

UNDERSTANDING UNIVERSITY DROPOUTS: EXPLORING  
STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES IN NEPAL.

By

Asst. Prof. Dhan Bahadur Pun (Thapa)

Ms. Mamata Thapa

Lumbini Banijya Campus

A Mini Research

Submitted to

Research Management Cell

Lumbini Banijya Campus

Butwal  
May, 2025



## CERTIFICATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby corroborate that I have researched and submitted the final draft of Mini research project Report entitled "**Understanding university dropouts: Exploring students' perspectives in Nepal**" The work of Mini research project report has not been submitted previously nor it has been proposed and presented as part of requirements for any other academic purposes. The assistance and cooperation that I have received during this research work has been acknowledged. In addition, I declare that all information sources and literature used are cited in the reference section of the Mini Research Project Report.

Asst. Prof. Dhan Bahadur Pun (Thapa)

Signature:



Ms. Mamata Thapa

Signature:



Date of Submission:



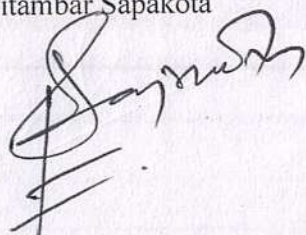
## REPORT OF RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Asst. Prof. Dhan Bahadur Pun (Thapa) and MS Mamata Thapa have effectively defended the Mini research project proposal entitled "**Understanding university dropouts: Exploring students' perspectives in Nepal**". The research committee has officially approved the title for the Mini research project report to proceed further. It is advised to adhere to the prescribed format and guidelines for the project and submit the Mini research project report for evaluation and viva voce examination.

Head of Research Management Cell

Asst. Prof. Pitambar Sapakota

Signature:



Mini Research Project Proposal  
Defended Date:

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Mini Research Project Report  
Submitted Date:

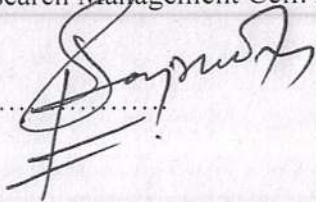
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## APPROVAL SHEET

We have assessed the Mini research project report titled "**Understanding university dropouts: Exploring students' Prospective in Nepal**" presented by Mr. Dhan Bahadur Pun (Thapa) and Ms. Mamata Thapa. We confirm that the Mini Research Project Report meets the required standards and is deemed acceptable.

Head of Research Management Cell: Asst. Prof. Pitambar Sapkota

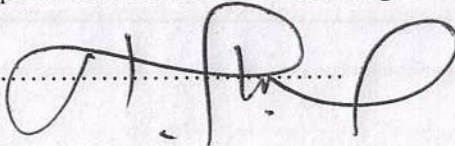
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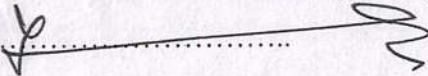
External Expert: Asst. Prof. Dr. Bharat Singh Thapa

Signature: .....



Campus Chief: Prof. Dr. Tara Prasad Upadhyaya

Signature: .....



Date: .....



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Furthermore, I would also like to acknowledge with much appreciation the crucial role of my family members and friends for their continuous encouragement and support.

Asst. Prof. Dhan Bahadur Pun (Thapa)  
Ms. Mamata Thapa



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Title page of the Mini Research Project Report</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Certification of authorship</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Report of Research Committee</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Approval sheet</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Table of contents</i>	<i>vi</i>
<i>Abstract</i>	<i>vii</i>
<b>Chapter I Introduction</b>	
Background of the Study	1
Objectives of the Study	3
Limitation of the Study	3
<b>Chapter II Literature Review and Framework</b>	
Empirical Review	5
<b>Chapter III Research Methods</b>	
Research Method	8
<b>Chapter IV Results, Discussion and Conclusion</b>	
Results	10
Discussion	16
Conclusion	17
<b>References</b>	19
<b>Appendices</b>	23



## ABSTRACT

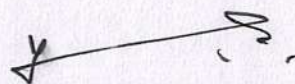
*The student's dropout is a major concern in any country. This study examined the possible causes of students' dropout from university in public campuses of Nepal specifically in Butwal Sub metropolitan City. A qualitative research approach is adopted and the data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with a total of ten respondents. The units of analysis were the students who dropout from bachelors' level of management program. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data. The findings show that lack of academic commitment, economic problem, low academic qualification and lack of institutional support are the strongest reasons for students' dropout. The causes found in the paper will help the campus and the government to develop new plans and policies that increase the student's retention.*



