

The Socio-Economic and Demographic Factors Affecting for the School Dropouts of Adolescents in the Urban Area of Colombo, with Special Reference to Modara and Mattakkuliya Areas of Sri Lanka

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Abstract: This sociological study is done based on Children who are considered to be the School Dropouts of Adolescents in the Urban area of Colombo, Sri Lanka. These Children live under the care of their Parents, grandparents, and with other care givers. The school dropouts in the Urban area of Colombo are found to be the victims of a society which is corrupted strongly due to Socio-Economic factors. The main objective of this Research article is to look into the main causes for students to dropout halfway of their schooling. The primary and secondary data were collected by providing questioners, interviews, and observations using accepted data collecting methods. The collected data are presented using most suited methods to analyze data by charts, tables and descriptive methods. The Parents, Teachers and Key Informants are being questioned as to why the percentage of School dropouts in this area is high and vulnerable. In order to achieve this objective, the questioners have been used particularly with School Dropouts and with their Parents further conduct interviews with Teachers and Key-Informants.

Keywords: Adolescent, Dropout, Urban, Poverty, School.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education fosters personal development and self-fulfillment. It encourages the individual to develop his mental, physical, emotional and spiritual talents to the full. Understandably, the word Education derives from the Latin word e-ducere, which means to lead out. In advance industrial societies Education is provided by the state as a matter of right for all its citizens. Formal institutions, schools, Colleges and universities are organized for this purpose. (M. Haralambos with R. M. Heald, 2011, P.172). The technical understanding in other words is to transmit the stored knowledge, values and skill from one generation to another. The word education has a complex meaning in a broader sense. Further, Education is always on the development process with new adoptions in any country. (Reddy, 1979). Education for human beings and animals has a different meaning. That means, the human beings could be educated always while animals are being trained. French sociologist Emile Durkheim saw the major function of education as the transmission of Society's norms and values. He maintained that "Society can survive only if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity; education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning the essential similarities which collective life demands". Durkheim argues that in complex industrial societies, the school serves a function which cannot be provided either by the family or peer groups. Further he says that Education teaches the individual specific skills necessary for his future occupation. (M. Haralambos with R. M. Heald, 2011, p. 175).

According to the “Sustainable Development” introduced in Brunt Land Report – 1972 of United Nations and Millennium development goals suggested to start in 2000 up to the end of 2015 and its annexure, the younger generation should be provided with a meritocratic education because many issues faced by the present society can be solved through it. Researches done by many of the recognized international organizations including UNESCO, state that most of the children who are in the schooling age, have not received their primary Education. Education is the basic foundation of a person’s life. Therefore, not providing proper education causes to bring bad results to children as well as to the whole society where they live. American sociologist Talcott Parsons argues that after primary socialization within the family, the school takes over as the focal socialization agency. School acts as a bridge between the family and society as a whole, preparing the child for his adult role. Parsons sees the Educational system as an important mechanism for the selection of individuals for their future role in society.

According to the UNESCO report in 2016, 52% of the world population is urban population (8 billion). One billion of the world population belongs to the urban community who receive low income according to the same report and they live in slums. This slum population has a very low economy and their poverty has become their culture. Therefore, this community is the source of many social issues that are directly affected to the co-existence and the development of the human society. socialist states that many deviant and delinquent behaviors such as prostitution, suicides, drug addiction, begging as a profession, underworld criminality, family problems, child abuse etc. have been created by its community. Use of alcohol and other drugs among school children is a current global problem giving rise to many health hazards, psychosocial problems and reduced school performances, both in academic work and in sports. These problems are also seen in Sri Lanka and very few studies have been done to estimate their prevalence. Furthermore, no not worthy actions have been taken to improve this situation. (National Dangerous drugs control Board, RESEARCH MONOGRAPH, 2006, p. 146).

In the first place, need to discuss the vast amount of resources provided on Education. The highlighted fact is that in Sri Lanka, it is free Education and not only that even government provides free provision of textbooks, uniforms and mid-day meals. It records that the literacy rate of Sri Lanka stands as 92% for adults and 97% for youths. (Perera, 2012). This is a major drawback in schools located specially in the urban areas of Colombo. Thus, the literal meaning of School dropouts can be noted as “A student who leaves the school before completing the education for any reason other than death or without transferring to another school”. (Perera, 2012). It has been revealed that the highest numbers of school dropouts are from low-income families in urban areas and them quitting education halfway through has a disastrous effect on society. (Ministry of Education, 2017). Even among them, school dropout is frequent among adolescent children (11-18 years of age).

