Dropout Voices of Urlabari Multiple Campus (UMC): A Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the causes of drop out case of Urlabari Multiple Campus (UMC) analyzing drop out students of two consecutive years -2075/76 BS and 2076/77 BS (2018/19 & 2019/20 AD). The purpose of the study is to explore the participants lived experiences regarding their drop out behavior. There has been a national circumstance that the students' retention in the campus level is almost degrading and thus this study is relevant to describe why students from UMC drop their study. It is a phenomenological study which analyses the lived experiences of the research participants drawing information through Seidman's three stages of interviews dealt with in- depth interviews of six participants. The constructivist paradigm was maintained in order to comprehend the methodology of phenomenology establishing trustworthiness through multiple realities ontologically and epistemologically. There were several causes of campus dropout including marriage, scholarship negligence, foreign job placement, internal job placement, poverty, lack of parental guidance and the like. The lived experiences are interwoven with the causes of the dropout and discussed vibrantly.

Key words: drop out, lived experiences, phenomenology, job placement, marriage

INTRODUCTION

Bajracharya (2021) noted that history of modern higher education expansion in Nepal has spanned a century since the establishment of Tri-Chandra College in 1918 AD. He further mentioned that at present fifteen autonomous higher education institutions, including eleven universities and four medical academies are established by the government. The first and the oldest and leading university is Tribhuvan

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University, in terms of number of students and national coverage (Khaniya, 2019; Bajracharya, 2021). However, the dropout cases are likely to be more in the campus affiliated to Tribhuvan university.

All the universities established in Nepal are accredited by the Nepal Government. Two universities- Tribhuvan University and Nepal Sanskrit University are solely run by Government of Nepal and the rest are established according to the concept of multi-university implemented in 1983 and are receiving partial support from the government of Nepal. These universities, medical academies and affiliated campuses or colleges around the country are contributing to higher education producing human resources required for the country. Urlabari Multiple campus (UMC) (hereafter UMC), a public campus established in 2043 BS (1987 AD) in the eastern Nepal, is one of them which is affiliated to the Tribhuvan University.

Although there is not an appropriate information on drop out case, the trend of drop out in the higher studies in Nepal is tremendously high (Raby, et al., 2020) which is a national crisis. In this context, the students preferring abroad or seeking jobs are found at a higher rate however they lack appropriate skill performance on any of the particular career they prefer (Ghimire, et al., 2023). As a teaching faculty of one of the multiple campuses affiliated to Tribhuvan university, I experienced that students quitting their studies are more in number either seeking job or more preferably lured by abroad going (Raby et al., 2020) and several other causes to quit the campus level studies.

We believe that discontinuing studies is caused by several factors, in the line like financial difficulties, academic challenges, family commitments, lack of interest, lack of motivation on career exploration, after marriage and birth of child and the like. As per the participants' point of view Dropping out of the campus is a significant decision that students make which have both negative and positive effect in terms of personal development (Davies, et al., 2003) in their lives that accounts with their social-economic status. While getting dropped every individual's circumstance differs or may have common reasons to discontinue studies. The research on personal reasons for quitting studies claims basically three reasons in the developed countries like; perception and experience of educational and organizational aspects; pragmatic and personal circumstances, and loss of interest in future occupations (Bragt, et al., 2011).

There are several such reasons for discontinuing campus level (Higher) study in Nepali context which are being discussed in this paper in the later part. There is not enough research on the dropout cases in the higher study which has become a national imbroglio since decades. Policy makers have much to do in contradiction of political interference (Bista, et al., 2019). As (Mathema, 2007) assured that the higher education in Nepal remains intensely political and relatively every public campus is not avoidable although it may not be pin pointed.

The well-versed narrative has developed among the students and youths that there is no way studying and working in Nepal and their planning for abroad begins from the high school or before (Khadka, 2023). The public campuses in Nepal are commonly running in a traditional method of delivery and also cannot provide new subject areas although with several policy reforms to connect the Nepali human resource with global needs (Gaule, 2015) due to which rather quitting studies (Baulke, 2021) at public campus or college and trying their fate in other fields or abroad looks more luring and fruitful for them. According to Wagle (2024, February 13) during the first half of the current fiscal year alone 54, 000 students exited the country. It is evident that the students' dropout is eminent in the higher studies in Nepali public campuses which includes dropout from the UMC too. It is an issue in the public campuses like UMC that the drop out has been eminent role player causing decrease in the production of highly skilled academic human resources required for the society or country as a whole as in the viewpoint of Veliz Palomino and Ortega (2023) "dropout is an issue of global importance that affects students, their families, labor organizations, universities, government agencies and therefore the country's economy" (pp. 156).

