

Introduction

A society educates its members in order to encourage prosperity. Institutionalized education includes the process of values, skills and knowledge building based on the experience, the culture and the objectives that the society aims to reach. In this context, education involves all types of learning obtained and used throughout life. Positive identity formation, as the developmental psychologist, Erickson, has pointed out, is a cumulative process of experience starting at home with a trusting relationship between mother and child that develops through interaction with children and adults. School is, therefore, the place where a great deal of identity shaping takes place. Under certain circumstances and with a lack of relationships within school, some students will find it easier to drop out, in search of the missing identity.¹

In Albania, 45% of the population attends school. At the beginning of the transition in 1989, attendance rates experienced a continuous decrease and financial resources for schools were significantly reduced.² Major damages were inflicted during the political transition of 1990-92. These years produced the highest number of students who dropped out. Transition from a centralized government to a free market economy, especially with disintegration of agricultural cooperations and enterprises, found Albanian families unprepared and economically weak to handle agricultural

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¹ Bardhyl Musai. Psikologji Edukimi. (Tiranë: 1999). fq. 67

² Geremia Palomba dhe Milan Vodopivec. Financimi, Efektiviteti dhe Barazia në Arsimin Shqiptar. (Banka Botërore: 2000). fq 8.

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labor. Lack of mechanization and infrastructure made it even harder to deal with the situation. Many families engaged their children in work, obliging them to abandon school. Lack of control over school functioning and law implementation allowed this phenomenon to happen with hardly any resistance. Although today, the dropout level has somewhat decreased, it remains a significant issue in societies who need educated citizens, like Albania.

The situation of education can be directly related to the economic situation in the country. According to the National Strategy for Socio-economic Development, one fourth of the Albanian population is poor.³ It is noted that there is an increase in illiteracy in the Albanian society (only 88% of the population from ages 15 and above are capable of reading and writing).

“Poor people in Albania do not receive a complete education. More than 1/3 of them have had only an elementary education and 1/5 has completed a basic education... children who beg, work, drop out from school... the primary subject to poverty.”⁴

Therefore, poverty reduction in the country is the main objective of the National Strategy. Under the same context, poverty and extreme hunger reduction, as well as completion of basic universal education are the first objectives in the list of the Millennium Development Objectives. The second objective states that by 2015, children, wherever they are, boys and girls, should have completed a basic education.⁵

The research presented in this report deals with the very important issue of basic education dropouts in Albania. According to the Albanian Ministry of Education and Science, school dropouts reached its highest numbers in 1991-2 (6.31%), which

³ *Strategjia Kombëtare e Zhvillimit Ekonomik dhe Social*. Këshilli i Ministrave të Republikës së Shqipërisë. Tiranë, 2003. p.42

⁴ Bledjana Beqiri. “*Varfëria, 30% e shqiptarëve në skamje*” (Gazeta “Shekulli”, e diel, 27 korrik 2003). p. 11

⁵ Ylli Çabiri and Lindita Xhillari. *Shqipëria dhe Objektivat e Zhvillimit të Mijëvjeçarit*. (Qendra për Nxitjen e Zhvillimit Njerëzor. Tiranë: 2002). p.17

decreased in 2001 (2.3%).⁶ However, according to Unicef,⁷ only 82% of the children enrolled in the first grade continue onto the fifth grade.⁷ Other sources show that more than 35% of Albanian students between the age 10-14 drop out from school because of an insufficient family income and that one fifth drop out because of poor school quality.⁸

How did the idea of this research begin

The idea for this research was conceived following the participation of CDE representatives in a meeting with education institutions in early autumn 2002. It was during this meeting that the school dropout issue was raised as a problem that remains unsolved to a worrisome degree. Following debates and discussions, the idea of a more thorough research study on the phenomenon was suggested by the CDE staff.

Existing sources and documents on the dropout issue in other countries was reviewed. It was noticed that the majority were conducted as correlational and longitudinal studies, especially in the evaluation of dropout prevention programs. The experience of such programs is new to Albania; however, a correlational research plan seemed suitable for the conditions. Many of the variables already researched in other countries were also valid for the Albania conditions (see chapter 1).

At the same time, research studies carried out in Albania by foreign or local organizations on the dropout issue were reviewed. Besides the fact that there is no wide-scale research available to the interested public or professionals, the existing research lacked the perspective to investigate either the interrelated causes, or the immediate and long-term implications of school dropouts. While the discussions were based on general and speculative assumptions as to the causes, some lacked the description of method and validity of the research. Because of these reasons, the research study

⁶ As cited by Ylli Çabiri and Lindita Xhillari. *Op.Cit. Note of the authors*: During the research, it was noted that the declared dropout numbers did not coincide with the real numbers in the field, which were significantly higher. Most of cases remain unfilled therefore undeclared.

⁷ Unicef. *Raporti i MICS*. (Tiranë: 2000).

⁸ *Sondazhi i Matjeve të Standardeve të Gjalla* (1996), as cited by G. Palomba dhe M. Vodopivec, *Op.Cit.* p.8.

presented here attempts to avoid some of the shortcomings of former studies, while attempting to be modest in its aims and results.

Goal and hypothesis

The study aims to explore the qualities of the context preceding school dropout (predictors) and following dropout (consequences). The focus is the dropout student. The study was carried out in five districts: Shkodra, Dibra, Tirana, Vlora and Korça. Dropout numbers in these districts showed consistency and sometimes a gradual increase, especially for females.

The hypothesis will not aim to define the direction of relations between variables (such as cause-effect relations), but to demonstrate that there exists a relation. In the first group of hypothesis, dropout is considered a dependent variable, which is preceded by:

- Poor academic performance, poor attendance and repetition;
- Aggressive behavior and disturbed character;
- Poor interest in school and feelings of alienation from school;
- Belief that school does not guarantee a better future;
- Poor relations with teachers and school friends;
- Involvement in social groups with deviant behavior and in activities such as: smoking, drug use, and gun possession;
- Tendency to have friends who have dropped out, are employed or friends who are older than himself/herself;
- Low economic status of the family;
- Social problems such as: parental divorce or emigration, alcohol abuse, or insufficient housing;
- Low educational status of parents;
- Parents who dropped out;
- Low interest of parents and lack of cooperation with school;
- Poor school conditions such as: insufficient organization, distance from home, teacher behavior, learning environment, etc.

In the second group of hypothesis, dropping out is considered as the independent variable in order to explore the implication it has on a child's life:

- School dropout is followed by low self-esteem of child;
- School dropout is followed by employment of child;
- Dropout children are more likely to have fewer friends than other children;
- Dropout children are more likely to suffer psychological and psychosomatic problems than other children are;
- Dropout children show more feelings of insecurity and lack of confidence in the future than other children do.

School Dropout: Predictors and Consequences

Definition

There is no general agreement about the definition of the term “dropout”. In the Education Glossary, “a dropout student” is “one who leaves school before the completion of a given stage of education or leaves at some intermediate or non-terminal point in the cycle of schooling.”¹ Morrow (1987) suggests this definition:

A dropout is any student, previously enrolled in a school, who is no longer actively enrolled as indicated by fifteen days of consecutive unexcused absences, who has not satisfied local standards for graduation, and for whom a formal request has been received signifying enrollment in another state-licensed educational institution. A student death is not tallied as a dropout.²

In Albania, the dropout student is defined according the school regulation. In the article 41 of the Albanian Law “Regulations of the Public Schools”, the definition on attendance is given below:

If the student aged 6-16 years, the age of compulsory school, is for no reason absent in school or abandons it, his/her parents are charged for law

¹ Open Society Institute. *Education Glossary*. (Budapest: 2003).

² As cited by Husen, T., Postlethwaite, T.N. *The international encyclopedia of education*. 2nd Ed. Vol 3. (Pergamon: 1994). P. 1602.

infraction with a fine from 1000 to 10000 leks.³

This study is based on Clements definition of a dropout, “a student, who leaves school before its completion, for any reason other than death, without being enrolled in another school/institution”.⁴

School dropout context in Albania

According the National Strategy for Socio-economic Development document, in 2001-02, the dropout rate decreased in 2.4%. In 2003, the level of school dropout on a national scale is 1.8%.⁵

Dropout research in Albania emphasizes the conjuncture of the potential causes of economic and social factors such as poor economic conditions, low educational level of the family, employment of the child, obligation from parents and lack of the child’s willingness to receive an education. According to Unicef, in basic education, the main cause of dropouts and the decrease of enrollment numbers is the lack of family income and the inability to deal with the expenses required for school.⁶ Ashton states another reason as the involvement of children in agricultural tasks.⁶ Distance of school from the village, especially in rural areas, has been another factor for a reduction in enrollment numbers.⁷

In a study in the Elbasan district on regional development according to millennium objectives economic and social conditions, emigration and infrastructure are the three basic factors that influence children to dropout.⁸ In a survey from the Children’s Rights Center, the economic reasons were the first among other reasons for drop-

³ *Dispozita normative për arsimin parauniversitar*. (Tiranë, 2002).

⁴ Clements, 1991, as cited by Frances Prevatt. *School dropouts/truancy*. (Florida State University, 2001).

⁵ Strategjia Kombëtare për Zhvillimin Ekonomik dhe Social. *Op.Cit.* p.69.

⁶ C. Ashton, et.al. *Global Education Project: Evaluation Report for Second Phase*. (MOE, IPS, UNICEF, International Institute for Global Education, University of Toronto. Tirana, 2000).

⁷ Unicef-Albania. *Assessment of social and economic conditions of districts in Albania*. (2000). p.27-28.

⁸ Qarku i Elbasanit, UNDP. *Nxiti ja e zhvillimit rajonal nëpërmjet objektivave të mijëvjeçarit*. (Tiranë, 2003), p 38-39.

A student, who leaves school before its completion, for any reason other than death, without being enrolled in another school/institution (Clements, 1991).

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ping out (17%). Other less frequent reasons were lack of willingness, family obligation, disagreements with friends and dislike of teachers. In the same study, 328 teachers ranked opinions on school dropout causes. A majority (66.4%) reported that the importance of school has decreased because of the transition. According to them,⁹ the causes for dropping out are mainly economic (53.2%) and cultural (51.2%). According a study from the Tirana Municipality, the children of poor families suffer from exclusion.¹⁰

Poverty deprives people of the fulfillment of basic needs such as... lack of possibilities for education and entertainment. Incidence of nonattendance in basic education for children aged 7-14 years is higher among poor families compared to other families (fq.26).

According to the same study, 4% of the children aged 7-14 in the city of Tirana do not regularly attend school or have abandoned it. The study also found that more than half of them are employed.¹¹

In a study from Unicef, carried out by the Society for Development of Education, dropout causes were studied in the district of Durrës. There was no significant change between the numbers of dropouts according gender. Economic problems were mentioned as the most frequent cause of dropping out (25.8% of the dropout children). According to this study, one fifth of the girls and 60% of the boys over 10 years of age were employed. It was reported that students exhibited very good behavior before leaving school in 41.4% of the cases, good behavior in 50% of the cases and poor behavior in 8.6% of the cases. According to the results of this study, the majority of parents (57%) had had a basic education, 12.8% elementary, 22% high school, 2.3% university education and 5.8% did not have any education.¹²

⁹ Altin Hazizaj, Aurela Pano and S.Thorton Barkley. *Trokitja e analfabetizmit: Studim mbi shkaqet e braktisjes së shkollës nga fëmijët shqiptarë*. (CRCA: Tiranë, 1998).

¹⁰ Bashkia Tiranë. Unicef. *Vlerësim i nevojave për informacion dhe shërbime sociale në qytetin e Tiranës*. (Tiranë. 2002.) p.26

¹¹ *Ibid.* p.27

¹² ShZhE. Unicef. *Braktisja e shkollës, shkaqet, rekomandime: Qarku i Durrësit*. (Tiranë. 2001) p. 16-40.

