Why Some Students Fail to Complete Their Education

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Abstract

Students must have strong cognitive skills in math and literacy, as well as the ability to solve problems, to succeed in a constantly evolving professional environment. Nevertheless, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics has reported that a global education crisis significantly impacts 617 million students (Montoya, 2018). Two-thirds of these students either drop out or remain in school without acquiring these fundamental skills, as they struggle with math and literacy. The crisis threatens their ability to secure better employment and escape poverty. The data from UNESCO indicates that 80% of students between the ages of 12 and 14 cannot read proficiently, a problem that affects students worldwide, including those in the United States and Europe.

The dread of failure is a substantial factor that contributes to student failure. Although anxiety may serve as an incentive for certain students, it can also undermine their self-assurance and impede their advancement. Students who are apprehensive about failure may avoid challenges or withdraw prematurely. Another concern is inadequate preparation. Transitioning from elementary to secondary school and university necessitates emotional stability, intellectual abilities, and a readiness to study. Regrettably, a significant number of students experience feelings of being behind and may even resort to deception due to a lack of preparation. According to empirical research, plagiarism is common among college students (You et al., 2018).

Moreover, dyslexia and dyscalculia are specific learning difficulties that impede reading comprehension and mathematical aptitude, respectively. Learning becomes more difficult for learners with ADHD due to its impact on executive functioning, impulse control, and concentration. These challenges can affect academic achievement, motivation, self-esteem, and social relationships.

In conclusion, it is imperative to address the dread of failure, improve academic preparedness, and support students with learning disabilities to enhance educational outcomes.

Keywords: fear of failure, lack of preparation, motivation, learning challenges, anxiety, instruction, depression, life stressors, health factors, educational barriers

1. Introduction

As we look to the future, students must have strong cognitive skills in math and literacy and the ability to solve problems and challenges uniquely and creatively in today's changing professional landscape. This lack of cognitive and soft skills leads us to question how best to prepare students for the future. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics suggests a global education crisis affecting 617 million students (Montoya, 2018). These students are not proficient in math or reading. The figures show that two-thirds of those students not learning math or reading were in school, or they were in school but ended up dropping out (Montoya, 2018).

This crisis threatens the individual student's ability to rise from poverty by securing better jobs when they enter the workforce. Each additional school year increases the student's income by 10-20 % (Montoya, 2018). This global crisis affects students from all continents. As noted by UNESCO's statistics, 80% of students between 12 and 14 cannot read proficiently (Montoya, 2018). All countries are impacted equally, including the United States and Europe (Montoya, 2018).

2. Fear of Failure

A fear of failing could be a problem for some students, resulting in avoidance tactics or a lack of drive. Their progress may be impeded by the dread of falling short of expectations or failing others. Addis (2023) emphasizes that fear of failure can be positive and negative. For some of our students, it could serve as a motivator. However, it can also negatively impact self-confidence and self-worth. The lack of self-confidence and self-work will block an individual and harmfully impact motivation and innovation. Many students want to succeed in their academic goals and avoid failure.

Martin (2010) and Addis (2023) agree on the high degree of damage caused to self-esteem by failure. Many students are happy when they perform well in school. However, their self-esteem suffers when their competence is questioned. Their fear of failure prevents them from trying and causes them to stop or quit (Martin, 2010).

3. Lack of Preparation

Many students fail due to a lack of preparation. Moving from elementary to secondary school and then to university requires a certain amount of readiness regarding study habits, intellectual abilities, and emotional stability. Many factors impact student preparation and, ultimately, performance. Some factors are a lack of preparation for classes, a feeling of not being well prepared from prior years, or laziness. Academic preparedness refers to cognitive and academic skills as well as socio-emotional and organizational skills. The language skills necessary for writing, critical thinking, mathematics, and reading comprehension are often lacking in college students.

Additionally, they lock in abilities like motivation, time management, and the capacity to handle stress and deadline pressure. The lack of preparation causes students to feel like they are falling behind and need to catch up, which might lead to cheating. You (et al., 2018) shared the results from empirical studies, which reveal that the majority of student's cheat.