## Chapter I Introduction

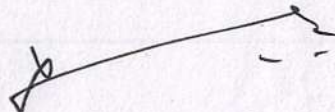
### Background of the Study

Under graduate education is the beginning of a significant and yet complex transition period for the young adults. It provides them an opportunity to explore new knowledge and enhance them to build their career. It empowers people, increase earnings potentials and helps to build a competitive economy (Huisman & Smiths, 2009). The government of Nepal prioritized increasing the enrolment in school level but proper attention hasn't been given to increase retention and boost quality of education. Despite the initiatives taken by Ministry of Education experts believe the government hasn't delivered the desired results because they don't address the underlying causes of students dropping out from schools (Ghimere, 2021). The focus of government remains at school level so far and no significant effort is observed to increase the quality of education and student's retention at university level. The UGC Nepal has also raised concerned through annual report 2021-2022 on the issue. It stated that it is one of the challenges for university education to increase the students' retention rate and maintain quality of education. The dropout continues to be a subject of concerned for the academic institutions and policy makers as it causes the loss of resource in terms of time and money. According to the report of UGC (2020-2021) 38% of financial resources have been wasted in the higher education. The report indicates a total of 423,996 students were pursuing higher education in Nepal and the pass rate was only 25 percent. Such low pass rate indicates poor education quality and could be one of the strongest effect of dropout. The larger number of dropouts in the higher education has serious consequences for the institutions itself (in terms of funding, mission achievement and performance), society (in socioeconomic terms) and the students (waste of productive time and money). It causes lower academic qualification and can cause unemployment or less remuneration from employment. In one study, Hallsten (2017) identified that the drop out has to spent 3 percent more than those who never have joined university in low earnings for first 8 years of working and the others, Nes et al. (2009) have identified some positive outcome of successful completion of higher education as increase in earnings and life style, personal and professional mobility, higher social status, good quality of life and less risk of unemployment. The issue of



dropout is common around the globe so there are number of studies carried out that are associated with student retention (Harackiewicz & Priniski, 2018; Kahu & Nelson, 2018) but the application aspect is not effective.

The word dropout is a bit complex issue to define. There are vast majority of literatures that define the term drop out in their own perspective. A student may discontinue study temporary and rejoin later in the same or any other institutions, while the other may permanently discontinue the study. Therefore, an attempt has been made to understand the meaning of dropout from the literature. The empirical research on higher education defines student drop-out as a special type of shrinkage that only includes students who leave the higher education system without obtaining a degree and do not complete their studies at a later stage. This narrow understanding of the term has gained ground in research (Heublein, 2014). UNESCO (2005) defines the drop out as “early school-leaving,” when we consider this statement, the drop out suggests leaving the campus in the interim without completing the cycle. Similarly, Marrow (1987, p.1603) defines a dropout as “Any students who enrolled in the course and become 15 days of consecutive unexcused absence, has not satisfied the standard for graduation and no official letter has been received for enrollment in any other institutions.” The definition looks solid but is not applicable in the public campuses of Nepal where large number of student’s study in the class and there is no strict attendance requirement. The literature defines dropout differently at different reference points. Without a clear conceptual distinction between student dropout and forms of student mobility such as interruption in studies, change in degree program or subject, change of institution, change of type of higher education, or going abroad, it is not possible to precisely capture this premature study terminology. The pioneering work on the issue of dropout was done in 1980 and 1990s by Tinto (1975; 1980; 1987; 1993) and Spady (1970). Tinto and Cullen (1973) define the meaning of dropout in two ways 1) dropout as referring to those persons who leave the college at which they are registered; and 2) dropout as referring only to those persons who never receive a degree from any institution of higher education. For the purpose of the study we apply the first definition developed by Tinto and Cullen. The past researches have shown multiple reasons for students dropping out from universities. For example, Poor academic achievement (Oriol, Mendonza, Covarrubias &