According to a study of Mita and others on working children, the majority of these children (65%) are dropouts and 35% used to attend school despite having to work.¹³

Who drops out of school: predictors

Individual effects

Ensminger and Slusarick have shown that early aggressive behavior and poor academic results in school are predictors of dropping out of school later.¹⁴ Children who repeat a grade level are significantly more at risk of dropping out than the children who do not repeat, according to a study of Cairns et al.¹⁵ According to Rumberger boys are more likely to drop out than girls are.¹⁶

Other dropout predictors are the frequent use of drugs and friends who exhibit deviant behavior.¹⁷ Bachman et al have demonstrated that low self-esteem and poor confidence in his/her own abilities could be a predictor for dropping out.¹⁸

Family effects

A great number of authors have listed the low socio-economical status of the family as one of the main predictors of the dropout phenomenon. Students whose parents did not communicate with the school were more likely to drop out.¹⁹ Poor aca-

¹³ Nikoleta Mita. e të tj. Fëmijët që punojnë në rrugë në Shqipëri: aspekti social, psikologjik dhe arsimor. *Probleme psiko-pedagogjike e sociale*. (2002. ISP: Tiranë). p 11.

¹⁴ M.E. Ensminger., & A.L. Slusarick. Paths to high school graduation or dropout: A longitudinal study of a first-grade cohort. (*Sociology of Education*, 1992).

¹⁵ R.B.Cairns, B.D. Cairns, & H.J. Neckerman. Early school dropout: Configurations and determinants. (*Child Development*, 1989), 60.

¹⁶ R. Rumberger. *High school dropouts: A review of issues and evidence*. Review of Education Research, (1987).

¹⁷ R.B.Cairns et al., *Op.Cit*.

¹⁸ J.G. Bachman, S. Green, & I.D. Wirtanen., *Dropping out, Problem or Symptom?* (Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1971).

¹⁹ D. Baker. & D. Stevenson. Mother's strategies for children's school achievement: Managing the transition to high school. (*Sociology of Education*, 1986).

ademic results of parents and their belief that school is not necessary,²⁰ as well as parents who dropped out of school are predicting factors for the child dropping out. A disadvantaged structure of the family (single parent, low educational level, and big family) is also defined by a group of authors as a predictor of dropping out.

Peer effects

Ellenbogen and Chamberland investigated the relations of children at risk of dropping out and identified three tendencies: first, dropouts have more dropout friends than other children; second, dropouts were more likely to be excluded by school friends; and third, they were less likely to integrate in school life. They discovered that children who dropped out had fewer friends than those who attended school.²¹

School effects

Wehlage and Rutter noted that the lack of attention from teachers and the child's perception that school discipline is nonproductive and unfair were predicting factors for dropping out.²²

Purkey and Smith emphasized organizational features of the school such as: clear goals, strict teaching standards, discipline and order, homework, managing, participation of the teacher in decision making, support and collaboration of parents and high expectations of the students as positively relating to academic results.²³

Conditions following school dropout: consequences

Research has shown that dropout children are more likely to join delinquent groups who use drugs and alcohol and engage in criminal and violent activities than children

²⁰ L. Beck. & J.A. Muia. A portrait of a tragedy: Research findings on the dropout. (*High school Journal* 1980).

²¹ As cited by Frances Prevatt. *School dropouts/truancy*. (Florida State University. 2001)

²² G.G. Wehlage, & R.A. Rutter. *Dropping out: how much do schools contribute to the problem* In Natriello, G. (ed), *School dropouts, patterns and policies*. (Teachers College Press, N.Y: 1986).

²³ Purkey and Smith, 1983. Citar nga Frances Prevatt. *School dropouts/truancy*. (Florida State University. 2001)

who attend school. According to the Educational Testing Service (ETS) dropping out appears to be related to lower future income, more social assistance being offered to families of the dropout, as well as an increased likelihood that the dropout will become part of the prison population.²⁴

Some authors have argued that dropping out relates to the unemployment level, likelihood of low social status, low wage employment, and social exclusion. According to Tidwell, it is also related to the low self-esteem.²⁵ According to Levin, the negative influences of the dropout in the society have to do with the decrease in the national income, fewer taxes paid, more demands for social services, higher level of crime and lower health status. Dropping out is related to low self-esteem, depression, dissatisfaction and alienation, which contributes to a disordered, aggressive and criminally oriented behavior.²⁶

²⁴ Educational Testing Services (ETS), 1995.

²⁵ R. Tidwell. Dropouts speak out: qualitative data on early school departures. (*Adolescence*, 1988).

²⁶ M. Levin. *The costs to the nation of inadequate education. Report to the Select Committee on Equal Education Opportunity of the U.S. Senate.* (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C: 1972).

Method

Sample

A sampling procedure was initiated in February 2003. A meeting was organized with representatives from the Local Education Authorities in the five districts, who were then appointed as coordinators of the district. Coordinators from the Education Authorities then verified data collected on dropout numbers. Quota sampling was used in order to preserve the dropout population rates in each district (n=63 in Dibra, n=47 in Korça, n=78 in Shkodra, n=91 in Tirana and n=22 in Vlora).

The sample (n=301 dropout children) was composed of children aged 7-17, (\bar{x} =13.84; σ =1.49). The percentages of dropouts were 45.5% girls and 54.5% boys. The dropout period varied from 1996 until 2002 (see table 1, annex 2). The comparison group was composed of children attending school (n=150) and children at risk of dropping out (n=100).¹ Fifty percent of children attending school were girls and fifty percent were boys. The ages varied from 10 to 14 years old in order to sample children who attend basic education. On the other hand, 30% of at-risk children were girls and 70% were boys. Their ages varied from 10 to 15 years old. A non-random sampling method was used to select the non-dropout children and at-risk children.

¹ Children at risk of dropping out will be considered students, who because of the high number of consecutive absences, are identified as potential dropouts, but still are not declared as such.

Instruments

Based on the existing research on dropouts and the research plan [correlational] structured interviews, self-administered questionnaires and structured observations were used. The instruments were set up in order to measure the following categories:

- *Individual effects*: attendance, academic performance, involvement in school activities, involvement in deviant behavior, etc.
- *Family effects*: economic status, family composition, parental participation in school activities, etc.
- *Peer effects*: number of peers, having dropout friends, etc.
- *School effects*: teaching quality, facilities and resources, effectiveness of the school policies and practices, school climate, teacher involvement, etc.

However, these categories may overlap and a number of effects may be grouped into more than one category.

Instruments included a) *interview with the dropout child*, b) *interview with parent of the dropout child*, c) *self-administered questionnaire for the teacher of the dropout child*, d) *interview with the child who attends school* and e) *interview with the at-risk child*. In order to assess the learning environment in the schools involved in the study, the *Learning Environment Schedule* was used (f).

The interview for the dropout child was comprised of 37 items: 29 close-ended and 8 open-ended ones. The child was asked to respond with information about his peers, parents and family, employment, school, actual and previous physical, emotional, mental and social status, as well as the reasons why he/she dropped out of school (see annex 2b). Items 8, 9, 10 have been adapted from the *Eynseck Personality Inventory*, while items 11, 12, 13 have been adapted from the *Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale*. The rest of the items were set up based on variables used in existing dropout research. The interview was piloted by a psychology student with a small group of school age children.

Interviews with parents were comprised of 27 items: 21 close-ended and 6 open-

ended ones. The parents gave demographic and economic data such as: child's birth-place, location, migration, economic status, family composition, employment, education, reasons for child dropping out, etc (see annex 2c).

The questionnaire for the teacher of the dropout child was self-administered by the teacher. It was comprised of 32 items, of which 24 close-ended ones and 8 open-ended ones. The teacher responded on the general data about the child, on the behavior and attitudes of the child, his/her relations with the child and his/her parents, the reasons for the child dropping out according to him/her, etc (see annex 2a).

The learning environment schedule was adapted from the version of School Quality Index (1995). This instrument served to assess the quality and organization of the learning environment, physical premises and settings, wellbeing of the children and classroom activities.

Data gathering

District coordinators identified the areas and schools where the dropout phenomenon was most problematic. Following contact with the school directors, the number of dropout children from each school to be included in the study was defined. The list of their names and family addresses was secured. School directors worked with the teachers to allow the completion of the questionnaire to collect data on the dropout children. District coordinators completed the learning environment schedule. The gathering of the data was carried out during February-March 2003. Interviews with children and parents were generally conducted in their homes, while teacher questionnaires were completed at school. The mean time for interview completion with dropout children was 13 minutes, with a minimal time of 1 minute and a maximum time of 30 minutes. There was no significant change between the interview time of non-dropouts (11 minutes) or those at-risk of dropping out (11 minutes).

Data analysis

Data analysis and research report writing was carried out in the Center for Democratic Education. The Statistical Processor of Social Sciences (SPSS-11) was used for

data analysis. Statistical processing included frequency distribution tables, mean and standard deviation (when necessary), cross tabulation results among variables and the Pearson correlation of coefficient calculation. The analysis was carried out with a group of 87 variables.

Ethics

Institutional permission to conduct this study was reached and collaboration with Education Authorities was secured. The research guaranteed voluntary participation of the persons involved, as well as their consent. Any risk for physical or psychological damage to the persons involved in the study was avoided. All information collected is subject to complete confidentiality. The information was collected and preserved with the full responsibility of the researchers. The results have been made known only for the strict purposes of this study alone.

Validity

The study guarantees a high content validity, while attempting to include representative issues of the school dropout phenomenon and categorizes them according to the findings of former research on this issue. The non-probability sampling strategy has made it difficult to gather representative data for the population. Nevertheless, a comparative analysis of the results between dropout samples and non-dropout or at-risk samples has provided more room for generalization.

The majority of the measurements in this study were gained through the reporting of students, parents and their teachers. This strategy has advantages and disadvantages. As for the factors related to the pre-dropout period, it is possible that information has been distorted in the person's memory, or that the selective memory has worked only to recall information that supports its own convictions and suppressing what does not. It is likely that interviewers and teachers might have had difficulty in rating the answers according to the possibilities of "usually", "sometimes", and "rarely/never". This rating was used because of the limited time to conduct the interviews. It is likely also that the three-point rating may not cover the possible range of responses. Nevertheless, the study did use the method of triangulation in order to ensure data validity.

Some students had dropped out of school in either 1997 or 1998 and in some cases the teacher who responded on his/her behalf had not been his/her teacher. This could create less reliability in the student data. However, this percentage of the sample is quite small (3.5) and does not significantly affect the data validity.

The data was collected by a trained team of interviewers, who, as former teachers or education experts, are familiar with the students' and parents' way of thinking. They were selected from the same areas where the interviews took place, which facilitated confidence building during the interview.

Interviewers reported that some interviews were conducted in the presence of other persons. Nevertheless, children did not hesitate to express themselves in front of their parents, even in cases where the responsibility for dropping out of school was placed on their parents. On the other hand, interviewers reported higher response resistance from the parents. In different cases, there was a deviation in the number of responses given by each respondent.

Results

Dropout predictors

Individual effects

Among individual effects preceding dropping out of school, we assessed the following in this research study: aggressiveness, disordered attitude and character during schooling, behavior towards teachers and peers, violation of school regulations, smoking and/or use of drugs, child's interest and motivation towards school, involvement in class, child's belief that school guarantees a better future, satisfaction in academic results, repeating a grade level, attendance, entertainment in school and sensitivity towards school failure.

