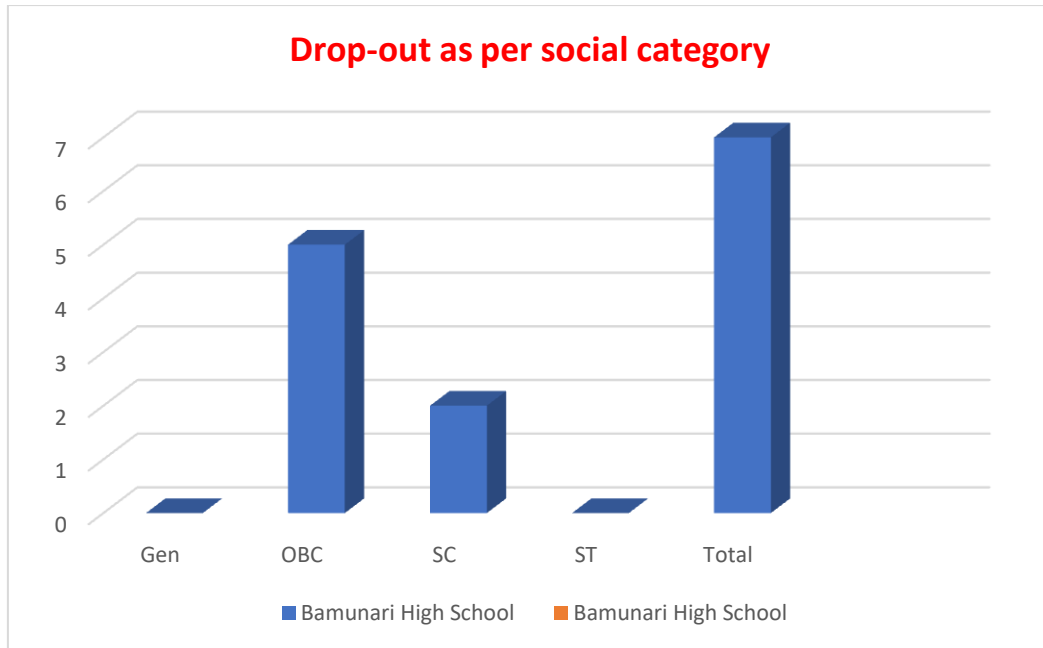
**Figure 2: Drop-Out at Rishra Vidyapith School according to Male and Female**

Table 4 describes school drop-out according to the social category. It is clear from the table the problem of drop-out is more intense among the students of other backward class of the families living below the poverty line. The problem is similar to Bamunari school. The study points out that the problem of drop-out centers around the OBC category. HTs and HMs of both school informed that drop-out problem arises due to the poor financial condition of the family. Though the students are enrolled, finally they left the school to support their family for livelihoods.

**Table 4: Drop-Out at Bamunari School Category Wise**

	Bamunari High School
	drop-out
Gen	0
OBC	5
SC	2
ST	0
Total	7

Source: Primary Survey



**Figure 3:** Drop-Out at Bamunari School according To Social Category

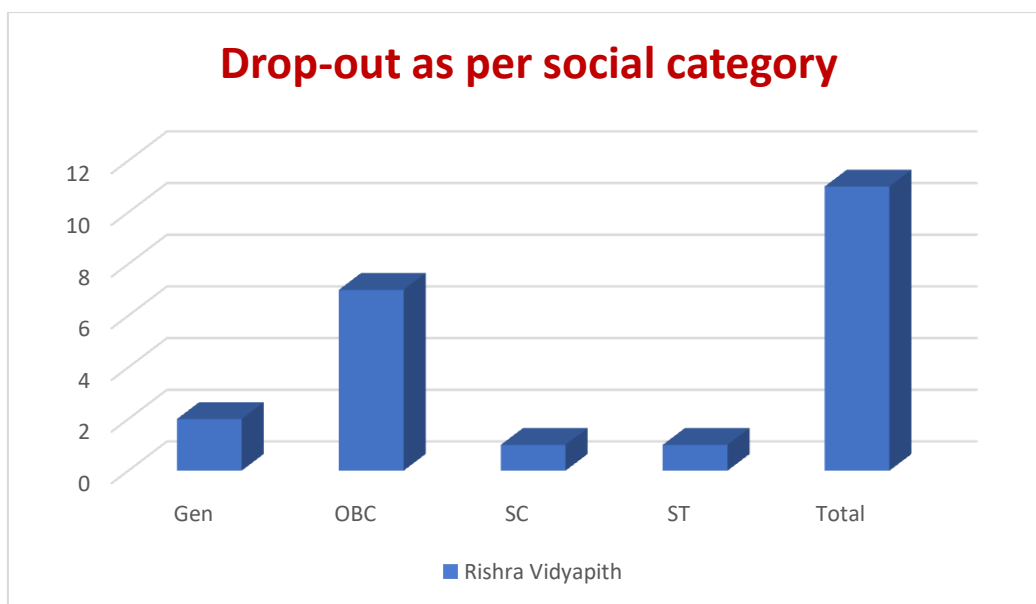
Population of Bamunary Village are dependent on agricultural activities and allied sector. It is seasonal and hence seasonal unemployment and disguised unemployment are the root cause of low capability of the families. Owing to these reasons, children of such families left the school at the mid of their study and migrated to the other states in search of jobs.