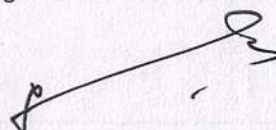
Molina 2016; Belloc, Maruotti, & Petrella, 2010; Lee & Croninger, 2001), lack of commitment, lack of social integration, financial pressures, personal circumstances, lack of course match, poor preparation for university life (Jones, 2008). Beside these, first generation students and students coming from families without a tradition of studying (Araque et al., 2009) severe illness, necessity to support the family members, lack of Social integration (Aina, 2013). As we dig out further, we noticed two important aspects that make us interested in the issue. First; there is no consensus among the literatures about the causes of dropout; the literature suggests the dropout phenomena is purely contextual. Second; most of the researches are done in western countries which are most developed and Nepal is under developed country. The socio-economic, cultural aspects of Nepal are not similar to them. For example; the family income source is very low (it was only \$1,460 in 2024) and the economy is mostly dependent on remittance, the course structure and teaching pedagogy also doesn't match with the western countries. we argue that due to these differences, the causes might be different or even if they are similar, it is necessary to identify which ones are the most significant in Nepalese context. An early identification of contextual factors causing drop out may help the management and policy makers for timely counseling to increase academic success rate through student retention.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of the paper is to explore the causes of student drop out in university level through empirical study in a business school of Tribhuvan University. Thereby, our particular interest is in a community-based management campus which has consistently suffered with the higher students' dropout in a bachelor program.

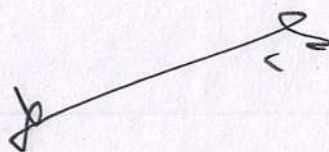
### **Limitations**

Although this study offers meaningful insights into the reasons why students drop out, there are a few limitations worth noting. To begin with, reaching dropout students directly proved to be quite challenging, so the study relied on snowball sampling. While this approach helped connect with participants, it may have led to sampling bias, as those interviewed often referred peers with similar situations or perspectives.



Another limitation is that the research only included students who were still living in or near the campus area, and all interviews were conducted in person. As a result, the voices of those who had moved to other cities or left the country were not included, which may have excluded other important factors influencing their decision to drop out. To reduce the risk of missing key perspectives, open-ended questions like “What helps students not give up when they face difficulties?” and “Why do many students leave before finishing the program?” were asked. These questions aimed to encourage honest and diverse responses. However, the way questions are phrased can sometimes shape how participants respond, which may have caused some response bias.

The data were analyzed using content analysis to identify common patterns in what participants shared. While this method is useful for organizing qualitative data, it does rely heavily on the authors' interpretation. This introduces a possibility of subjectivity in how certain themes were developed or emphasized. Finally, because the number of participants was relatively small, the findings cannot be generalized to all students who drop out. The study was designed to explore the issue in depth rather than to represent the full range of experiences across all regions or student groups.

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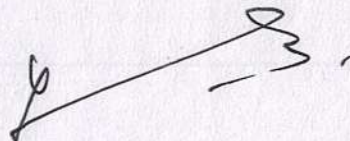
## Chapter II

### Literature Review

The vast majority of literatures show no consensus on the causes of dropout in higher education. Nevertheless, some reasons have been pointed that can lead the students not to complete their undergraduate program. Several studies show that students generally withdraw the college course with a mixture of reasons (Medway & Penny 1994).

A students' drop out decisions from a university degree program may be force full or voluntary. Force full drop out can exist due to severe illness, not enough financial support, necessity to support the family members (Medway & Penney, 1994). There might be a number of personal reasons to disengage from the program voluntarily. The students can rationally leave the college due to dissatisfaction with teaching methods, boring or poorly structured teaching pedagogy or due to mismatch of course with the career of the students.

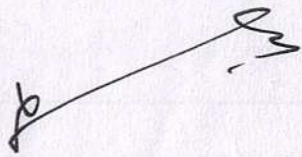
Socio demographic background (i.e., parental level of education and their occupational status) and a student's personal characteristics (i.e., age, gender, and prior school achievements) are found to have significant effect on student's decision on dropout. For example: Argentin and Triventi (2011) find parents education as the significant predictor of dropout. The paper indicates lower the parent's education higher the chance of students being dropout. Johnes and McNabb (2004); Casanova et al. (2018) find the dropout rate for female students higher, in the contrary Arulampalam et al. (2001; 2005) identify that dropout behavior varies across universities and males and more mature students are more likely to withdraw than females or younger students. Vignoles et al. (2009) find that the students from lower socio-economic backgrounds have a higher rate of university drop-out. In another paper by Arulampalam et al. (2007), the father's and mother's level of education and job, academic preparedness along with the age of students (older students) have influence on the students' decision of drop out. The students having their parents with higher level of education and permanent jobs have less chance of being dropout. This may be because in such families, the students get more financial support from their parents and are aware about the importance of education as well. In one of the papers by Lassibille and Gómez (2008) academic preparedness, delay



in entry in university, financial support and family characteristics were found as major determinants of dropout. In a distinct study Glaesser (2006) found that men are more than twice as likely to drop out as women, and students of urban origin three times more than those from rural areas and parental divorce nearly doubled the dropout rate.