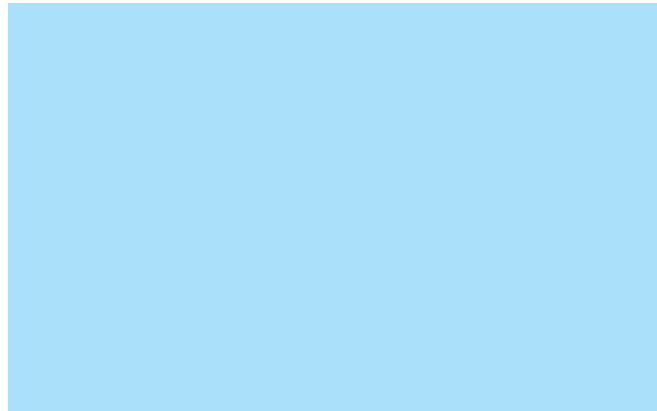
Aggressiveness was reported in a low percentage of dropout children (1.7) and was sometimes noted by teachers in 18.3% of students. In 74.4% of the dropout cases, teachers thought that students were not aggressive (see table 2). However, the reported number of aggressive boys is higher than that of aggressive girls. There exists no relation between parental alcoholism and child aggressiveness.

As for disordered attitude and character, teachers reported slightly higher numbers compared to aggressiveness (see table 2). There were twice as many boys than girls reported as having a disordered character. Aggressiveness did correlate positively with disordered attitude during schooling (0.451, $p < 0.01$) (see table 10).

There were twice as many boys than girls reported as having a disordered character.

Children expressed to be satisfied in their teachers' behavior in 58.8% of the cases.

Sixty four percent of the children reported that they behaved decently with teachers during schooling. 24.6% of them reported that it did not happen all the time and 2.3% admit that they were never good with any of their teachers (see table 2). Teachers reported that 69% of the dropout students had not had any conflicts with them, 17.6% stated that disagreements were rarely reported and 1.7% said that disagreement were frequent (table 2). The answers from teachers and students on disagreements significantly correlate, although the relation is not particularly strong (0.138 ($p < 0.05$)). Children expressed to be satisfied in their teachers' behavior in 58.8% of the cases. It was reported that 4% were very dissatisfied, while 28.2% stated that the teachers' behavior was only sometimes good (see table 3). Boys were twice as likely as girls to have disagreements with their teachers. This finding is supported in reports from both the teachers and students (tables 4-5, annex 4)



Disagreements between dropout children with school peers were reported by the dropouts themselves and their teachers. The highest percentage (47.8%) was noted in those children who never had had disagreements with their peers, followed by 41.2% who sometimes had disagreements. Only 2.7% reported that they usually fought with friends. The children's answers correlated positively, but not strongly with the teachers' answers (0.205 , $p < 0.01$). The tendency to have disagreements with school

peers based on teachers' responses was 3 times higher for boys than for girls, but was 4 times higher in the children's responses (tables 6-7, annex 4).

Only 4.7% of the dropouts admitted that they usually violated school regulations, 44.5% admitted they sometimes did, and 39.5% never did (table 2). There were more boys than girls who reported violation of school rules.

Teachers were asked if students smoked or took drugs. Drug use was reported in none of the cases. The teachers' and children's responses on smoking correlated positively, but the coefficient was not high (0.279, $p < 0.01$) (table 2). Nevertheless, the responses did not cover the same period because teachers responded about the period when the child was in school. Possession of guns was reported in only one case (0.3%).

According to teachers, 39.9% of the dropouts showed no interest towards school, 37.2% were somewhat interested and 22.3% were interested (table 2). Average motivation for learning among dropouts was reported in 6.3% of the cases, random motivation in 41.9% and low or no motivation was reported in more than half of the cases (50.5%). The number of girls with high motivation and satisfaction within school was slightly higher than that of boys.

Participation in class was reported as being frequent in 18.6% of the cases and rare in 44.9% of them. Only 35.5% participated randomly in class (see table 2). Participation and completion of class work correlated positively with one another. The student who did not participate in class was less likely to complete work related to the class.

It seems that there was a general opinion among both parents and children that attendance at school does not necessarily guarantee a better future (see table 8). There were more girls than boys who saw school as a way of guaranteeing a better future. The negative opinion that school doesn't guarantee a positive future was significantly higher in boys than in girls.



In most cases, the teachers reported very poor academic results of the dropout children. Good results were reported in only five cases (1.7%) and moderately good results in 49% (table 2). Among the dropout children, 39.2% reported that they did not feel satisfied with their own results in school, 31.9% felt very unsatisfied and 11.3% were satisfied (see table 2). There was no significant gender difference concerning the level of academic results (table 9, annex 4). More than half of the dropout children did not seem to worry about school failure. Worrisome feelings were somewhat present in 32.9% and frequent in 9% of the dropout children (table 2).

Children involved in the study had dropped out of school mainly in the fifth, seventh and sixth grade (graph 4). Thirty percent of the dropouts were students who repeated a grade level and 69% that were not. Fourteen percent of the students had regularly attended school, 45% somewhat regularly and 40% very irregularly.

Teachers reported that most of the dropout children only sometimes joined school peers in games (40.5%), 26.2% of them frequently joined games and 32.6% never joined (see table 2). According to the teachers, more than half of these children (53.8%) did not spend much time playing games. The majority of these children participated randomly in extracurricular activities, 27.2% never participated and 11.3% frequently did.

TABLE 10
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL EFFECTS
THAT PREDICT DROPOUT BEHAVIOR

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1										
2	.451**									
3	.378**	.346**								
4	.436**	.447**	.377**							
5	.496**	.435**	.306**	.463**						
6	.205**	.166**	.116*	.180**	ns					
7	-.249**	-.174**	-.229**	-.228**	-.185**	-.148*				
8	-.143**	-.123**	ns	ns	-.140*	ns	.402**			
9	-.162**	-.116**	ns	ns	ns	-.165**	.454**	.507**		
10	-.117*	-.142*	ns	ns	ns	ns	.370**	.415**	.537**	
11	ns	-.126*	.117*	-.148*	ns	-.180**	.392**	.402**	.383**	.373**

- 1 Aggressive behavior
 2 Disordered attitude
 3 Character problems
 4 Disagreements with teachers
 5 Conflicts with school peers
 6 Violation of school rules
 7 Used to like school
 8 Motivation towards school
 9 Participating in the learning process
 10 Regular attendance
 11 Satisfactory academic performance

** Correlation is significant in the level 0.01 of significance

* Correlation is significant in the level 0.05 of significance

ns Non significant correlation

According to the teachers, 33.2% of the dropouts were usually sensitive while 44.5% only occasionally (see table 2). Girls were seen as more psychologically sensitive than boys were as reported by the teachers. Eighty three percent of the parents reported that their children did not have health problems, 11% reported such problems and 3.7% did not answer. Three percent of the interviewers reported that children were not in a good physical health, while 24% reported children were in a relatively good health.

Family effects

Thirty percent of the families of dropouts had migrated after 1990, while 68% had not. The mean number of children in those families was four ($\sigma = 1$). Sixty nine percent of the families had four or more children. Ninety three percent of the children had a mother and father, 5.6% had only the mother, 0.7% had only the father and 0.7% had no parent. Ninety two percent of the children lived with both parents, whereas 8% lived with one parent or grandparents. Five percent of the parents were divorced. Twenty percent of the parents had emigrated.

In the families of dropout children, usually one member was employed ($\sigma = 1$). In 21% of those families no one worked, in 56% only one family member works, in 16.6% two persons work and in 3% of the cases three persons work. More than three persons were employed in 2.3% of the families. Fifty eight percent of the families reported that their monthly incomes were less than ten thousand lek. Twenty-six percent of them reported incomes of up to 20 thousand lek, and only 7.3% reported that their incomes were more than 20 thousand lek. Thirty five percent of the families do receive social assistance, while 65% do not receive social assistance. Forty three percent of the parents say their housing is sufficient for the family, whereas 55.5% do not think that their housing is sufficient.

Regarding the dropout's fathers, 7.3% did not have any schooling, 6% had not completed basic education, 73% had completed basic education, 10.5% had completed high education and 0.7% had a university education. For the dropout's mothers, 13.3% had no education, 5% had not completed basic education, 77% had completed basic education, 3% had high education and 0.3% had a university education.

Fifty eight percent of the families reported that their monthly incomes were less than ten thousand lek.

Fifty four percent of the fathers were employed, while 44% were not employed. Seventeen percent of mothers were employed, whereas 82% were not employed. The most common jobs of dropout children's fathers were construction workers, farmers, guards and commercialists. The most common positions for mothers were as farm workers, cleaners, commercialists or other workers.

Concerning having conversations with their parents, 34.2% of dropout children responded that they do not engage in conversation with their parents. Twenty six point six percent responded that they rarely converse with their parents and 17.6% report that they frequently converse with their parents (table 11).

In most cases, there was no report of alcoholism in the families of dropout children. Alcohol abuse from family members was reported in only 11% of the cases.

Teachers and students alike responded to questions about the existence of family problems. It was found that there was no significant correlation between their answers. However, it was noted that more teachers reported problems in dropouts families than dropout children did (table 12).

According to parents' responses, in 58.8% of the families of dropout children no parent had dropped out of school. However, in 40.5% of the families at least one parent had dropped out. In 14.3%, neither parent had completed a basic education (table 13).

Parents reported that they agreed with the child to dropout in 34.6% of the cases. 45.8% reported they did not agree, while 17.9% did not respond to the question. The children's answers positively correlated with those of parents on this issue, although there is no high correlation coefficient.¹ The percentage of children who reported that parents did agree with their dropping out from school is significantly higher than that of

Dropping out of school to emigrate

G.H. is a 13-year-old boy from Postriba of Dragoç in the Shkodra district. Two years ago, he dropped out of school to go to United Kingdom. Three months later, he came back, but never again went back to school. Now he "assists his father with several tasks" as he says. He is convinced that school is of no use and that he will leave again to be with his brother in England. His father says that they have tried to send him several times as an emigrant and will try again...

¹ Pearson correlation coefficient (0.124) is significant in the 0.05 level of significance.

Dropout parent, dropout child

F.Gj is a 14-year-old boy from Kamza in the Tirana district. He left school when he was in the fifth grade. Both parents have not completed a basic education. His father works as a guard, while his mother is unemployed. They have six children in the family and live in very difficult housing and economic conditions.

parents admitting it (table 14). It seems that parents are more likely to agree for girls than for boys to drop out of school (tables 15-16).

Thirty percent of dropout children reported that their parents were never interested if he/she did his homework, 45.8% reported that parents did show interest sometimes and 12.6% of parents were usually interested. The children reported that 60.1% never received help from their parents in completing their homework, while 5.3% reported that they frequently received help from their parents (see table 17).

TABLE 17
PARENTS INTEREST TO CHILD EDUCATION

	Parents showed interest in his/her homework		Parents helped him/her to study	
	Nr.	%	Nr.	%
Usually	38	12.6	16	5.3
Sometimes	138	45.8	87	28.9
Never	100	33.2	181	60.1
No response	17	5.6	12	4.0
Total	293	97.3	296	98.3

More than half of the dropout children reported that their parents only sometimes met with their teachers. On the other hand, teachers reported even lower numbers of parents communicating with them. The teachers reported that 33.6% did not have good communication with the parents of dropout children, while 28.2% of them reported they did have good communication (table 18, annex 2).

Peer effects

The mean number of peers of dropout children is three ($\sigma = 2$). The children reported that 20.6% reported four or more best friends, 24% had three, 33% had two best friends, 14% only one friend and 2% no friends.

Thirty-six percent of children report that their peers were at the same age as they were, 48% report that their peers were almost same age and about 10% reported their peers were quite older than they were.

About 29% of dropouts reported that all their peers attend school, 40% reported that only some of their peers attend school, and 26.6% reported that none of their peers attend school. Four percent of dropouts reported that all their peers are employed, 26% reported that only some of them are employed and 62.5% reported that none of their peers are employed. School attendance and employment negatively correlate with each other ($-0.310, p < 0.01$).

Fifty five percent of dropouts reported that they maintain infrequent contact with school friends, 11.3% reported they have frequent contacts and 22.9% reported they no longer have contact with school friends (table 19).