4. Learning Difficulties

Learning difficulties are specific impairments in the learning process, not to be confused with intellectual disability. For instance, dyslexia impair reading comprehension and language processing, but dyscalculia lowers mathematical aptitude. Conversely, executive functioning, impulse control, and concentration are all impacted by ADHD. When these conditions coexist, it might make learning more difficult for the impacted learners.

Social relationships can be difficult for students with learning difficulties, resulting in isolation. This may also impact students' self-esteem and motivation, affect scholastic achievement, and lead to irritation and anxiety. It is essential to offer customized accommodations to meet every student's needs. Students receive customized training based on multimodal and differentiated instruction at various educational levels. Students who struggle with studying could benefit from the technology as well. These tools might be audiobooks, text-to-speech software, or other platforms for adaptive learning.

5. Lack of Motivation and Engagement

It can be difficult for students to remain dedicated to their academics when they lack intrinsic drive or a strong sense of purpose. Academic achievement is greatly dependent on motivation. Students' motivation and involvement in their education majorly affect their success. The curriculum, instructional design, teachers, and students influence students' involvement in a class or project (Korobova & Starobin, 2015). Some pupils lack direction, perseverance, and determination, and others have strong traits for success. These students typically graduate on schedule and even enroll in more classes than is advised (Stelnicki et al., 2015).

Students who learn online need to be driven to succeed. Students who possess intrinsic motivation are driven to seek out possibilities and rely on their self-efficacy, as Lin, Liu, and Yuan (2001) discovered. Low motivation and involvement have numerous negative effects on students' achievement. Some must decide whether to stop their education. There is also the fear of failing, which frequently translates into uncertainty about one's capacity for success and causes anxiety (Covington, 1992). Other aspects that affect how motivated and involved students are include instructional strategies, personal problems and stress, and a shortage of resources. Lepper (1988) declared that a motivated and engaged learner knows the purpose of his/her study.

6. Issues With Material or Faculty

Poor instruction or a hard time learning the subject can impact students' chances of success. Students may become disinterested if the curriculum lacks interest or relevance. Some challenges students face include a lack of motivation, which is a significant cause of student failure. Faculty can make the learning experience engaging by

varying the classroom experiences, using rewards to motivate students, and allowing students more control over their learning experiences. Faculty can also provide students with various choices over their learning experiences.

- Vary experiences to engage the students

- Using rewards to motivate students

- Allow students more control over their learning experience

(Mustafa, 2023 and Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015)

Anxiety about poor performance can hinder a student's academic performance. Encouraging a growth mindset and a supportive environment where mistakes are used as opportunities for learning will help motivate students. Sometimes, students struggle due to challenges with teachers or course materials. To address this:

- Ensure there is clear communication between students and faculty

- Provide additional support and training for instructors

- Offer accommodations for students with different learning needs

(Mustafa, 2023 and Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015)

Students may fail if they are not adequately prepared. Encourage effective study habits and time management skills. Personal issues, health problems, or family responsibilities can also affect student performance. Faculty must be understanding and provide support when needed. Health conditions can affect learning. Faculty should be supportive, encourage students to seek help and provide necessary accommodations. Sometimes, students lack the necessary skills or aptitude for a subject. Identify these gaps and offer targeted support. Addressing these issues requires empathy, active problem-solving, and collaboration between educators, students and families (Mustafa, 2023).

7. Institutional Factors

Policies, procedures, and the university's curriculum may also cause student failure. Insufficient resources, strict grading guidelines, or a lack of support services may hamper student achievement. Institutional factors such as advising, counseling, academic services, admission, registration effectiveness, financial aid, and instructional services impact students' success in education. Building relationships with students through advising, communication, coaching, and even mentoring is essential for students' success and graduation (Drake, 2011).

It is important to maintain communications and provide support when needed. Financial aid is also an imperative factor impacting students' success and retention. Chen and Hossler (2017) learned from their students' results that nontraditional students would drop out less due to financial aid options. In higher education, instructional services significantly influence students' achievement. These services cover a broad spectrum of support tools intended to raise academic performance, improve the learning environment, and promote the general development of students.