II. METHODOLOGY

Research refers to a search for new knowledge. It is a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic. To Redman and Mory, “Research is a systematized effort to gain new knowledge”. (Sminatharatnam and Chandra, 2004). Methods are methods of data gathering and interpretation, whereas methodology is concerned with the theoretical assumptions about methods. (Uyangoda, 2011). This research followed a mixed method design including both qualitative and quantitative research designs. Quantitative research analysis will be utilized to gather ground data of the school dropouts where qualitative research design will be employed to follow the narratives of the other entities related to the subject. The quantitative research design will allow the researcher to understand the family structure, economic structure and their societal relationship towards the community through their relationship among various community organizations of their social setting. Qualitative research design permitted the researcher to identify the unique stories of each and every school dropout regarding the real-life situations that they live.

The School dropouts and their families in Modara and Mattakkuliya of Sri Lanka are taken as the study population of the study. There are 50 families with students who do not attend schools and they are considered as school dropouts. (Field Survey, 2021). It will be non-random methods in selecting the sample of the study. Particularly 5 “Gramasevaka Areas” (GS) will be monitored. It is observed that Modara has 3 “Grmasevaka Areas” while Mattakkuliya has 2 “Gramasevaka Areas”. Thus, ten (10) school dropouts are being selected from each GS division while five (5) parents from each GS division are being selected. At the same time five (5) Teachers from each GS division are interviewed by the researcher while two (2) key informants from each GS division were being selected for the interview. Thus, the total sample size stood as 110. The key informants (K) such as School Teachers (T), Principals (SP), and Gramasevakas (Headman of the Village) will be selected purposively.

The researcher employed a structured questionnaire which will be followed by interview. The first interview will be done with children (S) and second interview will be with their parents (P) and Guardians. Thirdly, the Teachers (T) will be interviewed and the key-informants as well. The questions of the questionnaire were ninety percent designed with close ended questions whereas researcher will interview each and every dropout selected from purposive sample in filling the answers to all the questions.

III. MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to the United Nations Multilingual Demographic Dictionary, demography is a scientific study of human population particularly related to size, structure and their development. (United Nations Multilingual Demographic Dictionary, 1958). Therefore, it realizes that Socio demographic characteristics refers to demographic factors in related to social and economic phenomena such as geographic locations, gender, ethnicity, religion, education attainment and employment. According to Functionalism, the society is studied as a system, that is as a set of interconnected parts which together form a whole. The basic unit of analysis is society and its various parts are understood primarily in terms of their relationship to the whole. The early functionalists often drew an analogy between society and an organism such as the human body. They argued that an understanding of any organ in the body, such as the heart or lungs, involves an understanding of its relationship to other organs and in particular, of its contribution towards the maintenance of the organism. In the same way, an understanding of any part of society requires an analysis of its relationship to other parts and most importantly, of its contribution to the maintenance of society. In order for these essential services to be maintained, individuals must be sufficiently motivated to perform their roles. If they were totally apathetic, the social system would collapse through lack of effort. These socio-economic variables are an ideal descriptive cross-cutting which illustrate the realistic and profound circumstances of students who are living in a specific area. This phenomenon is studied under the topic of “School Dropouts of Adolescents in the Urban Area of Colombo, Sri Lanka and possible Strategies towards Continuous Education” and for this Colombo Divisional Secretariat of Sri Lanka is selected because in which it is visible that in the urban areas which exists the large number of school dropouts.

A. Personal Details of the School Dropouts.

The researcher focusses his attention on the age of the child interviewed, the gender, nationality, religion, place of birth. The intention of the researcher by evaluating these personal details is to build up the background of each school dropout. These personal details would certainly direct the researcher to understand the real-life situations of each school dropout.

a. Students by Gender and Age.