Zero point three percent of teachers reported that the child could be involved in a gang or delinquency. Only 1.7% was unsure of the correct answer, while 94% reported that the child never engaged in either group.

School effect

School effect is assessed by the following four factors: school organization, setting and physical environment, wellbeing of the children and classroom activities.

School organization

Almost half of schools had a plan for improving facilities and services, while 32% of them did not have one. The majority of schools (86%) did have regulations, which are known by administration, teachers, students and parents. Sixty six percent of the teachers work in a team and collaborate with one another. Only 24% of schools in this study reported having a student government, which almost always functions. Just 8.5% of schools in the study reported that they did not have a school board or other school-family body to support school activities. On

Engaging in deviant groups

E.P. is a 12-year-old boy from Lundra district of Tirana. He regularly had problems with attendance and was disinterested in school. His parents rarely communicated with teachers. According to the teacher and his parents, he was engaged in a deviant group of peers. For the past two years, he has been involved with four problematic friends who are older than he is. E.P admits that he did not like to study and that he frequently violated school rules. He is unsure of what qualities he has as a person or what will happen to him in the future.

Only 24% of schools in this study reported having a student government, which almost always functions.

the other hand, 60% of the schools that have a similar board declared that this board functions regularly.

Setting and physical environment

Sixty six percent of schools had comfortable classrooms, with appropriate temperature and air conditioners. Hygiene and organization were found in 45% of the schools that participated in this study. In 62% of schools, the gardens were clean and did not risk the lives of the children. Appropriate space needed for games and rest was found in 66% of schools. Working toilets were found in 45% of schools. A drinking water system that regularly functions was present in 47% of schools. In 70% of schools, each student had his/her own desk and chair. Only in 1/3 of schools could the furniture be moved to facilitate group work. In general, it was reported that the facilities of school were well maintained and repaired (60% of schools).

School distance

The house of H.B is more than one-hour distance from the school of Drisht in the Postriba community of Shkodra. For this reason, he was always late to school and started having many absences. "He had many interruptions, thus he decided not to go to school any more", says his mother..

Wellbeing of the children

A health program for children functions in 10% of the school and in 40% of the schools, children have recreational activities available during breaks. In 40% of schools, it was reported that teachers regularly participate in the activities with their children. In 79% of the schools, it was noted that children are treated well. It was noted that the schools give great importance to children's rights in education. In 53% of the schools, this is a regular operation, while in 45% this rarely happens.

Classroom activities

The use of group work and individual work in classroom activities was reported as being occasionally present in 51% of the schools, while 42.5% of those frequently use it. In 51% of the cases, teachers motivated the students by asking questions, seeking information and encouraging critical reasoning, whereas 42.6% did this less frequently. In 53% of the schools, teachers regularly supported and led students' work and 40.4% did this less frequently. Library books were used frequently in 17% of cases, 25.5% were rarely used and 57% were rarely or never used. School material was used by teachers in 27% of cases, although 51% rarely used them.



Library books are frequently used in 17% of the cases, while 25.5% stated infrequent use and 57% never used them. School materials are used by teachers in 27% of the cases, whereas 51% rarely use the materials.

Blood feud as a drop out predictor

B.B is a 12 year old boy from Shtoji i Ri in the district of Shkodra. He never had any problems with attendance or behavior. The teacher said B.B participated in the class and completed school tasks, although the results were not at the maximum. Nevertheless, his family began a blood feud with another family. For this reason, B.B left school in the fifth grade and is now isolated at home. Sometimes, B.B feels upset and has nightmares. However, he still has faith in his own qualities and hopes that in the future to join the law enforcement personnel.

Reported dropout causes

In table 21, the dropout cases appear as reported by the teacher, parent and the dropout child themselves. The responses from the teachers and parents correlated positively (0.973, $p < 0.01$). The responses from the teachers and students correlate positively with each other (0.820, $p < 0.01$). The responses from the parents correlate positively with those of the children (0.749, $p < 0.01$).

Dropout consequences

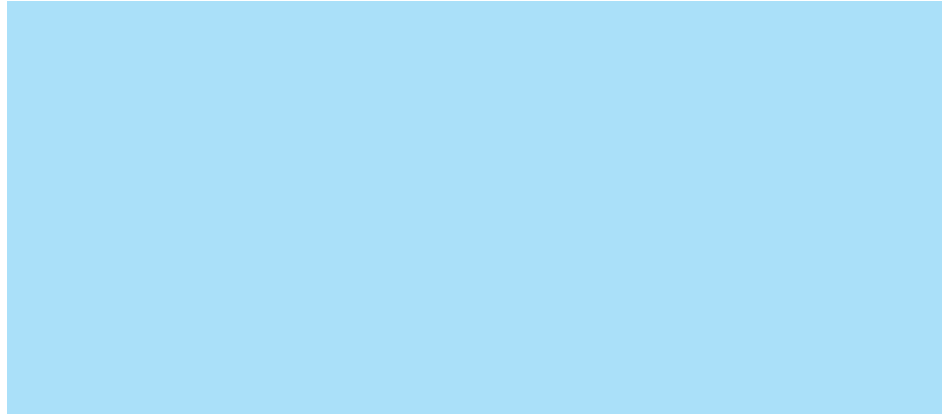
Employment

Nineteen percent (57 cases) of dropout children reported that they were employed, while 70.4% did not report that they were employed. Almost 31% of the children, who work, work up to 4 hours per day, 25.6% work 5 to 6 hours and 34% work 8 to 12 hours per day. The study also found that more boys are employed than girls are. 5.7% of children reported they worked while they attended school, 57% reported they did not and 9% do not respond to the question. Children who are employed are more likely to come from families with four or more children (see table 22). The most frequent jobs among dropouts were peddlers, construction workers, car service workers in urban and suburban areas, farmers and woodcutters in rural areas.

Psychological status

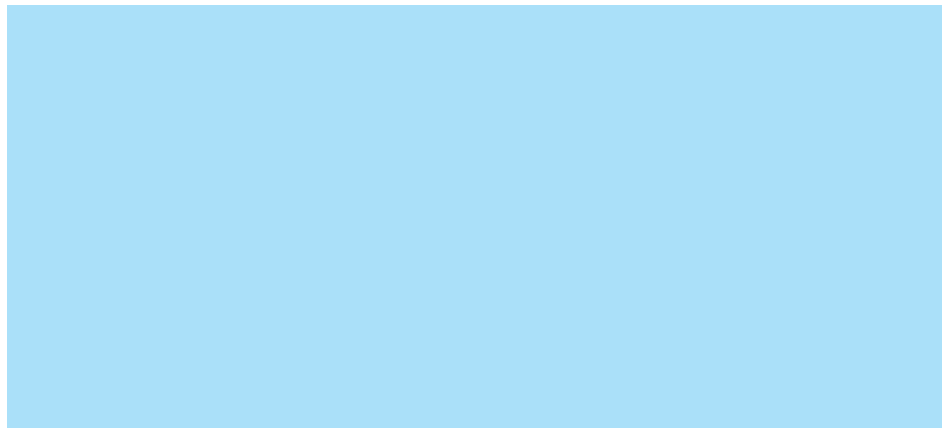
Frequent upset feelings were reported in 23.9% of cases. More than half of dropouts reported that they sometimes feel upset and 19.3% rarely had upset feelings. There was no significant gender differences found in the study regarding upset feelings: boys and girls were equally upset. Regarding nightmares, 43.9% of the children reported they do not have nightmares, 35.9% reported that they sometimes

have them and 10.6% reported that nightmares are frequent. Headaches were reported frequently in 35 cases (11.6%) and rarely in 113 cases (37.5%). Forty point nine percent of the children reported that they never had a headache (table 23).

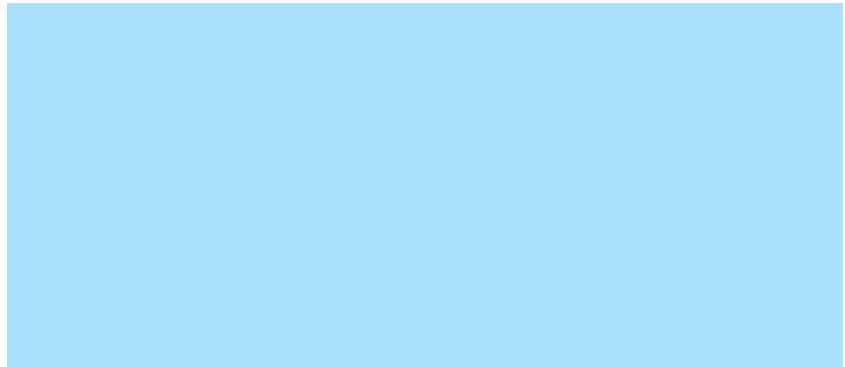


Self-esteem

Children report feelings of competence in 43.5% of cases and are unsure about this in 22.9% of the cases. However, the possession of good qualities and self-satisfaction were reported in fewer cases and the uncertainty about those is slightly higher. There was no significant gender difference in feelings of self-satisfaction (table 24).



Fifteen percent of the children reported that they know what they want to be in the future, 37.5% were unsure, 32% reported that they did not know and 14% did not answer. It seems that there are no significant gender differences concerning the insecure feelings about future professions (table 25).



Discussion

The discussion of the results is based on the comparative analysis among the data collected from the three groups of children (dropouts, at-risk for dropout, non-dropouts), as well as from the perspectives of the child, parent and teacher. However, the comparison was not possible for all variables in this study.

Dropout predictors

Individual effects

The aggressive behavior before the child dropped out of school was assessed through the teachers' impressions. It was assumed that the later observed the children's behavior in the environments where they were freer, such as at play or on breaks and therefore could provide valid information. Although, former studies have discovered that aggressive behavior can be a dropout predictor, this was not supported by the results found in this study. The fact that aggressiveness is reported at higher levels in boys could be explained through the "culturally based expectation that boys are more likely to be violent than girls are"¹ This excludes the possibility that boys who drop out of school are particularly aggressive, as long as no comparison data are available.

Disordered attitudes and character problems are generally not dominant among

¹ ME Clark. *Aggressivity and violence: an alternative theory of human nature.* (2003.)

dropout children. On the other hand, gender differences are significant, which could support the explanation for why there are more male dropouts. The results show that among the responses from teachers about aggressiveness, disordered behavior and about character problems, there is a significant positive correlation. This shows that these factors are interrelated; therefore, with the increase of one, the increase of the other is expected. Conversely, the fact that the two latter factors are encountered in almost half of dropout children could give rise to the assumption that a potential relation with school dropouts exists and could cause us to think of them as predicting factors.

The child's relationships within school have shown that it might be one of the factors that could influence the decision to drop out from school. According to the results of this study, the frequency of disagreements with teachers is not a dominating factor, since only one fourth of the dropout children reported this factor. However, the frequency of arguments is three times more frequent in children who dropped out than in children who attend school. This remains at the same level for at-risk children. Satisfaction from their teachers' behavior was reported 1.5 times more frequently in non-dropout children compared to dropout and at-risk children. This would indicate that disagreements with teachers could affect the decision to drop out.

Based on reporting from teachers, disagreements with school peers were not a dominating factor among dropouts, since they reported this in less than one fourth of the cases. There was no difference among the number of children who reported disagreements with school peers and among those who did not. The difference was not significant compared to children who attend school. However, children at risk of dropping out reported higher levels of disagreements with school peers compared to actual dropouts. This is possible because school life is occurring in real-time for at-risk children rather than for dropouts. This could cause us to consider disagreements with peers as a predicting factor.

The breaking of school rules seems to predict drop out behavior. This was reported by half of the children who dropped out, especially boys. Violations were 1.5 times

more frequent in dropouts than in non-dropouts, but were 1.5 times less frequent in at-risk children. Nevertheless, the study did not assess the rule violation *per se*, but the perception that the child has about the violation. It is possible that the child understands more or less what a “violation” is *per se*, based on school rules.