8. Health Related Challenges

Excess stress is related to health problems. Excessive stress can lead to health issues, resulting in a negative impact on academic performance. Academic stress is often linked to ongoing study, writing assignments, testing, and boring professors, to name a few. Many college students who suffer from physical and psychological stress find that they have health difficulties, including fatigue, loss of appetite, headaches, and gastrointestinal issues. Academic stress has been linked to poor mental and physical health.

8.1 Family Stressors

Personal life stressors, including financial hardships, family issues, or other occurrences, may hamper a student's capacity to concentrate on their studies. Personal life stressors, including financial hardships, family issues, or other occurrences, may hamper a student's capacity to concentrate on their studies. External stressors can significantly impact students' ability to focus on their studies. Financial difficulties, family challenges, and other life events can create mental and emotional strain, affecting cognitive processes and productivity. Students must seek support, manage stress, and maintain a healthy balance between personal life and academics.

Parental participation often reflects how well students manage cognitive processes and academic performance. The parent/student relationship depends on the parent's attitudes, understanding, and perspective. When parents have positive views, the relationship between parents and students is much better than when parents have negative attitudes. Supportive parents encourage student success, while non-supportive and repressive parental reactions have been known to affect disordered behaviors due to an inability to communicate unpleasant sentiments to the students.

8.2 Academic Stress Related to Student Depression Levels

Depression improves as students enter adulthood. Depression starts to decline between 18 and 25, according to Deng et al., 2022. According to Afreen et al. (2013), 30% of high school students suffer from depression. Those high school graduates often encounter depression as they enroll in university. These stressors can result from challenging assignments and unrealistic deadlines. As students become depressed, they become demotivated, resulting in poor performance, affecting university dropout rates and higher than average suicide rates.

According to Wang et al. (2021), the higher the level of school burnout, the higher the level of depression. Depression, high levels of anxiety, behavioral issues, and irritability are just a few of the problems associated with high academic stress. Sociodemographic factors also play a role in depression among university students. Academic stress continues to be a factor that affects students in all countries worldwide, including all ethnic groups and civilizations. Academic stress continues to be a problem that impacts a student's well-being and mental health.

Academic performance based on Lazarus' appraisal theory of stress can be linked with anxiety, depression, and academic performance. This stress harms students, resulting in depression, and it negatively affects students' academic performance and learning outcomes. Higher learning institutes are believed to be the strongest pillar in a nation's growth, according to Alturki, Aldraiweesh, and Al-Rahmi (2021). The performance of higher learning institutes relies on the success of their students.

Student performance is affected by social media, academic quality, family, and social bonding (Alturki, Aldraiweesh, Al-Rahmi, 2021). Academic stress occurs when a person has difficulty handling inner and outer feelings. Academic stress can impact an individual's mental health and lead to different psychological disorders, such as depression, as reported by the World Health Organization. Depression ranks third among global burdens of disease, and it is predicted to take over first place by 2030 (Who, 2021).

Decreases in energy affect day-to-day thinking processes and concentration, making career decisions difficult. Students often worry about family issues, a new lifestyle when entering college and university, poor academic grades, and teacher favoritism. These issues can lead to depression in students, resulting in depression disorder. That can span 12 months or more, limiting a student's mental and physical health, social relationships, and professional careers.

9. Life Stressors – Internal and External

Personal stresses in life, such as money troubles, family issues, or other occurrences, might make it difficult for students to concentrate on academics. Aydin (2017) discussed how personal concerns can adversely affect a student's progress. Our students require social, cognitive, and emotional support and grades to succeed. Many students who go back to school to finish their degree have difficulties with time management, organizing skills, prioritizing, academic self-efficacy, and stress management.

Aydin discovered through her research that stress and time constraints were the biggest factors influencing students' academic performance. Her research recommended improved relationships and more communication among all stakeholders. According to Burger and Naude (2019), motivated students have good study habits and coping mechanisms for dealing with personal problems. Stress and unpleasant life events can cause negative feelings and reactions that can hinder a student's ability to succeed. Students need different kinds of support depending on how they face crises. Doygun and Gulec (2012) suggested that institutions of higher learning offer mental and social assistance.