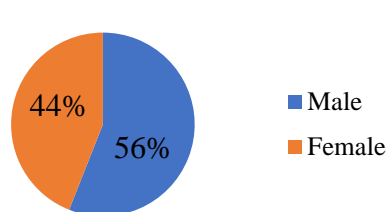


Fig. 1: Students by Gender

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

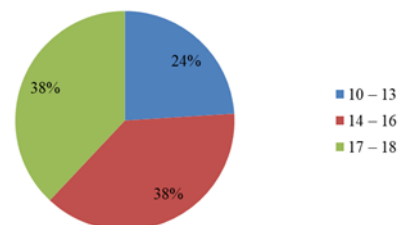


Fig. 2: Students by Age

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

This field research data shows 56% of male and 44% of female children have been dropped out of school. According to the percentage calculation it does not show a vast difference between boys and girls but the dropping out percentage of boys is little more than girls of these areas. These children live in a place where there are no one working in the Government sector. The later discoveries show that people are engaged in daily wage involvements. Therefore, parents cannot afford much comforts for their children. Thus, children get involved in opportunities in which they could earn money. Evidently, boys have the trend of involving drugs since it can bring quick money. There is a trend for girls to be abused due to various circumstances such as insecurity at home. The researcher has categorized the age limits for the study as 10-13, 14-16 and 17-18. The most vulnerable age for students to drop out of school according the figure 02 is

highlighted as the age limit between 17-18. The field survey data shows the highest number of school dropouts are found between the age limit of 14-16 and 17-18 while 10-13 record a low level of school dropouts.

b. Permanency of their Houses and Dropouts Living with Parents.

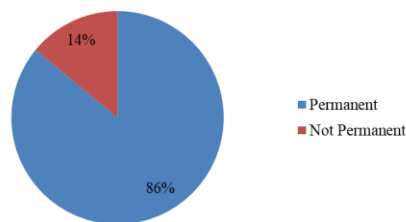


Fig. 3: Permanency of the houses

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

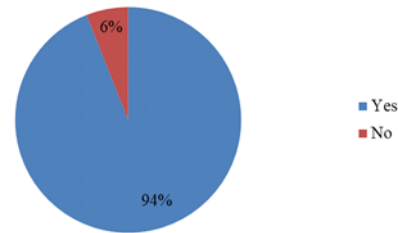


Fig. 4: School Dropouts living with Parents

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

The personal observation of the researcher is that they live in unauthorized places with limited facilities. Most of the time these people live in line houses and just one room for them to do everything. They cook, sleep, study, rest and what not everything is done in that little room. The specialty is that all these people are daily wage people and you do not find anyone working in the government sector jobs other than the Colombo Municipal Council-CMC. The researcher identifies according to the above figure 04, the school dropouts still live with their parents except very few cases. These students were critically questioned as to why he or she is dropped out of their school and what is important here is many of these students just spend the time at home without any solid involvement at home and anywhere else. Therefore, the researcher finds that (94%) of school dropouts still live with their parents while about (6%) school dropouts living away from their parents.

c. Number of Family Members and Happiest Time duration of the Dropout.

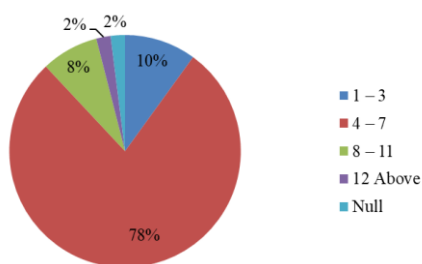


Fig. 5: Number of Family Members

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

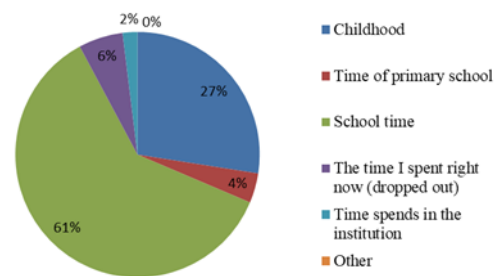
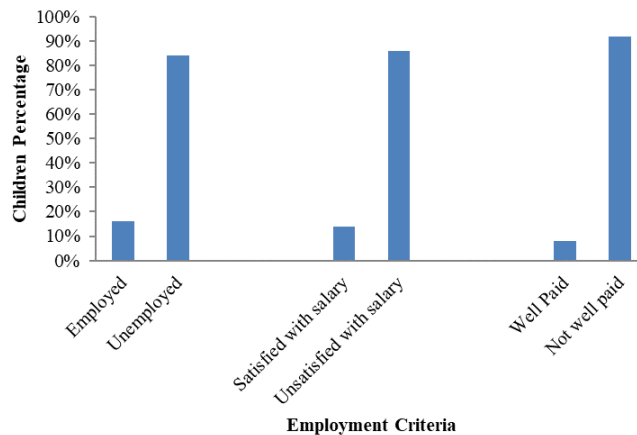