Dropouts stated that they smoked more frequently than was reported by the teachers in the questionnaire about the dropouts. This inconsistency could be because the teacher does not have information about the child’s behavior after dropping out.

Interest in school was reported at different levels among dropout children. Lack of interest was, however, more frequently cited. Dropouts who did have some interest in school were reported at almost the same frequency. However, it was unclear if the teachers interpreted interest in the positive sense of the word or just avoided extreme answer options to the question. Low motivation for learning and poor or lack of participation in the class seemed to be qualities dominant among dropout children; therefore, we could assume that they are predicting factors of dropping out. These qualities were expressed by the lack of respect towards obligations implied in the class.

The belief that school guarantees a better future is 3 times more frequent among non-dropouts compared with dropouts and 2.7 times more compared with at-risk children. This means that, children who decided to leave school held the underlying belief that school is not valuable. The belief that attending school does not guarantee a positive future was expressed in same frequency between dropouts and their parents. On the other hand, parents who think that school could guarantee a better future were almost twice as high as children who believe this. Probably, as an individual ages and gains more life experience, they begin to realize how important school is in building a better life.

Poor school results were frequently reported among dropouts. According to the results of children, most of the children, who did abandon school, had poor results and more than half of them did not consider it a problem. On the other hand, satisfaction with their own school results among non-dropouts was almost 5 times

Children who decided to leave school held the underlying belief that school is not valuable.

A typical dropout case

G.M., a 14 year old boy from Trush in the Shkodra district, did not attend school regularly, did not participate in the class and showed poor motivation in learning. According to his teacher, he did not like school. The teacher says that G.M.'s parents had a low educational level and therefore, did not understand the importance of school. "Engaging their son in agricultural tasks was a priority for them", she said. G.M. dropped out from school in the fifth grade. He admits that he did not study systematically. His parents did not show an interest in his studies and in some cases, he broke the school rules. However, according to him, the rough behavior of his teacher was one of the reasons that contributed to him dropping out. The income of the G.M.'s family is less than 10000 lek per month. His father is a mason, while his mother is unemployed. According to his father, G.M. was not motivated in school. He also admits that the teacher did not behave well towards him, which upset the boy. Now G.M. assists the family by working on the farm. He has few friends who do not attend school. G.M. is unsure about his future. On the other hand, he does not believe that attendance at school would guarantee a positive future.

higher compared to dropouts, but 7 times higher compared with at-risk children. It must be emphasized that non-dropout children showed high academic achievement. The non-dropout students selected to participate in the study were selected via non-random sampling and therefore, did not allow for children to be selected from every level of academic achievement.

Non-participation in school life has been defined by other studies as a predicting factor for dropping out. In this study, it seems that non-dropouts are involved in extracurricular activities five times more than dropouts were and 3.5 times more than at-risk children. Teachers reported that dropouts were involved inconsistently in entertainment with school peers during their schooling.

Repeating a grade was present in one third of the dropouts, which allows for repetition to be added to the predicting factors for dropping out. At the same time, problems with attendance were reported in the majority of dropouts. This has been supported by other studies.

Health problems did not seem to be dominant among dropouts, although the number of children with poor physical health, as reported by interviewers, was higher than that those reported by parents. As a result, health is not a predicting factor.

Family effects

Although one third of the dropout child's families had migrated recently, there seemed to be no direct relationship between migration and dropping out. How-

ever, migration could be seen as a factor, which is related to other predicting factors such as economic problems that follow migration, parents' unemployment and/or employment of the child, adaptation problems, etc.

The majority of these families are large with four or more children. This exposes them to an increase in economic and social problem and impacts the decision to have the child leave school without receiving an education. In some of these cases, this is done in order to save on school expenses, to employ the child or to send the child abroad.

In the majority of the cases, the families of these children have only one member working and earning money with a monthly income not exceeding 10 thousand lek. Social assistance is provided in more than one third of the cases. One fifth of the parents of these children emigrated, which supports the idea that most dropouts have a low economic status. The majority of the parents expressed that the living conditions were insufficient. Problems with divorce and being raised by a single parent do not seem to be a dropout predictor since this is less frequent.

The majority of the fathers and mothers of these children completed only basic education, which supports the thesis that dropout children are from families with low educational backgrounds. Fathers' employment was three times higher than that of the mothers of the dropouts. However, a considerable portion reported that they are unemployed. Again, this only adds to the difficult economic situation that these families face.

More than one third of the dropouts do not usually converse with their parents. This number is three times higher than in non-dropouts and almost the same with at-risk children. Lack of communication with parents could be a predicting factor for dropping out.

Since most of the cases did not report the presence of alcoholism in the families of the dropouts, we cannot assume that it is a predicting factor. However, comparison groups

were not available for this study; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized. Family problems in general, such as conflicts, were reported in dropout children five times more frequently than in non-dropouts and 1.5 more frequently than in at-risk children. Teachers report the number even higher. It could be assumed that dropping out might be preceded by the existence of family problems.

Parents who dropped out seem to allow for the supposition that their children will be more likely to drop out themselves. This is supported by the results of this study because in a considerable number of families at least one of the parents dropped out from school. It seems that having a father who dropped out increases the risk of a male child dropping out, but not with a female child (table 27). This can be explained because boys are more likely to identify with their fathers.

Less than half of the parents reported they did not agree with the child dropping out. Meanwhile, children reported 1.5 times more frequently that parents did agree. This could show that the child's obligation to the parent does create a potential cause for dropping out of school.

Children who dropped out are less likely to have an extended peer circle and therefore do not have a more active social life.

Parental interest in schooling is 6 times more frequent in non-dropout children than in dropout children and 4.7 times more frequent than in at-risk children. Parents assisting children in studying was reported to be twice as high in non-dropout children compared with dropouts and was 1.7 higher in at-risk children. Dropouts and at-risk children reported that their parents met their teachers 5 times less than non-dropouts did. It should be noted that teachers reported frequent disagreements with the parents of dropouts. This shows that parental involvement in a child's schooling can be a predictor of the child's positive attitude towards school. The more the parent communicates with the child's teacher and shows an interest in the child's education, the less likely it is that the child will drop out in the future.

Peer effect

The results do support the idea that children who dropped out are less likely to have an extended peer circle and therefore do not have a more active social life. The

percentage breakout for children who reported that they had more than two friends was 45% for dropouts, 90% for non-dropouts and 87% for at-risk children. Hanging out with coevals was twice as frequent for non-dropouts compared to dropouts and 1.5 more frequent than in at-risk children. Dropouts reported their number of friends who attend school was three times less than that of non-dropouts. Dropouts have 1.5 times more friends who are employed than non-dropouts do. This shows that the peer effects could predict dropout behavior. The higher the number of dropouts with employed friends, the higher the likelihood of dropping out. The fact that dropouts do not keep contacts with school peers explains why their peer number is lower. At the same time, it could be interpreted as a form of refusal or avoidance. Gangs or deviant group involvement is not a predictor of dropping out.

School effects

There are several facts cited in the study that support the idea of insufficient organization within the schools. Almost half of them did not have a clearly defined plan to improve the facilities, environments or services. This indicates that the situation will remain unchanged for an indefinite period of time. Student government is lacking in most, which could allow for poor representation of student interests in the school body. In addition, the school council (board) does not function in 40% of the schools. This means that parents and the community are not involved in school life.

The issues of classroom conditions, such as the number of desks, space, climate, hygiene and organization are not represented at appropriate levels. The drinking water system and unusable toilets reveals further problems.

The fact that children in most schools do not have an opportunity to participate in recreational activities could be related to the low level of satisfaction in school. At the same time, teachers are not involved in children's activities, what establishes a hierarchy between them. Health programs are lacking in most of schools. Proper care for the physical wellbeing of each child is therefore nonexistent. The observers (coordinators) stated that the children are treated decently in most schools and that children's rights are generally encouraged and promoted. However, these observations should be taken with reserva-

Student government is lacking in most, which could allow for poor representation of student interests in the school body.

A considerable number of schools did not include group work activities, encourage critical thinking, elicit questions and allow for independent inquiry of information or regularly lead student work.

tion because they were spontaneous and non-systematic.

Concerning the methodology aspects, it seems that a considerable number of schools did not include group work activities, encourage critical thinking, elicit questions and allow for independent inquiry of information or regularly lead student work. The fact that teachers do not incorporate the use of school library books means that schools have a limited library or do not have updated books. At the same time, it seems that the material teachers use, are not resources provided by the school.

These factors contribute in creating a partially functioning and restricting learning environment. In these conditions, without the standards of infrastructure, teaching and learning methodology and student assessment, the school environment may encourage dropouts. However, the study does not provide comparison data on this assumption.

Dropout reported causes

There exists a strong positive correlation among the causes of dropping out as reported by teachers and parents. These answers can then be considered determining factors. However, the correlation coefficient is likely to decrease between adult (teacher and parent) and child responses most probably because adults tend to modify reality during the response process.

Poor economic conditions seem to be the main predicting factor for dropping out of school according to teachers and parents. Lack of willingness on the part of the child and lack of parental obligation seems to be the next dropout factor. According to children, lack of willingness and interest in school are the main reason for dropping out. Parental obligation is reported in higher numbers by children than by parents themselves.

The above explanations provided by teachers, parents and children constitute value judgments. In this study, the economic conditions could be the simplest factor to declare. Nevertheless, based on the results, the economic situation is not the only significant factor that precedes dropping out.

Dropout consequences

The study assessed some individual conditions that result from dropping out. These factors are related to social life as well as the psychological status of the child. The comprehensive examination of the context of these factors was not a prior objective of this study. Alternatively, only immediate implications of dropping out of school were investigated and not the long-term implications, such as employment and future profession. In this case, a longitudinal study would be appropriate.

The number of dropout children who are employed is 6 times higher than that of non-dropouts and 3 times higher than that of at-risk children. This means that employment is one of the potential consequence for the dropout, but it is not excluded as a preceding factor. The employment of the children is a complete violation of the Labor Code of the Republic of Albania. According to this code, the employment of children under the age of 16 is forbidden. The most common jobs for dropout children are peddlers, construction workers and car service workers in urban and suburban areas, while farmers and woodcutters in rural areas. These jobs do not provide a stimulus for those aspects of mental development, which are socially accepted as essential. They engage children in laborious and tiring activities since they require difficult physical exertion and provide poor health conditions. Conversely, they shape certain skills such as, selling and service skills, orientation skills and physical and technical skills. Generally, these children know the locations where they can make the most profits, tend to smoke early, know street life tricks, and attach to and imitate adult groups, especially in urban and suburban areas. Based on this perspective, this is the only alternative for these children and could be seen as a coping mechanism for the life given them. In the study, only those kinds of jobs that are socially acceptable were reported, such as those mentioned above. On the other hand, there is a contingent of children who tend to engage in non-legal activity and this increases the potential for delinquency. According to sources from the Public Order Ministry, about 18% of authors of crime have not completed a basic education.²

Children, who abandon school for blood feud reasons, express the willingness to become law enforcement personnel in the future.

² As cited by Ylli Çabiri e tji, *Raporti i Zhvillimit Njerëzor në Shqipëri*. (Tiranë, 1998.) p. 46.

Upset feelings were reported twice as frequently among dropouts than non-dropouts or at-risk children. It is not by chance that children not attending school do feel upset. In school, the child has an opportunity to establish contacts and relationships participate in several activities, become part of a bigger group and more. Spending time with school peers and in extracurricular activities is sufficient to avoid monotony and dissatisfaction in the life of the child. There were no differences among dropouts and non-dropouts related to nightmares and headaches.