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9.2 Barriers to Education

Millions of youths and adults globally encounter obstacles in their pursuit of an education. The largest barrier is still poverty, which is followed by characteristics like ability, identity, and background. For example, few rural young women in sub-Saharan Africa finish secondary education. These differences have been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, with many low- and lower-middle-income nations finding it difficult to assist vulnerable students during school closures. Adults often face numerous barriers that impact their learning preventing them from taking part in learning opportunities Cross (1981). These barriers can range from situational, institutional, and dispositional barriers, including the misconception that they are too old to learn or lack confidence.

Several barriers can prevent students from completing their education, such as poverty, a lack of access, emotional stress and mental health issues, family challenges, a lack of Transportation and housing, inequitable access to services, and aversion to academics. Poverty is a significant barrier preventing students from accessing the needed resources to complete their education, such as books and learning materials. A report by UNESCO suggests that the main barrier to education Is poverty. In low- and middle-income countries, children from the wealthiest sectors are 20% more likely to complete their education than those from the poorest neighborhoods (Langs, 2022). According to Drew (2019), 264.3 million children have never been to school or have dropped out. Without access to textbooks, tools, and computers, many children and young adults will be left behind, according to Langs (2022). This is often due to access disparities, where poverty is the number one barrier.

Financial barriers are the biggest barrier to why adults are not currently enrolled in secondary education (Carrasco, 2023). Other issues affecting enrollment include inflation and the need to work. The costs of a college education are still insurmountable. The top reasons students drop out of college are emotional stress and inflation (Carrasco 2023). According to Carrasco (2023), education costs have come down by 10% since the pandemic; however, the cost is still out of reach for many.

Emotional distress and mental health issues often become a barrier for many students. According to Carrasco (2023), 55% of students think of dropping out due to emotional stress. Many currently enrolled students are still struggling with emotional stress and mental health barriers. Post-pandemic restrictions have started to improve; however, many students still struggle to stay enrolled. This has affected Black, Hispanic, and male students more so than others.

Often, many students encounter family and home challenges that can physically prevent them from attending school (Gabenski, 2024). To cut absenteeism, educational institutions must develop a multifaceted approach by analyzing data and communicating effectively.

Promote cultural change, address the causes, and remove barriers that prevent students from attending classes. Frequently, students have family or home challenges, trauma, a lack of transportation, housing issues, and inequitable access to services that prevent students from getting to school physically. There are also psychological factors that come in. Play, such as school climate, academics, relationships, and disciplinary practices. When students find instruction irrelevant, they often become disengaged. Often, students have misconceptions about the impact of their absence and why attendance matters. Many times, data on student attendance can be. Sometimes, it is delayed for weeks or even months to reflect the student's attendance. This time, the leg makes it difficult. School administrators should react promptly to implement processes and respond to attendance data faster.

Many schools inform parents of chronic absenteeism. This often includes warning notices when the student is absent, such as in personal outreach. To inform students and parents about missing school. Equates to missing foundational elements of learning. Repeatedly, teachers' absenteeism can affect them. Many students will question if attendance matters: why aren't the teachers present? Many times, school starts and ends times post. Challenges for students. This can unintentionally contribute to tardiness or absenteeism. The impact of absenteeism can be profound. Often setting students back academically and hindering foundational skill development.

Adjusted strategies include engaging students and families as partners, removing attendance barriers, and using data proactively to identify issues, which is important. In promoting a positive school climate and a sense of belonging. Health. And disability needs. Ensures that students receive equitable access to learning; providing mental health support and services is a great way to relieve anxiety, depression, and other conditions that affect attendance. A lack of transportation and housing issues can also prevent students from getting to school on time. Inequitable access to services can also discourage students from attending. With diligence and creativity, schools can ensure that students attend and receive the education they deserve. Addressing these barriers is critical to ensuring that all students can complete their education.

9.3 Situational Barriers

Situational barriers include working adults, women, and overqualification. Students with parents who have not shown interest in their earlier educational experience are less likely to engage in academics later in life. This effect usually becomes cross-generational (Williams, 2024). Adults who have not had previous success in education are less likely to return to continue their education. According to a 2017 participation survey, learning slows with age. This survey reported a 9% decline in those older than 45 pursuing a degree in higher education.