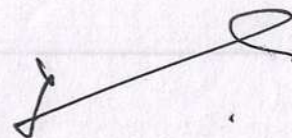
In one of the seminal papers Tinto (1993) identified two important factors i.e. academic and social integration for students' retention. The academic integration includes academic performance i.e. grade achievement and the belief that the lecturers are committed and helpful to students and the social integration includes the relationship with the class mates, faculty members and self-esteem. Tinto's argument that academic and social integration constructs can have an influence on the student retention process but the largest direct effect on retention was accounted for by initial goals and institutional commitments. Academic vulnerability (lower entry grades) and proximity to family support (distance from family, feeling of loneliness) cause the student drop out. Bennett (2003) found financial hardship as a major reason for drop out and academic performance, student's level of commitment to the program and individual self-esteem play a crucial role in encouraging or discouraging withdrawal especially when the students experience low grades or financial problems.

In addition, the literature has identified some institutional factors that can affect the decision of dropout. The factors could be Study content, study structure/organization of exams, Learning environment and learning quality, Support and counseling services, Peer effects, Subject of study. In one of the papers Arulampalam et al. (2004) mention less effective admissions policies, changing curricula, higher costs, and a growing mismatch between student and school characteristics as major determinants of dropout, whereas Lassibille and Gómez (2009) explore the institutions that are politically influenced and have lower entrance standards suffers with more dropouts. According to Hodum and Martin (1994) when the university try to improve program and services that contribute on overall satisfaction and success, students' engagement time to the university is prolonged. Jones (2008) found number of institutional factors that affect attrition such as universities that have high standards of quality in learning and teaching have lower dropout rates than others that do not achieve the same standards. In the same way students are more likely to complete their degrees at universities that are generally strong in terms of research.



The lack of goal commitment or institutional commitment can lead to dropout. Tinto (1980) states if the individuals have lower goal commitment, the institutional commitment will be lower and they are likely to drop out from the university. Since dropout is the outcome of a multidimensional process involving the interaction between the individual and the institution, it is not surprising that the characteristics of the institution, even at the aggregate level, have also been shown to relate to differential rates of dropout. It is the characteristics of the institution, its resources, facilities, structural arrangements, and composition of its members that place limits upon the development and integration of individuals within the institution and that lead to the development of academic and social climates (Tinto,1975).

The literatures indicate the socio demographic variables as the major cause of dropout but some institutional factors and personal factors are also found important predictors of dropout. In particular Heublein (2014) find mixture of reasons for students' dropout. In the past studies authors have found performance problems, financial problems, lack of motivation, study conditions, failure in exams, family problems etc. as major determinants of dropout. Given the complexity of issue, it would be difficult to clearly state something like these are concrete factors affecting the students to dropout. Therefore, the issue is interesting in Nepali context for the study.



## Chapter III

### Research Methods

The issue of student dropout is complicated hence the study used a qualitative research method to better understand and explore the different reasons why students leave school. This approach helped the author get closer to the students and learn more deeply about their lived experiences and personal reasons that attributed dropout.

#### **Research Design and Sampling**

The unit of analysis for the study is students who had dropped out of the community-based campuses located in Butwal Sub-Metropolitan City. Since it was difficult to find and contact these students, a snowball sampling method was used. Initially, a few dropout students were contacted with the help of college records, and these participants then helped connect the researcher with additional dropout students. Many potential participants could not be included due to inactive phone numbers, migration abroad, or unavailability. In the end, ten dropout students took part in the study. Of the ten, five participants were selected from Lumbini Banijya Campus, three from Siddhartha Gautam Buddha Campus, and two from Kalika Campus. Snowball sampling was used to choose participants, and interviews continued until data saturation was achieved that is, until no new information was being revealed and responses began to recur.