Behaviors like drug use or possession of guns was very rare or non-existent among the three groups of children included in this study. Smoking is infrequent among non-dropouts (less than 2%). However, smoking is significantly higher among at-risk children (18.3%) and in children who have dropped out (18.7%). This means that children who have dropped out or are at-risk are more likely to smoke.

Non-dropouts report feelings of competence 1.5 times more frequently than dropouts do or at-risk children do. Non-dropouts also believe that they possess good qualities 1.6 times more frequently than dropouts do and at-risk children do.

Self-satisfaction is reported twice as frequently among non-dropouts compared to dropouts and at risk children. This shows that self-esteem is present among children who attend school rather than among those who do not. However, this should not necessarily be considered a dropout consequence, but rather a predictor. It is possible that low self-esteem could be both a preceding factor and a consequence of dropping out.

Dropout children possessed self-confidence 3.5 times less than non-dropouts did when considering their future profession and 1.4 less than at-risk children did. This could express a lack of confidence for their future compared to non-dropout co-evals.

Conclusions

Based on the discussion of the results of this study, several conclusions could be drawn in relation to the predictors and consequences of dropping out of school. It is important to note that a considerable part of the conclusion section is not only valid for actual dropouts, but additionally for at-risk children. The later, in some aspects have demonstrated a higher probability towards predicting factors such as: disagreements with school peers, violation of school rules, smoking and dissatisfaction with academic achievements.

What is more likely to CAUSE a child to drop out from school

The results of this study discovered that a child who has decided to leave school is more likely to:

- Reveal disordered attitudes and character problems during schooling;
- Have frequent disagreements with teachers and school peers;
- Violate school rules;
- Smoke;
- Show lack of interest in school, poor motivation in learning and lack of involvement in school life;
- Dissatisfaction with school achievements;
- Lack of involvement in school activities and do not feel incorporated into the school environment;

- Repeat grade levels;
- Have frequent attendance problems;
- Have parents with basic education and/or who have dropped out;
- Have unemployed parents;
- Have parents who show poor interest in school progress, who do not assist him/her in studying and who do not meet with his/her teachers.

The family of the child who has decided to drop out is likely to:

- Be large and have many children;
- Suffer from unemployment and low monthly income;
- Possess poor or ineffective living conditions;
- Have communication problems among members;
- Encourage and often enforce the child to leave school.

The school that generates dropouts is more likely to have:

- Poor organization;
- Poor community participation;
- A non functioning school board or student government;
- Inappropriate conditions and infrastructure;
- Unavailable health programs;
- Lack of incorporation in the learning/teaching process and recreation activities;
- Difficulties in teaching techniques and methodologies;
- Poor teacher development;
- Poorly motivated teachers.

What is NOT likely to cause a child to drop out:

The child who drops out is not inclined to:

- Show aggressive behavior during schooling;
- Have poor health;
- Have a family which has migrated;
- Have divorced parents or parents who are emigrants;
- Have alcoholism in the family;
- Engage in gangs or deviant groups.

What is likely to happen to a dropout child

A child who has dropped out from school is more likely to:

- believe that school does not guarantee a better future;
- be employed in order to help the family;
- be more upset than children who attend school;
- have a lower self-esteem than children who attend school;
- have fewer peers than do his/her coevals who attend school;
- hang out with older friends, who have dropped out from school and who are employed;
- have disconnected relationships with school peers;
- be less self-confident and less confident about his/her future than a non-dropout.

Recommendations

Hereby, some recommendations are provided in order to encourage children to stay in school and to decrease the number of dropouts.

General level

- 1.To accelerate implementation of the National Strategy for poverty reduction in accordance with the Millennium Objectives.
- 2.To provide assistance to rural and suburban families.
- 3.To set and apply sustainable systems for data registry at the country level. To set policies which allow schools to have a data managing system which gives basic data and standards on all students. To develop and implement a system for data gathering on dropouts and use this in order to identify at-risk children.
- 4.To carry out research studies which informs teachers and the public about factors that lead a student to drop out. To treat dropping out of school as a consequence of a dynamic interaction of factors such as: student's characteristics, school context and family and peer effects.
- 5.To ensure state and local policies which examine the consequences of success and nonsuccess of the school in performing their job. These policies should hand over the responsibilities to schools through a system that identifies progress and lack of progress found in the schools.
- 6.To formulate curricula and teaching strategies which are specific to at-risk

children.

7. To build wider collaboration links with the community aiming at at-risk children services.

Specific

1. To intervene early in order to prevent dropouts. The timing of intervention is critical. To identify and focus on potential dropouts and check their schooling progress.
2. To train school staff to identify at-risk children. To select teachers who are interested in working with at-risk children. To select school staff based not only on subject area competence, but also on the quality and willingness to ensure a caring and respectful climate that responds to the child's needs.
3. To encourage and support programs which motivate parents to participate in all levels of their child's education. The dropout problem is a community, economic and social problem. Families and community organizations should work together to develop a collaborative program for the prevention of dropouts.
4. To educate children so that they meet the demands of a developing society, and not simply to search for employment in the job market requiring few skills. To extend the personal viewpoints of students in the selection of future education and careers.
5. To review policies and school procedures related to teacher-student communication, discipline, attendance, suspension, poor academic results and repeated grade levels.
6. To implement strategies to teach children basic academic skills. To reassess educational programs to meet the actual interests and long-term social and economic interest of the student.
7. To create a positive atmosphere in the classroom and school. The student should feel part of the school and view it as a supportive environment that encourages the individual and cares about his/her success. Children at-risk of dropping out need positive reinforcement of their performance.

It is obvious that there is no quick and simple solution to the dropout issue. Dropout children have varied characteristics and need different programs to meet their needs. In order to be effective, programs should pay attention to at-risk children. They should be convinced that they are able to be successful in school. Curriculum should include basic educational skills, social skills and experience-based skills. Moreover, the interrelated causes and various problems related to dropping out need comprehensive models, which are based on the community and offer multi-component services and programs.

At-risk children should be identified at a younger age and be continuously supported. Success in early classes decreases the possibility of dropping out. The key to reducing the dropout level is to help these children to not feel overwhelmed by feelings of alienation from school.

Not all the factors related to dropout reduction are manageable by the school. Solutions, too, are not achievable only by the school. This is a problem of national importance, which needs the attention of the society. It requires resources that go beyond the school and solutions should combine the efforts of students, parents, leaders, organizations, as well as authorities.

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Annex 1

Instruments

Teacher questionnaire

ID NO OF THE PUPIL: _____

- 1.Name of the dropout pupil: _____
- 2.Municipality: _____
- 3.City/village: _____
- 4.School (name) _____
- 5.Gender:F __ M__
- 6.Age: ____ years old
- 7.Dropout grade _____
- 8.Dropout academic year: _____-_____
- 9.Was a repetitive: yes __ no__
10. His/her attendance was
a) systematic b) somewhat disordered c) pretty disordered
11. Did the pupil show aggressive behavior?
a. usually b. sometimes c. never
12. Did the pupil have a disordered attitude?
a. usually b. sometimes c. never
13. Did s/he have a quite character?
a. usually b. sometimes c. never
14. Did s/he use drugs as far as you know?
a. usually b. sometimes c. never
15. Did s/he smoke as far as you know?

16. Was s/he in possession of an arm? a. usually b. sometimes c. never
17. Was s/he motivated to learning? a. usually b. sometimes c. never
18. Did s/he have disagreements with you or other teachers? a. usually b. sometimes c. never
19. Did s/he have disagreements with school peers? a. usually b. sometimes c. never
20. Did s/he have fun with school peers? a. usually b. sometimes c. never
21. Was s/he psychologically sensitive? a. usually b. sometimes c. never
22. Did s/he spend much time in entertainment? a. usually b. sometimes c. never
23. Did s/he participate in the class? a. usually b. sometimes c. never
24. Did s/he fulfill the classroom tasks? a. usually b. sometimes c. never
25. Were his/her results high? a. usually b. sometimes c. never
26. Did s/he get upset because of results? a. usually b. sometimes c. never
27. Did the parents communicate with you? a. usually b. sometimes c. never
28. Did you have effective communication with them? a. usually b. sometimes c. never
29. Do you think there were problems in the family? a. yes b. not sure c. no
30. Did the child engage in deviant groups? a. yes b. not sure c. no
31. Did s/he like school? a. yes b. not sure c. no

32. According to you, which were the reasons that influenced in the dropout of this child? Please, describe:

Interview with the dropout child

ID No of the student: _____

1. How many close friends do you hang out with? ____ friends
 2. Are you close friends of your same age?
 - a) yes
 - b) almost
 - c) no
 3. Do your close friends attend school?
 - a) all of them
 - b) some of them
 - c) none of them
 4. Are your close friends employed?
 - a) all of them
 - b) some of them
 - c) none of them
 5. How long have you hung out with these friends? _____ months
 6. Do you always listen to your friends' opinion?
 - a. usually
 - b. sometimes
 - c. never
 - d. no response
 7. Do you work?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
 - d. no response
 - 7.a If yes, what is your job: _____
 - 7.b How many hours per day you work: _____ hours
 - 7.c Have you been working during school?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
 - d. no response
 8. Do you sometimes feel upset?
 - a. usually
 - b. sometimes
 - c. never
 - d. no response
 9. Do you have nightmares?
 - a. usually
 - b. sometimes
 - c. never
 - d. no response
 10. Do you have headaches?
 - a. usually
 - b. sometimes
 - c. never
 - d. no response
 11. Do you think you have good qualities?*
- a. yes
- b. unsure
- c. no
- d. no response
12. Do you think you are competent?*- a. yes
- b. unsure
- c. no
- d. no response
13. Are you satisfied of yourself?*

- a. yes b. unsure c. no d. no response
14. Do you smoke?
a. usually b. sometimes c. never d. no response
15. Did you participate in extracurricular events?
a. usually b. sometimes c. never d. no response
16. Do you have contacts with your school peers?
a. usually b. sometimes c. never d. no response
17. Were you satisfied with your school grades?
a. yes b. somewhat c. no d. no response
18. Have you violated school rules?
a. usually b. sometimes c. never d. no response
19. Did you fight with your school peers?
a. usually b. sometimes c. never d. no response
20. Were you satisfied with teachers' behavior?
a. usually b. sometimes c. never d. no response
21. Were you nice at teachers?
a. usually b. sometimes c. never d. no response
22. Did your parents care about your study?
a. usually b. sometimes c. never d. no response
23. Did your parents help you out with studies?
a. usually b. sometimes c. never d. no response
24. Did your parents meet your teacher?
a. usually b. sometimes c. never d. no response
25. Did your parents agree with your dropout?
a. yes b. no d. no response
26. Who in the family did not agree with your leaving? _____
27. Did you have problems in the family during your leaving school?
a. yes b. no d. no response
28. Do you talk with your parents for your problems?
a. usually b. sometimes c. never d. no response
29. Do you believe school guarantees a better future?
a. yes b. don't know c. not at all d. no response

30. Why did you leave school? (*describe*) _____
31. Would you prefer to again attend school?
a. yes b. not sure c. no d. no response
32. If yes, what could be done about this according to you? (*describe*)

-
33. Do you know what would you like to become in the future?
a. yes b. not sure c. no d. no response
- 33.a If yes, what? _____
34. Interviewer's code: _____
35. Interview date: ____/____/____
36. Interview duration: _____ min
37. Did the child resist answering?
a. usually b. sometimes c. never
38. According to you the physical health of the child was:
a. good b. somehow good c. not good at all

Interview with the parent

- ID no of the student: _____
1. Person interviewed:
a) mother b) father c) grandparent d) other: _____
2. Child birthplace: _____
3. Family location: _____
4. Family has migrated after the '90s: a. yes b. no
5. Number of children in the family: 1__ 2__ 3__ 4__ 4<__
6. How many persons work in your family? ____ persons
7. What is your monthly family income (in lek):
a) Up to 10.000 leks b) 11.000-20.000 leks
c) 21.000-30.000 leks d) 31.000-.....leks
8. Your family receives social assistance: a. yes b. no
9. Is your housing appropriate?
a. yes b. no
10. Does the child have both parents?