Factors such as occupation, parental education, and income all affect engagement in learning. Those with higher socioeconomic levels are twice as likely to pursue a higher degree than those in the lower socio-economic class. The 2008 NIACE Briefing, and the 2017 Participation Survey indicate that there is a significant difference between learners from white, Black, Asian, and Minority backgrounds (Aldridge, 2017; Learning and Work Institute, 2018)

9.4 Institutional Barriers

There are numerous barriers to higher education access, including affordability and readiness. Many students are required to take some form of remedial coursework. Remedial and developmental courses are designed to prepare students for college-level courses. These developmental courses have become barricades for post-secondary education (Long, 2016). While these remedial courses are intended to prepare students for entry into college, they do little to help the student to complete their postsecondary degree. In most cases, the credits earned for these remedial courses do not count toward completing a post-secondary degree, further delaying progress (Long, 2016).

9.5 Dispositional Barriers

Dispositional barriers include the unemployed. The more barriers adult learners experience, the less likely they are to reenter higher education. Adults who have not been successful in the past are not likely to return or continue with their education (Learning and Work Institute, 2018). Social class remains the strongest educational barrier (Savage, et al., 2015; Learning and Work Institute, 2018.

10. Recommendations to Help Student Retention, Engagement, and Success

The following recommendations are for all levels of education and modalities, including online asynchronous courses. Establishing robust connections with students is essential for their achievement and ability to stay enrolled. Whether in a conventional classroom or a distant learning setting, cultivating connections favors student engagement and contentment. Effective methods for establishing and sustaining robust student connections, particularly in remote environments, involve motivating students to produce concise introductory films, share written passages and images in discussion forums, or contribute to an "About the class" wiki page. These activities foster a sense of connection and worth in pupils by utilizing live video streaming, photographs, or pre-recorded videos to communicate with pupils. If you are not engaging in daily live meetings, creating recorded movies elucidating the daily or weekly tasks and events would be advisable. Providing video or voice feedback on tasks can further strengthen the connection.

Demonstrating a genuine concern for student growth and well-being can be achieved by maintaining constant communication through announcements, emails, or discussion forums. Establishing a conducive atmosphere that fosters students' willingness to approach you is crucial, particularly when addressing their inquiries and apprehensions. Recognizing that students may encounter diverse challenges, particularly in distant learning, exhibits empathy and adaptability in addressing their needs.

Remember to acknowledge accomplishments, regardless of their magnitude. Positive reinforcement fosters student motivation. Personalized support lets you gain insights into your students' interests, learning styles, and goals. Adapt your teaching style by giving customized feedback. Provide valuable feedback on assignments, emphasizing strengths and identifying areas that need development. Support students from the beginning, especially students who might be struggling to prevent dropping out or failure. Communicate often with all parties involved. Set clear expectations for success. Provides specific, timely, and personalized feedback, allowing students to learn from it. Offer support systems such as counselors, mentors, coaches, advisors, etc.

It is important to remember that establishing relationships requires significant time and effort. However, the positive effects on student retention and achievement are immeasurable. Educators substantially contribute to their students' overall experience by establishing a secure and encouraging learning environment.

11. Conclusion

The global education crisis affects millions of students worldwide, with many struggling to learn math and reading. To address these challenges, a move toward more inclusive education is imperative. We can better support

students and improve educational outcomes by identifying individual and systemic barriers, providing additional training, and creating appropriate accommodations.

Fear of failure, learning difficulties, and academic stress contribute to student challenges.

Customized accommodations, faculty support, and addressing institutional factors are essential for student success. Health-related challenges and personal stress also impact academic performance. As students enter adulthood, depression levels improve, emphasizing the importance of holistic support for their well-being and achievement. Millions of youths and adults globally face barriers to education, including poverty, lack of access, emotional stress, mental health issues, family challenges, and aversion to academics. Financial barriers hinder adult enrollment, while emotional distress affects student retention. Addressing these challenges requires multifaceted approaches, data analysis, and effective communication.

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