Fig. 6: Happiest time Duration

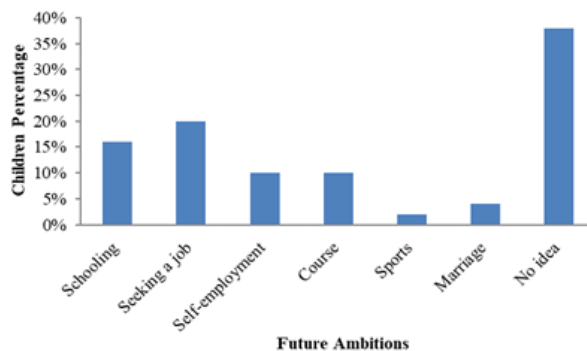
Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

This draws the attention of the researcher to critically analyze why these parents have brought up many children in the family. There are 1-3 children in (10%) of families, 4-7 children in (78%) of families, 8-11 children in (8%) of families, 12 and above children in (2%) of families and in (2%) families without any child. The number of children affect the economy of the family this reveals that the family planning of these families is weak. The family planning of the families live in this area is questionable and the researcher identifies that sex education of parents and the legal side of the marriage life is not satisfactory. The children expressed their school time as the happiest time duration in their life and it stands as (68%) and then (28%) says their childhood. It emphasizes that though these children dropped out of their school their happiest time period has been the school time. It further discovers that the time the school dropouts spend right now (6%) and these children are not really enjoying their life. About (4%) say that the primary school time has been good. The time spends in the institution is (2%) and which is also not the happiest time of their lives. By and large, the happiest time has been the school time for majority of children even though they happened to be at home due to various factors.

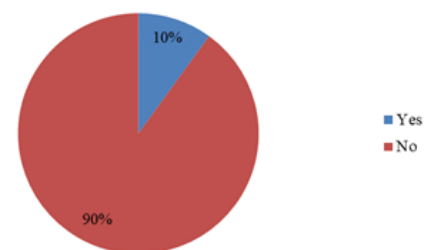
d. Employment Status of the School Dropouts.**Fig. 7: Employment Status of the School**

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

According to the figure 07, there are only few percentages shows that they are satisfied with their existing occupation but majority is not satisfied with the job. The researcher identifies that only (16%) of school dropouts are employed or rather engaged in earning money while a bigger proportion of school dropouts (84%) stay at home without any involvement. The satisfaction of the job is evaluated and it records that only (14%) of children are satisfied with what they are involved while (86%) of children are not satisfied with the amount of salary they receive. The children also confessed that their working place does not pay well and about (8%) of children are satisfied with their working place while (92%) of children are not satisfied with their working place. These students are not engaged in proper occupations and they are qualified to pay well.

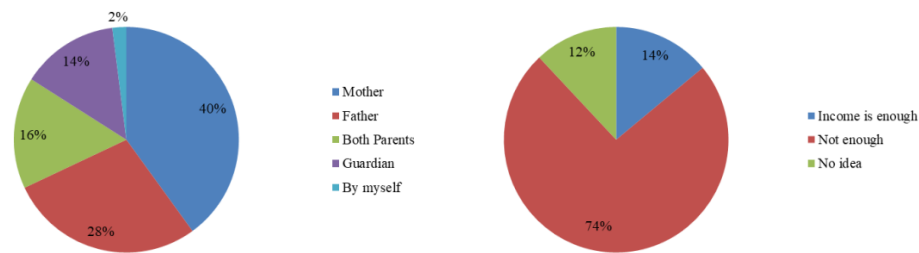
e. Future Ambition of the School Dropout and Dropouts following a Vocational and Professional Course**Fig. 8: Future Ambition of the School Dropouts**

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

**Fig. 9: Professional or Vocational Training**

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

The future ambition of the school dropouts is evaluated and accordingly about (16%) children like to school again, (20%) of children seek a job, (10%) of children like to engage in self-employments, (10%) of children are looking forward to follow a course, (2%) of children to go ahead in the field of sports, (4%) of students need to enter into marriage and (38%) children have no idea about their future. Therefore, this (38%) of children should be payed more attention because this would affect the family and the society in which they live. At this stage it is seen that larger number of students do not follow any professional or a vocational training course. Understandably, only (10%) of children follow a course or any professional course while (90%) of children lying at home without any training.