- a. both b) only mother c) only father d) none
11. Do you live with both parents?
a. yes b. no
12. Are the parents divorced?
a. yes b. no
13. Has one of the parent emigrated?
a. yes b. no
14. The father's years of education:
0__ 8__ 12__ 16__ 16 <__
15. The mother's years of education:
0__ 8__ 12__ 16__ 16 <__
16. The father is employed:
a. yes b. no
16. a If yes, what is his profession: _____
17. Mother is employed:
a. yes b. no
17. a If yes, what is her profession: _____
18. Have the parents dropped out from school?
a. both b. father c. mother d. none e. no response
19. What were the reasons that he/she left school?
20. Did you agree with his/her dropout?
a) yes b) no c) no response
21. Does any member of the family use alcohol?
a) yes b) no c) no response
22. Has the child been in good health?
a) yes b) no c) no response
- 22.a If not, please explain why: _____
23. Do you believe that school guarantees a better future?
a) yes b) not sure c) no
24. Interviewers' code: _____
25. Interview date: _____/_____/_____
26. Interview duration: _____ min

Annex 2

Statistical tables

TABLE 1

THE ACADEMIC YEAR OF DROPOUT

Academic year	No.	%
1996-1997	2	.7
1997-1998	8	2.7
1998-1999	12	4.0
1999-2000	44	14.6
2000-2001	48	15.9
2001-2002	72	23.9
2002-2003	108	35.9
Total	294	97.7

TABLE 2
INDIVIDUAL EFFECTS PRECEDING DROPPING OUT

Individual effects	S/he was aggressive		Had a disordered attitude		Had character problems		Behaved decently with teachers		Behaved decently with teachers (teachers reporting)		Violated school rules		Had disagreements with school peers (student reporting)	
	Nr	%	Nr	%	Nr	%	Nr	%	Nr	%	Nr	%	Nr	%
Usually	5	1.7	21	7.0	37	12.3	192	63.8	208	69.1	14	4.7	8	2.7
Sometimes	55	18.3	97	32.2	79	26.2	74	24.6	53	17.6	134	44.5	124	41.2
Never	224	74.4	174	57.8	182	60.5	7	2.3	5	1.7	119	39.5	144	47.8
No response	—	—	—	—	—	—	18	6.0	—	—	28	9.3	16	5.3
Total	284	94.4	292	97.0	298	99.0	291	96.7	266	88.4	295	98.0	292	97.0
Individual effects	Had disagreements with school peers (teachers reporting)		S/he liked school		Was motivated in school		Took part in class		Completed class tasks		Results were satisfactory (student reporting)		Results were satisfactory (teacher reporting)	
	Nr	%	Nr	%	Nr	%	Nr	%	Nr	%	Nr	%	Nr	%
Usually	13	4.3	67	22.3	19	6.3	56	18.6	55	18.3	34	11.3	5	1.7
Sometimes	68	22.6	112	37.2	126	41.9	107	35.5	102	33.9	118	39.2	49	16.3
Never	190	63.1	120	39.9	152	50.5	135	44.9	139	46.2	96	31.9	229	76.1
No response	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	47	15.6	—	—
Total	271	90.0	299	99.3	297	98.7	298	99.0	296	98.3	295	98.0	283	94.0
Individual effects	Smokes (student reporting)		Used drugs (teacher reporting)		Had fun with school peers		Participated in activities		Became upset because of lack of success		Was psychologically sensitive		Health was good	
	Nr	%	Nr	%	Nr	%	Nr	%	Nr	%	Nr	%	Nr	%
Usually	11	3.7	—	—	79	26.2	34	11.3	27	9.0	100	33.2	249	82.7
Sometimes	45	15.0	—	—	122	40.5	160	53.2	99	32.9	134	44.5	—	—
Never	212	70.4	301	301	98	32.6	82	27.2	170	56.5	63	20.9	33	11.0
No response	20	6.6	—	—	—	—	12	4.0	—	—	—	—	12	4.0
Total	288	95.7	301	100	299	99.3	288	95.7	296	98.3	297	98.7	294	97.7

TABLE 4**DISAGREEMENTS WITH TEACHERS ACCORDING CHILD GENDER
(TEACHERS REPORTING)**

Gender	Disagreements with teachers			Total
	<i>Usually</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Never</i>	
Girl	1	15	101	117
Boy	4	38	107	149
Total	5	53	208	266

TABLE 5**BEHAVING GOOD TOWARD TEACHERS ACCORDING CHILD GENDER
(CHILDREN REPORTING)**

Gender	Behaved good toward teachers				Total
	<i>Usually</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>No response</i>	
Girl	105	21	3	3	132
Boy	87	53	4	15	159
Total	192	74	7	18	291

TABLE 6
DISAGREEMENTS WITH SCHOOL PEERS
 (TEACHERS REPORTING)

Gender	Had disagreements with school peers			Total
	<i>Usually</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Never</i>	
Girl	1	15	101	117
Boy	12	53	89	154
Total	13	68	190	271

TABLE 7
CONFLICTS WITH SCHOOL PEERS
 (CHILDREN REPORTING)

Gender	Conflicts with school peers				Total
	<i>Usually</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>No response</i>	
Girl	3	19	103	7	132
Boy	5	105	41	9	160
Total	8	124	144	16	292

TABLE 9
STUDENT RESULTS ACCORDING GENDER
 (TEACHERS REPORTING)

Gender	Had satisfactory results			Total
	<i>Usually</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Never</i>	
Girl	3	30	94	127
Boy	2	19	135	156
Total	5	49	229	283

TABLE 11**TALKS TO PARENTS**

	No.	%
Usually	53	17.6
Sometimes	80	26.6
Never	103	34.2
No response	59	19.6
Total	295	98.0

TABLE 12**FAMILY PROBLEMS**

	According to teacher		According to child	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	61	20.3	49	16.3
No	124	41.2	154	51.2
Not sure	112	37.2	84	27.9
Total	297	98.7	287	95.3

TABLE 13**PARENTS HAVE DROPPED OUT FROM SCHOOL**

	Nr.	%
Both	43	14.3
Father	17	5.6
Mother	27	9.0
None	177	58.8
No response	35	11.6
Total	299	99.3

TABLE 14**PARENTS AGREED FOR THE CHILD TO DROPOUT**

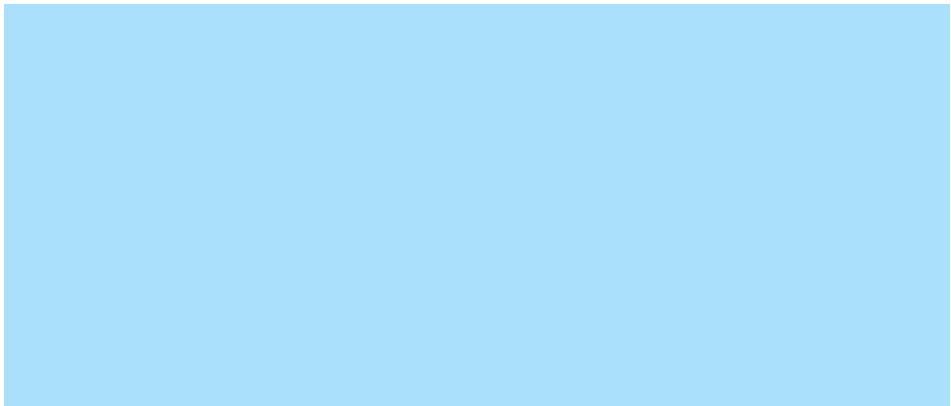
	Parents		Children	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	104	34.6	162	53.8
No	138	45.8	99	32.9
No response	54	17.9	34	11.3
Total	296	98.3	297	98.7

TABLE 15**PARENTS AGREED ABOUT DROPPING OUT ACCORDING GENDER
(PARENTS REPORTING)**

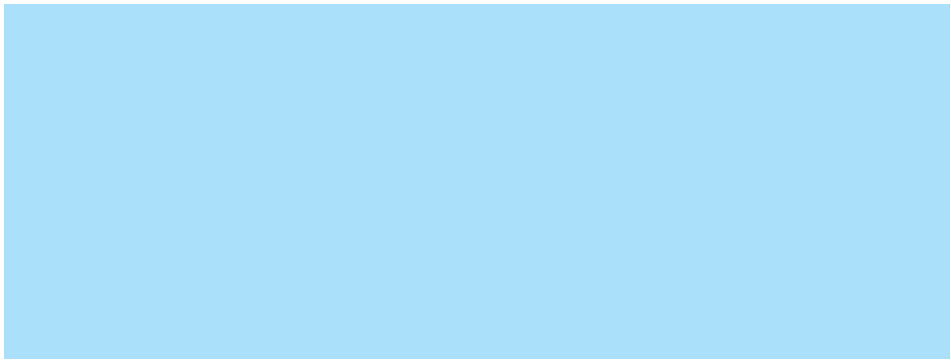
Gender	Parents agreed about dropping out				Total
	Yes	No	No response		
Girl	60	49	25		134
Boy	44	89	29		162
Total	104	138	54		296

TABLE 16**PARENTS AGREED ABOUT DROPPING OUT ACCORDING GENDER
(CHILDREN REPORTING)**

Gender	Parents agreed about dropping out			Total
	Yes	No	No response	
Girl	88	36	10	134
Boy	74	63	26	163
Total	162	99	36	297