#### **Data Collection Procedure**

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which offered a balance between consistency and flexibility. The interviews were conducted using an interview guide (see Appendix). The guide had two sections, the first section incorporates demographic and background information and the second section incorporates open-ended questions to get insight about on students' academic experiences, challenges faced, teaching methods, campus environment, and institutional support mechanisms. The interviews were conducted on campus premises or in public places, wherever the participants felt comfortable and the language used during the interviews was Nepali, the

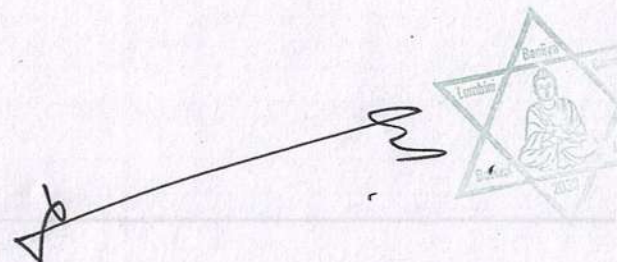
participants' native language. The duration of the interviews ranged from 45 to 60 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission and then transcribed.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Prior to participation, all respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they agreed to take part voluntarily, with the right to withdraw at any stage. Their information was kept private and secure, and their names were not used in the transcripts or the final report.

### **Data Analysis**

The authors first read the transcripts multiple times to become familiar with the content. Using content analysis (based on Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), we then systematically identified and coded meaningful segments of the text. These codes are developed based on repeated ideas and patterns found in the data. Similar codes were then grouped into broader themes that capture the key issues or experiences of the participants. The themes were reviewed, refined, and categorized into major factors that explain the research problem.



**Chapter IV**  
**Results, Discussion and Conclusion**

**Results**

The semi-structured interview with the students, faculties and the administrative staff has helped us to emerge the following codes and themes.

**Table 1**

*Major Codes and Themes*

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Themes</b>
Irregular in school, Skipped Classes Importance to job, Less care to study Low motivation	Lack of learning commitment
Family financial support, Personal expenditure Concerned to money	Economic problem
Poor entry grade, Poor exam preparation Fail in final paper, Tough syllabus	Low academic achievement
No feedback from teachers, Poor teaching practices, Delayed result publication, Lack of academic counseling, Lack of co-curricular engagement	Lack of ins institutional support

**Lack of Learning Commitment**

When we interviewed with the students one of the most common thing, we found was they were not committed towards there study. They were irregular in the campus and sometime used to leave the class before time. Among them, most were doing jobs and they are found giving less importance to their study. The following statements of the students help us to derive the codes.

*I was determined with my study at the beginning. I had great enthusiasm to learn. I took the class in the morning and job in the day. Later, it was difficult for me to manage time. When I was in second year, I thought to go abroad and joined language class. I had my*



*family responsibility and I could not balance time. I thought going campus only won't yield anything to me.*

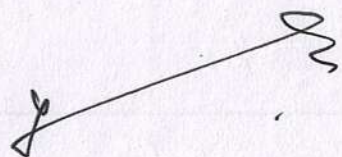
*I joined campus after two years gap. I was working in a mobile repairing center. I was balancing my job and study meanwhile I went Delhi to learn advance course but my bad luck the Indian government declared lock down due to Kovid-19 and I was forced to stay there. I didn't take online class from there. I came back after 9 months. Then I got the job in Palpa and couldn't continue the class.*

*The first year I managed somehow. Later job pressure mount and I became irregular in my class in the second year. I couldn't pass all the subjects in the first-year exam and slowly I lost hope to pass the exam and thought to focus on job only. What I thought at the end is that everybody counts money and though who read and complete study also count money at the end so I left my study.*

The stories shared by these three students offer real insights into why some choose to leave their studies. The first student started out enthusiastic, attending morning classes while working during the day. But her decision to take language classes and prepare to go abroad showed that, despite her initial motivation, her focus was already shifting away from her academic journey.

The second student pointed to the COVID-19 lockdown as the main reason for discontinuing. While the pandemic certainly created challenges, it's important to note that classes had moved online, and many students managed to attend them from various locations. This suggests that the effort to stay engaged may have been lacking.

The third student was more direct. He said, "*What I thought at the end is that everybody counts money...*" a statement that reflects a deeper shift in values. He began to see earning money as more meaningful than completing a degree, and eventually chose to leave school altogether. This thinking wasn't unique to him; few students reflected similar thoughts indirectly. One even remarked, "At the end of the day money counts no matter how you earn; what happens extraordinarily after reading?" It's clear that some



students start to question the practical benefits of formal education, especially when real-world responsibilities and pressures take over.

But it wouldn't be fair to look at student commitment in isolation. The environment they learn in shaped by teachers and the institution plays a big role in how motivated and connected they feel. Firestone, et al, (1987) explained three kinds of teacher commitment: to the place, to the students, and to the teaching itself. When teachers care about the school and the students, and take pride in their work, students often feel more supported and motivated. On the other hand, if teaching becomes just a job without a personal connection, the atmosphere can feel cold and uninspiring.