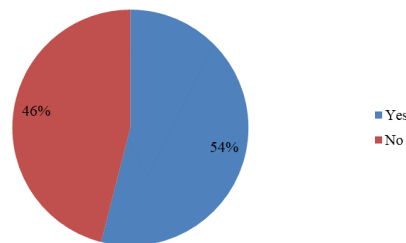
f. Nature of the Family Income**Fig. 10: Person who Earns the family Income**

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

Fig. 11: Income Sufficiency

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

Most of the time the school dropout is looked after by his or her Mother and it is (40%) and (28%) of children are looked after by their Father, (16%) of children are looked after by both parents and (14%) of children are looked after by a Guardian and (2%) by their own. Convincingly, Mother has become the key figure in the family. The children are well aware of the family income and the researcher finds that (14%) children say that their income is enough, (74%) children confessed that their family income is not enough while (12%) has no idea about the family income.

g. Awareness of the Education Level of Parents of the School Dropouts.**Figure 12: Awareness of the parents Education**

Source: Field Survey Data, 2021

Understandably, majority of school dropouts confessed that their parents have studied up to grade 05 or 06 and thus, the parents of these students do not take much interest in schooling their children once they come to grade 05. The (54%) children are aware of the education level of their Parents and Guardians and (46%) of children do not know whether their Parents are studied properly.

B. Key Findings of the Study.

Considerable proportion (56%) of Boys are dropped out of school and 44% of girls are dropped out. It has convinced that Boys addicted to drugs and girls due to insufficient security at home, have caused them to be fallen into social problems. The poverty level is very high and this has affected the children of these families. The age between 14-16, 17-18 record a highest number (38%) of school dropouts and this age duration is discovered as vulnerable. A sizable proportion of (86%) families have houses built with bricks and (14%) families live in houses made out of wood. Even though these houses are built permanently, they are unauthorized constructions. Government has given red notices for them to move. Considerable portion of (94%) of school dropouts live with parents and (6%) of school dropouts do not live with parents. Even though, majority of students live with Parents, these children are unemployed. Convincingly these families are big, the researcher identifies that there are 4-7 children in majority of families (78%). The raring of children done without reflecting the family finances. The happiest time duration of the child is discovered as the school time (62%) and the childhood (28%). Though, the termination of school has happened by accident or by force, the favorites and the happiest time period has been the school time. A vast majority of school dropouts (84%) is not unemployed only (16%) school dropouts is employed. The researcher discovers that (86%) school dropouts are not satisfied with the salary. These students are not

engaged in proper occupations and they are not qualified as well. A big portion of school dropouts (38%) do not have a proper idea about their future and it discovers that (20%) seek a job while (16%) like to continue schooling. The school dropouts (90%) are not following any vocational or a professional Course and only (10%) is following a professional course. In the families where there is a school dropout, the Mother (40%) provides the daily necessities while Father provides (28%). Both the Parents (16%) provide necessities. The Mother has become the Head of the family. The income of the family in this area is not satisfactory (74%).

C. The Following Socio-economic and Demographic Factors were identified in this Study.

These socio-economic factors have caused largely the families and the children in an unexpected way around. These causalities and circumstances have led the families to a lot of uncertainties in the lives of the people in Modara and Mattakkuliya areas of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Widowhood-The control of females in many families are much prevalent in this scope of study. Understandably, the female headed families are largely formed due to the death of their spouses and the following reasons have caused the death; use of alcohol, accidents, suicides, homicide, violence. T. W Tesfamariam, in the research “Livelihoods and Coping Strategies – A Study of Female-Headed households, in Mekelle, Ethiopia” have discovered that causes for women to become the heads of the household, is the death of their spouse. Inadequate health infrastructure, unawareness of health and good practices and vulnerabilities in livelihood are the common causative factors in this research area.