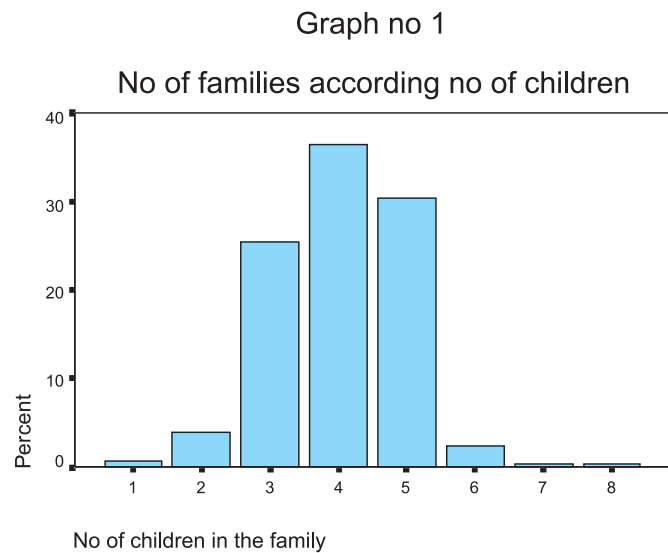






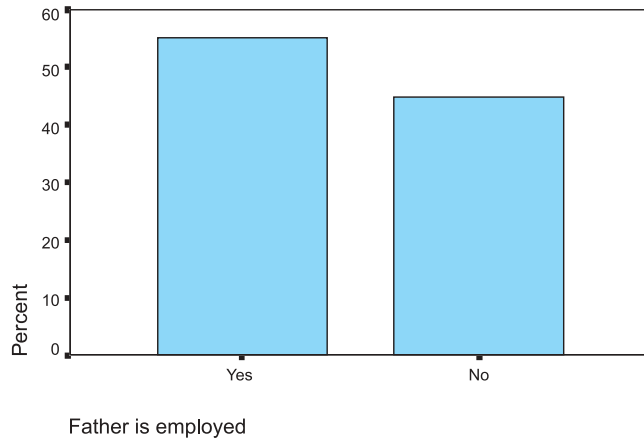
Annex 3

Graphs



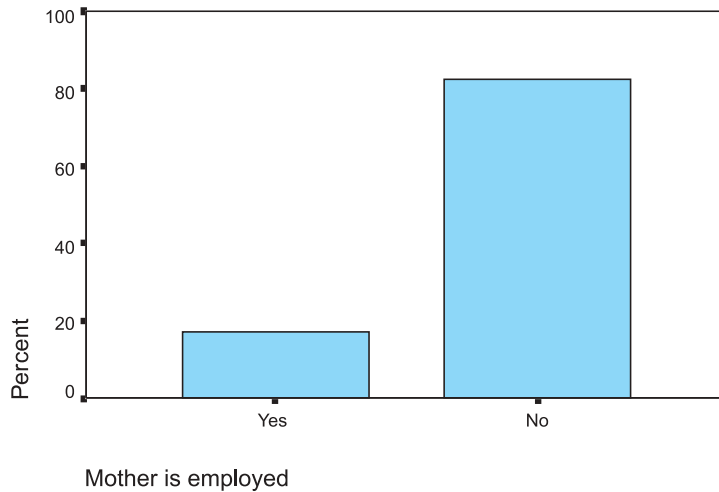
Graph no 2

Father employment

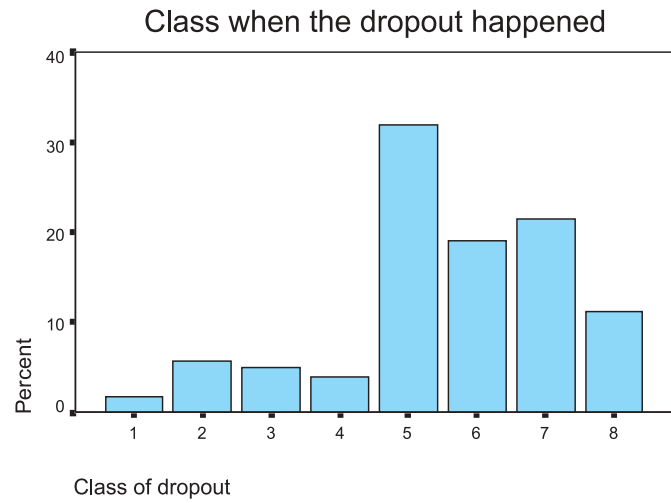


Graph no 3

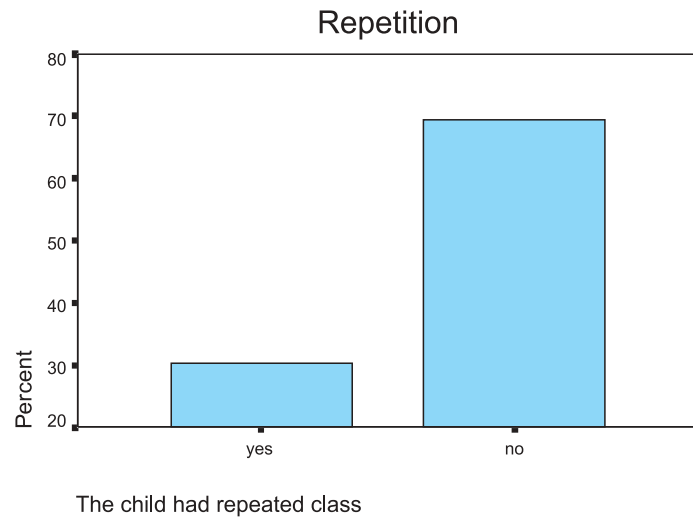
Mother's employment



Graph no 4

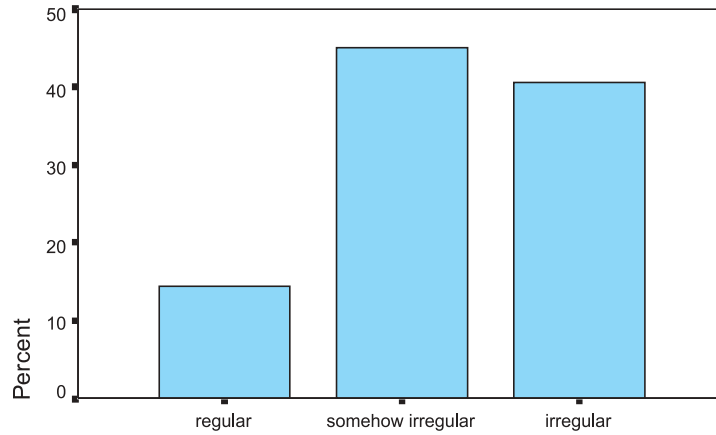


Graph no 5



Graph no 6

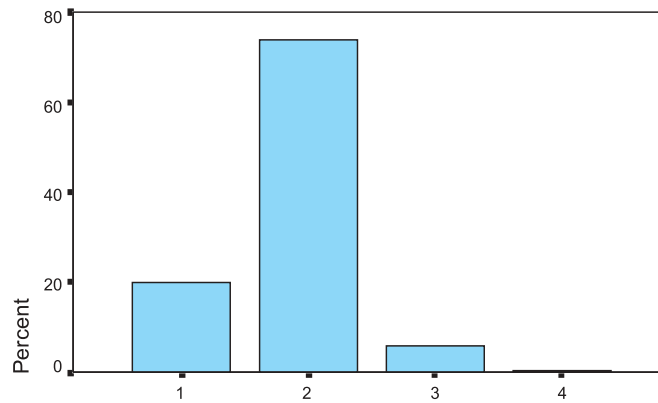
Attendance



Attendance

Graph no 7

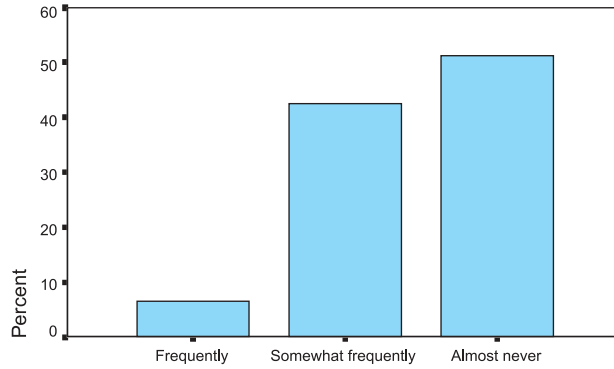
Dropout child employment



The child is employed

Graph no 8

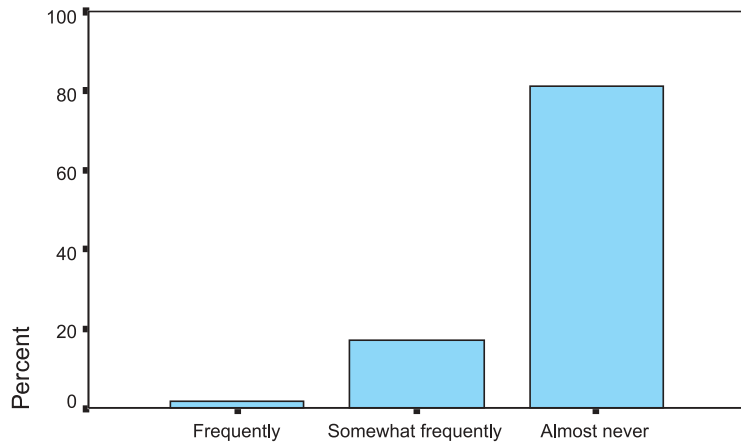
Motivation of child



The child was motivated

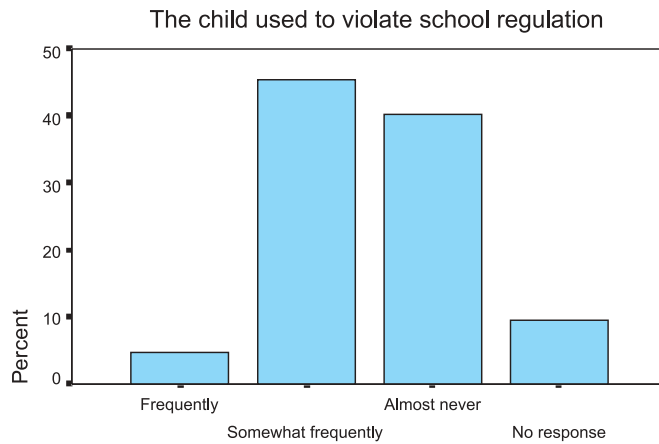
Graph no 9

Satisfactory achievements in school



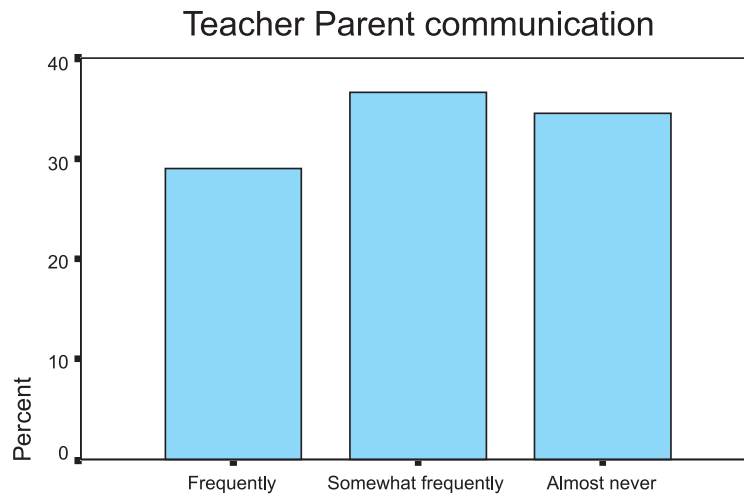
The child had satisfactory achievement before dropout

Graph no 10



The child used to violate school regulation

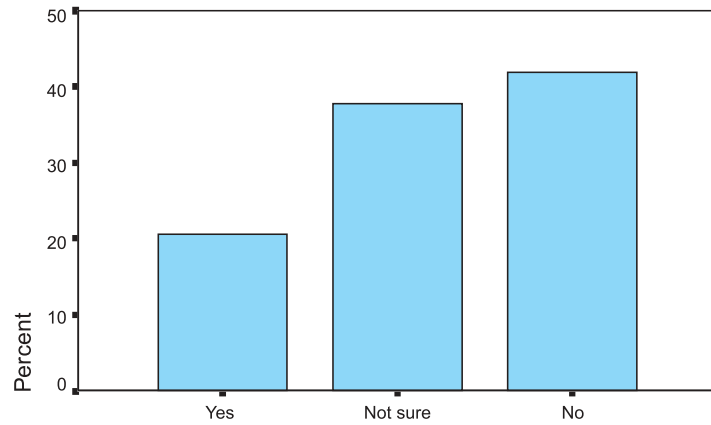
Graph no 11



The parents and teachers did communicate

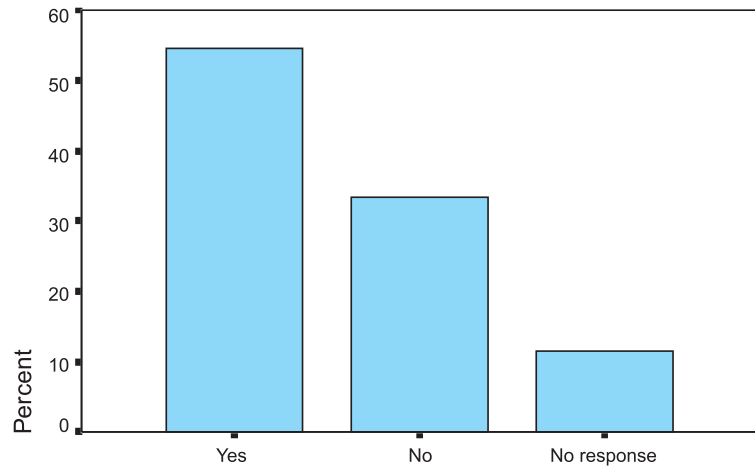
Graph no 12

The family of the child did have problems



Graph no 13

The parents agreed with dropping out from school



The parents agreed with dropping out