The same researchers also point out that students, too, build their own sense of commitment not just to learning, but to the school itself. Just showing up doesn't always mean they're engaged. For real learning to happen, they need to feel connected and see value in what they're doing. That's why the role of teachers and administrators is so important: their commitment helps shape the students' experience. Tinto (1980) also highlights this, noting that when students lose sight of their goals or feel disconnected from their institution, they're more likely to drop out. When there's no strong personal reason to stay no sense of purpose it becomes easier to drop the study.

### **Economic Problem**

Economic problem is one of the dominant factors that cause the student to dropout. Upon interview four out of ten were found doing jobs. When I asked about their family members and how they managed time and money for the study, the following facts were revealed;

*My family belongs to average class, my father works in India and we altogether five members live in Butwal. I have two sisters working in N-cell Company. My mother is house wife and I work in a liquor distributor's office. My brother studies in class 12 in private school.*



### **Low Academic Achievement**

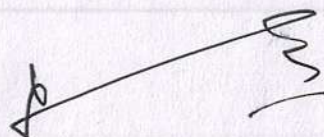
Nepal's education system, a student's academic ability is often judged by their grades or percentage in final exams. During my conversations with dropouts, we discovered that low academic performance was a key factor influencing their decision to leave their studies.

Many of the students enrolled in the Bachelor of Business Studies (BBS) program come from rural areas. In school, their learning environment was mostly based in Nepali, with limited exposure to English. Most of them had average grades in high school, and when they entered university, they suddenly faced a much more demanding and complex curriculum taught primarily through English textbooks and a mix of Nepali and English in classroom instruction. One student shared their experience:

*"I was average in school. When I joined campus, the courses were difficult for me. Still, I tried to give my level best but I failed two subjects out of five. In the second year, I again failed in two subjects. Slowly, I lost hope of ever completing the bachelor degree..."*

This student's story reflects a larger issue a lack of preparedness for university-level education. Several other respondents reported they were average or below average in school life and limited English language skills. Since the BBS program does not require a high cumulative grade point average (CGPA) or merit entrance exam, many students with weak academic backgrounds can enroll easily. But as they enrolled in the program they find difficulty to grasp the pace of learning. In addition, most of them admit that they have less reading habit, it further hindered their progress. In addition, their hardship is increased as they need to tackle the questions that are asked in English language only. This gap between the students' academic readiness and the program's expectations leads to mounting frustration and, ultimately, dropout.

These findings reflect the conclusions of researchers like Lassibille and Gomez (2008) and Tinto (1993), who found that low academic achievement as one of the major predictor of students' dropout. When students enrolled in university education without



basic knowledge and skills of learning, they likely to drop out before completion of their degree.

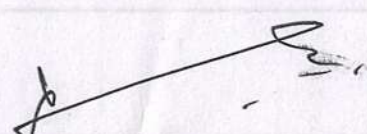
### **Inadequate Institutional Support**

The individual factors plays a major role for the students success, the institution where they pursue education also plays an important role. As we were in conversation with the students they raised concerned about institutional support as well. Students did not just struggle with course content, but also with the institutions that failed to engage, guide, and care for them. Few of the students found themselves ignored by teacher, isolated from campus family, and less supported by the administration. These feelings of isolation from campus for the longtime created a sense of less mentorship that pushed them further away from their studies. This connects with Tinto's (1993) belief that a student's persistence is not only about academic ability, but also about their level of integration into the educational setting and societal framework of an institution. Without these kinds of connection, even the most determined students may begin to lose motivation. Some voices from the students reported are

*"When the first year result published, I failed in two subjects. I couldn't say where I went wrong only few teachers used to provide feedback during internal exams ..... the next students added we didn't received our first-year internal exam results when second year started. I didn't know whether to give next exam or not."*

*"There were occasions when we attended class and the teachers were absent. Some teachers merely read from the slides even when they arrive. Real instruction and interaction were absent..."*

The first response indicates the absence of constructive feedback from the teachers and without knowing what they need to improve to get successful, many felt lost and discouraged. In addition the second response reflects the frustration of being part of a classroom where learning feels like a formality. Irregular attendance and passive teaching reduced students' interest and connection to the course material. The conversation further reveals that they felt the absence of academic counseling, where somebody would ask



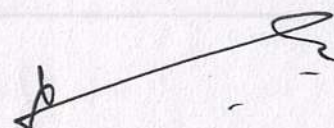
them whether they are doing okay in studies and in their personal life. They felt neglected in the crowd this statement is supported by the student saying "*Teacher simply come in class, taught us and went off, there is no one to guide and mentor us.*"

These reflections from the students indicated there is the necessity to adopt institutional culture, which helps in sharing values, behaviors, and practices. The interaction with the students indicates students didn't only because of their own reasons, but because they felt less motivated and supported by the school. The lack of feedback, traditional teaching practices, less attachment with the teacher and unavailability of proper mentorship boost the dropout.