Divorce and Separation-The family is disturbed since many of the spouses do not know the gravity of the family life. Illegal relationships, alcoholism, domestic violence and conflicts have influenced the disruption of the families. It is discovered that in adequate sexual education is one of the hidden social conditions for divorce and separations, most of the time. Absence of the Male Partner-In the Modara area this problem prevails since there is a fisherfolk community and most of the absence of the male partner is experienced by the female at home. This absence of the male partner has caused the Female partner to have illegal relationships. During the absence of the male the Female partner has taken it as a freedom to move about as she desires. Children do not have an idea about the future-The field data clearly manifested that the school dropouts have no clear idea as to how to organize their future. It is highlighted that these children just lie at home without any involvement. The importance of education is not realized by these students.

Underworld-The researcher discovered three main underworld groups in this research area. There are famous names from these three groups and further discovered that one group does not be the second to the other group. The reason is proper socialization has not been in the lives of these personalities. The thug life of Parents and brothers are transferred to the younger of the family.

Temporary jobs and dissatisfaction of the salary-The majority consists the low level of income and no one is working in the Government sector and in the semi-Government sector. Majority are daily wagers and one reason is these people cannot engage in good jobs because they have not been schooled. Very ignorant and illiteracy prevails much among the crowd.

Drugs and Domestic Violence-The use of drugs in this area of study is much common and there is at least one in the family who uses drugs or who is connected with drugs. Thus, the life style at home is much shaky and not strong. Many a time Wife does not encourage the life style of the Husband. It is highlighted that Husbands are not in a position to listen to their Wives. Parents use drugs at home in front of their children. In these families Husbands are very dominant and quickly coral with Wives with no reason.

Unemployment-All most 100% people are daily wager or receive some money at the end of the week depending on their involvement. There is no any proper job as such for most of these people in this area. It is discovered that during locked down due to COVID -19 pandemic, these people had a hard time. Many used to sell things near St. Anthony’s Shrine, Kochchikade, Colombo, Sri Lanka and even this was stopped after the Easter attack in 2019.

Illegal Relationships-This has been a very common fact in this vicinity, reason is according the life style in this area, everyone is exposed and the settings of houses lead opportunities to fall into this problem. There are families discovered, not legally married and there is no legal Marriage Certificate. The polygamy state of marriage is existing in this place. The gravity of the Marriage life is not taught by anyone. A lot of underage marriages take place due to ignorance of both Parents and children.

School Dropouts Live with Parents-Convincingly, larger portion of School dropouts (94%) live with Parents and many of these children are not employed. This is an extra burden to the families since there are many siblings in the family. Children have stopped going to School due to poverty and social issues related the family.

Urban Population-The urban population is very high and people live in line houses with limited infrastructure facilities. It is discovered that during COVID many of these people affected with COVID since these people live together day and night. Therefore, it identifies that there is lack of Social protection, inadequate health sanitary facilities and insecurity for women and children. Poor housing conditions have been influenced by the instability of employment or

livelihood activities. Inadequate access to the basic needs and poor conditions of social and health insecurity have directly weaken the life style here. Unauthorized Houses-These families live in houses built in bricks and by wood. Anyhow, whatever the way they have built the house do not count here because many of these houses are unauthorized constructions. At any given time, these people will have to move. People have occupied these places basing on their employments. Colombo is a highly commercialized city and therefore, there are opportunities to earn something by involving in any quick work. This is basically due to the low level of living status. Temporary Absence of Spouses-This is a much prevalent fact in this area due to the unethical involvement in the society, the husband or wife is time to time put in prison. There are occasions came across during the data collection, both parents are in prison. This courses strongly the life of children. This happens when trying to earn money in following quick ways. The only quick way to earn money in this study area is the drugs.

III. CONCLUSION

The overall understanding of this work is satisfactory that the Socio-economic and Demographic factors play major changes in the lives of Adolescents to drop out of Schools. It is visible that Widowhood, Divorce and Separation, Absence of the male partner, children do not have an idea of the Future, Underworld, Temporary jobs, Drugs and Domestic violence, Unemployment, Illegal relationships, Dropouts live with parents, Urban population, Unauthorized houses and Temporary absence of spouses are found in this study as Socio-Economic and Demographic factors that mainly cause the Adolescents to dropout of School. Therefore, the cooperation of parents with school teachers, counseling sessions for both parents and children, food and nutrition, culture and society has to be changed, scholarship programmes, living status should be uplifted, upliftment of poverty, vocational trainings and system of providing meals for these children at schools, would solve many problems.

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