While the Vidyapith school is located in municipal area. Major population are employed in industrial sector. But due to factory lockout and technological upgradation, they have now become unemployed and marginal workers. They migrated to other area or states with their families and their children becomes drop-out as a result.

**Table 5: Drop-Out at Rishra Vidyapith Social Category Wise**

	Rishra Vidyapith
	drop-out
Gen	2
OBC	7
SC	1
ST	1
Total	11

Source: Primary Survey



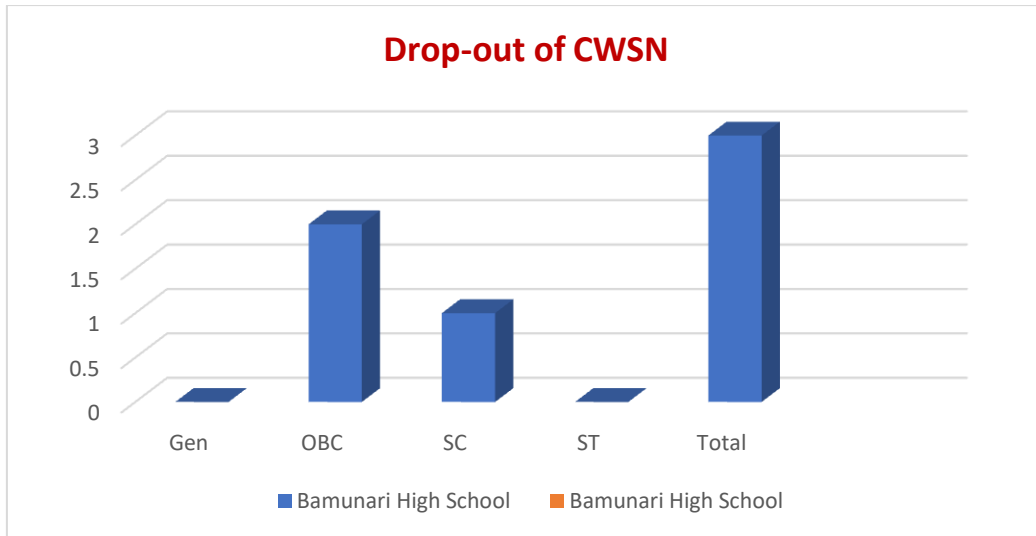
**Figure 4:** Drop-Out at Rishra Vidyapith according to Social Category

Table 6 & 7 analyzes the school drop-out among CWSN students in both schools. Drop-out of the CWSN students due to not only poor financial condition of the families but also due to the severity of their disabilities. Though lot of provisions and facilities are recommended in RTE (2009) Act, but all are not realized and regularized at school premises. Special educator and HTs and HMs of both schools informed that lack of facilities, irregularity and insufficient of escort allowance, severity of disabilities, parental attitude and absence of specially trained teachers are the main causes of drop-out of CWSN students. Intensity of the can be comprehended from the data of the last two censuses.