### **Discussions**

The discussions with the students shed light and infuse academic, institutional, and personal issues that lead to student dropout. Four main themes emerged from a thematic analysis: low academic achievement, economic problem, lack of commitment to learning, and lack of institutional support. Many of them started their academic careers with great enthusiasm, but as time passed on, their dedication to learning weakened. Some students experienced this change gradually as a result of conflicting obligations and goals like moving overseas, working for family. "*I had great enthusiasm to learn... but later it was difficult for me to manage time,*" one of student stated. The statement reflects how students' academic goals are often re-evaluated in the context of life circumstances and emerging priorities. The statement also emphasizes how students compare their education with practical applications. A phrase like "*Padhera ke hunxa ra?*" shows a utilitarian perspective, in which the immediate financial benefits of education are evaluated. The statement expelled by the student directly connects Cost-Benefit Theory. The theory states disengagement becomes a good decision when one see a particular activity is less productive as compare the effort and time. The study result also support Tinto's (1980) claim that Commitment can weakened when there is unclear goal and less support.

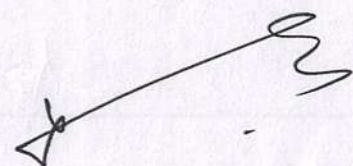
Another important variable that emerged from the discussion is the economic problems. Out of 10 interviewees 6 of them disclosed that they supported their families by working full-time or part-time jobs. They admit that they one of the bread earner for their family



and for them working was not always a choice but rather a necessity. *"I am working ... to provide financial assistance to my family,"* said one participant, while another student felt shame of constantly requesting money from family members, which put pressure them to look for job. Woosley's (2003) claim that financial hardship is a strong predictor of dropout and the statement is supported by these sources. Students found it difficult to maintain consistent attendance and fell behind academically as work demands increased. Their sense of confidence and belonging gradually diminished as a result of their failure to manage employment and education, which ultimately resulted in disengagement. The findings of Joo et al. (2009) that financial pressure reduces course engagement and raises dropout risk are given a human aspect by the qualitative research presented here.

Few of the students were found to have low academic achievement. They were average when they enrolled in campus with weak English background. These students frequently expressed how tough it was for them to deal with English language books and complex subject content. One student said, *"I found the classes challenging. In two subjects, I failed. I gave up on ever finishing the degree."* These kinds of saying highlight a wider societal problem rooted to our teaching learning system which prevailed in rural schools. This is congruent with the findings of Tinto (1993) and Lassibille and Gomez (2008), who found that poor academic performance as one of the major indicator for students dropping out. However, as seen by the lived experiences shared, performance frequently reflects readiness, assistance, and adjustment to new academic contexts rather than just ability. The sociocultural perspective on academic success is also important. While achieving personal goals is frequently linked to success (Tao & Hong, 2000), students in this study viewed success through social and familial lenses. Academic achievement was frequently subordinated to the need to provide for one's family, illustrating the conflict between personal ambition and group duty.

The perceived lack of significant institutional engagement was another theme emerged from discussion. Students saying like *"There was no one to coach and guide us," "Some teachers just read off the slides. There was no genuine instruction or engagement."* These observations imply that relationships between teachers and students as well as institutional culture are important factors for students' retention. Students stated they

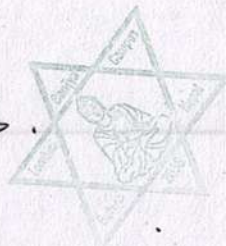
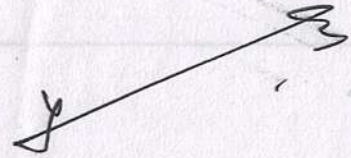


failed tests but they were rarely given comments or instructions on how to get better. The feeling of being ignored, particularly in trying times, led to emotional disengagement from the classroom. In order to promote commitment, Firestone et al. (1987) highlighted the significance of support, respect, and relevance and disappearance of these can have serious institutional problem. In a similar vein, Tinto (1993) maintained that dedication to learning necessitates academic, social, and emotional integration within the institution. Even motivated students may experience detachment in the absence of this interaction.

### **Conclusion**

This study reveals that student dropout on community-managed campuses is caused by a combination of academic personal and institutional problems. Four major themes emerge are lack of learning commitment, economic problem, low academic achievement and lack of institutional support. Due to family responsibility, financial hardship, and the absence of skilled based education and support in the campus they make decision to drop out. The study shows students usually begin their studies with enthusiasm but gradually lose interest. A greater institutional failure to engage and retain students is indicated by the absence of meaningful faculty interaction, mentorship, and feedback. The discussion with the students revealed dropout is not an easy choice and is motivated by unfilled intellectual, emotional, and financial needs. Institutions must tackle this by implementing inclusive pedagogy, financial aid, mentorship, and greater student-faculty collaboration to establish conducive learning environments. The findings can be helpful to the academic institutions and policy makers to make some amendment in existing education system to improve student retention in the university level.

The empirical research indicates that these attributes can be built in students only when teachers have all three level of commitment as explained by Firestone et al. (1987). They argue that the learning commitment of the students depends on faculty commitment. Indicating faculty commitment to commitment to place, commitment to students, and commitment to teaching as activities that increase the students' academic commitment. Therefore, identifying the faculty commitment level in public campuses could be the future research agenda.

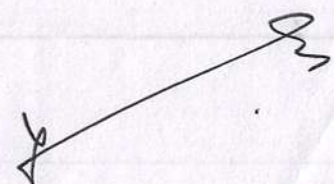


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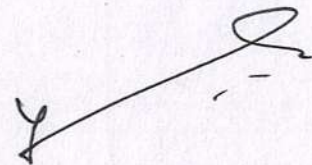


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## Appendix Interview Guide

### Data Collection and Interview Protocol

#### Ethical Considerations

- Participants provided informed consent and could withdraw at any stage.
- Confidentiality ensured through pseudonyms and secure data storage.

Semi-structured interviews (45-55 minutes) were conducted using a detailed guide divided into two sections given as follows:

#### Section 1: Demographic and Background Information

Collected via pre-interview form or direct questioning

- Age
- Gender
- Place of permanent residence (District/Municipality)
- Family structure (e.g., joint, nuclear)
- Parents' education level (Father and Mother separately)
- Parents' occupation (Father and Mother separately)
- Estimated monthly household income
- First in family to pursue university-level education? (Yes/No)
- Type of high school attended (Public/Government | Private | Community Managed)
- Academic performance in high school (GPA/Division)
- Reason(s) for choosing the BBS program
- Expectations from the campus at enrollment
- Part-time/full-time work alongside studies? (Type of work, if applicable)
- Living arrangements (with family, rented room, hostel)



## Section 2: Open-Ended Interview Questions

### A. Academic Experience and Institutional Support

1. How would you describe your academic experience in the campus? (Teaching methods, language of instruction, use of technology)
2. Did you find course materials relevant and understandable?
3. Has the course structure ever misaligned with your career goals?
4. What academic support was available if you struggled?
5. Have you sought help from faculty? Describe their responsiveness.

### B. Faculty and Peer Relations

6. How would you describe your relationship with faculty? (Approachability, supportiveness, mentorship).
7. Were you comfortable communicating with teachers outside class?
8. Describe your relationship with classmates.
9. Did you feel a sense of belonging on campus? (Why/why not?)

### C. Financial and Family Support

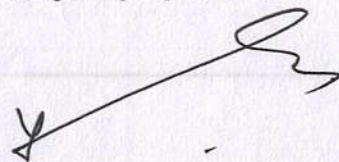
10. Have financial issues affected your studies or led to dropout considerations?
11. Does your family support your education (emotionally/financially)?
12. Have family/financial responsibilities caused missed classes/exams?
13. Is there pressure to earn instead of study?

### D. Campus Facilities and Environment

14. How adequate were facilities (library, labs, study areas, toilets, canteen )?
15. Did the infrastructure encourage learning?
16. Were there extracurricular/support programs (clubs, counseling)? (Have you participated?)

### E. Personal Challenges and Perceptions

17. Have you considered dropping out? What were the reasons?
18. What personal challenges hinder continuing your studies?
19. What motivates students to stay in class despite challenges?
20. Why do many students leave before completing the program?



**F. Suggestions for Retention**

21. What changes would better support students?
22. What could faculty/administration do differently?
23. If you could redesign one aspect of the BBS program/campus, what would it be and why?