**Table 6: Drop-Out of CWSN Student at Bamunari School Category Wise**

Category	Bamunari School
	CWSN drop-out
Gen	0
OBC	2
SC	1
ST	0
Total	3

Source: Primary Survey

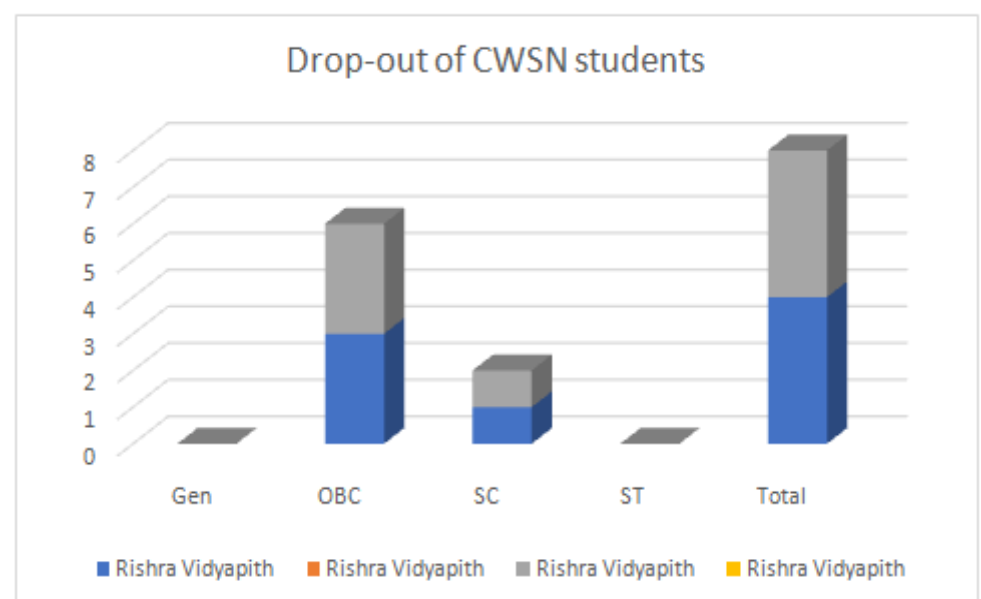


**Figure 5:** Drop-Out of CWSN Students at Bamunari School according to Social Category

**Table 7:** Drop-Out of CWSN Student at Rishra Vidyapith Social Category Wise

Category	Rishra Vidyapith drop-out CWSN
Gen	0
OBC	3
SC	1
ST	0
Total	4

Source-Primary Survey



**Figure 6:** Drop-Out of CWSN Students at Rishra Vidyapith according to Social Category

## IX. CONCLUDING OBSERVATION AND POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS

The entire study highlights the underlying factors of school drop-out with special attention to Children with Disabilities (CWDs). Concluding observations can be summarized as follows:

1. School drop-out is a common problem among both boys and girls students in rural and as well as in urban areas.
2. The main reasons behind such high prevalence of school drop-out are poor financial condition of the households, less interest of the parents in continuing study of their children, family migration to other states in search of jobs.
3. Drop-out is more intensive among the CWDS. Factors such as low capability of the family, cost of schooling, parental attitude, non-availability of family members for escorting, severity of disabilities, lack of specially trained teachers, distance of Rircle Resource Centre (CRC) are responsible for higher drop-out of the CWSN students.
4. Though the Right to Education (RTE-2009) Act has been admitted in Indian Constitution, the achievement of universal elementary education is far away from the target level. This under achievement is due to the lack of resource allocation, improper monitoring and lack of coordination between state and Centre.

Though SarvaSikshaAbhijan (SSA) and Cooked Mid-Day Meal (CMDM) have significant impact in gross enrolment, retention and reducing school drop-out of the children but far away from reaching the goal. So, it brings forth the necessity and importance of enunciating policy prescription for reducing such high prevalence of drop-out.

- School drop-out issue is substantially shaped by financial incapability of the households, so
- measures specially for the BPL families could include extending financial support or indirect measures through employment generation for the needy and deprived section of people.
- Allocation of funds should be increased with provision of proper monitoring.
- For mainstreaming the out of school children (OOSC), SSA has been performing its role. For this purpose, SikshaBandhus are employed. They mainly track the OOSC and enroll them in local school. Access of protective environment and joyful learning may reduce the school drop-out of the children. Furthermore, introduction of some innovating progammes by trained teachers for attracting children participation in school learning in a joyful atmosphere can yield better results.
- Government should scale up inclusive education instead of practicing it only in selected special schools, so that larger number of disabled students can avail the benefits of inclusive education. Though SarbhaSikshaAbhijan (SSA) has trained some special educators at circle level or block level but it is inadequate for mainstreaming all the CWDs. Therefore, every school should have nodal teachers or specially trained teachers for disabled students.

- Most of the literatures regarding drop-out of CWDs pointed out that parental attitudes and unawareness are crucial factors for low achievement in the socialization of disabled children. Social awareness camp should be organized for this purpose.
- Mainstream- teachers are unable to teach the disabled students as per their pedagogical ability. So, nodal teachers of every school should be oriented with mandatory special-training. Each and every School need to be equipped with functioning infrastructures such as ramps, barrier free toilets, wheel chairs, Braille materials with ICT tools.
- Poverty is considered as the main reason of capability deprivation. MGNREGS and Self-Help Group (SHP) for financially empowering the women may enhance the capability of the households to some extent and thereby ensure the educational facility of their children.

It has been almost 12 years since the RTE Act was implemented, yet it is clear that it still has a long way to go before it can be considered effective in its aim. After 62 years of independence, India gained the right to education as a fundamental right, but the RTE (2009) Act, whose main goal was to provide quality education to all, has mostly failed to accomplish so. The government must reconsider the R.T.E. Act, as well as its viability and execution. To prevent additional complexity in its implementation, the government should explore further revisions to the R.T.E. Act. India's future can only be bright if all children, regardless of socioeconomic status, receive a proper quality education. There are significant gaps in the R.T.E. Act that must be filled because it is the most important Act that prioritizes improving school education for children.

The present study tried to analyze the differentials and factors associated with school dropouts in India. Based on the data from NFHS-4, it was found that only 75 percent of the children in the age group 6 to 16 years were attending school. About 14 percent of the children never attended the school and 11 percent dropped out of school for various reasons. The study also examined the financial status of the household and parental characteristics possibly influence the school dropouts. In general, it was observed that the dropout was high among OBC families. The drop-out rate is high among the CWSN students. While RTE emphasizes on the inclusive education, but it fails to mainstreaming them. Since school drop-out is a chronic problem, so no single intervention can alone eradicate it. A comprehensive approach is required to address the problem such that the children of the present generation can realize their growth and developmental potential towards a sustained economy.

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