While discussing the students' enrolment trend and dropout in the academic session of BS 2075/76, the total enrolment was 89 (eighty-nine) in the Education faculty however, by the end of the fourth year 35 (thirty-five) students got dropped out. In the same session year of BS 2075/76, the total enrolment in BBS was 182 (one hundred and eighty-two) out of which 63 (sixty-three) got dropped out. Similarly, in the same academic year 22 (twenty-two) students got enrolled in BA out of which 11 (eleven) students got dropped out of the UMC.

Moreover, in the academic session of BS 2076/77, the total enrolment in BBS was 170 (one hundred and seventy) out of which 57 (fifty-seven) students got

dropped out, in the same session there were 128 (one hundred and twenty-eight) students enrolled in Education faculty but at the end of their final year 34 (thirty-four) students got dropped out. In addition, there were 31 (thirty-one) students enrolled in BA and out of which 15 (fifteen) students left their studies in the middle of the session.

Particularly, scholarships have been addressing the drop out issues since the 1970s (Subedi, 2022) however, the literature also suggests that dropout cases of universities students have been studied since as early as the 1930s (Bardach et al., 2020) as cited in Veliz Palomino & Ortega 2023). Research literature has discussed several factors affecting the dropout phenomenon including personal reason, socioeconomic aspect, family facet, institutional factor, academic performance of students as well as behavioral characteristic of students (Scheunemann et al., 2021; Bardach et al., 2019; Fourie, 2020).

As Veliz Palomino and Ortega (2023) discuss that the college dropout is a critical problem in undergraduate programs that directly affect students and the related community, due to direct economic losses and significant social costs. In the context of dropout research conducted on the issue, this paper deals to construct significant understandings on students lived experiences on being dropped out. Hence, this study looks out for the causes of the dropout among the students in UMC. It also makes assessment and digs out the lived experiences after quitting the studies from the campus in Bachelor level.

Research Questions

1. What are the reasons/causes that the Bachelor Level students quit their studies in the middle of the course from UMC?

2. How do they conceptualize being dropped out from the campus?

Research Methodology

We applied qualitative research design with a phenomenological study approach exploring the reasons for quitting and assessing their lived experiences of being dropped out. A qualitative approach was used for collecting field texts and analyzing them with rigorous studies. For this, semi-structured interviews were

conducted following the convenient principle of sampling by inviting them to the campus.

In addition, purposive sampling methods were used for one-on-one telephone interviews, social media chatting and audio and visual conference were conducted to dig out the phenomena that caused them to quit their study. The interview was conducted individually and interactively that echoes the constructivist worldview (O' Connell Kelly, 2012; Creswell, 2009). The constructivist paradigm was being used that helps open the participants' own experience of their world and their understanding. Through this study, we dealt with the multiple realities ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically in order to carry out tasks of trustworthiness of the study in the whole research process.

Frechette et al., (2020) viewed that the phenomenology allows to unearth phenomena from the perception of how the research participants interpret and construct meaning to their existence in the cosmos. To represent their meaning making of their existence the analysis of field information was performed as lived experiences of research participants collected through semi-structured interviews which was based upon Seidman's (2013) three interviews process (Kelly, 2012). The rigorous triangulation procedure was used in meaning making process for better understanding of the dropout phenomena by using literature as secondary information and or theories, field information and researchers' self-reflexivity- being faculty member.

The research participants were chosen as per the convenience of meeting, making phone calls, using face book messenger, WhatsApp and other social media applications whenever the researcher required during the research process. There were six research participants (two each from three faculties- BBS, B.Ed and BA) taken for this study from UMC, the permanent residents of Morang, Jhapa and Udaypur districts Koshi Province.

The vignettes excerpted from the interviews are used to contextualize the participants' cause of dropping the higher studies which clarify the judgements of their own. It has enabled our participants to define the situation of their own real-life conditions.

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We followed the principle of prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) with the participants. We traced the drop out for two years, contacting through phone calls for their attendance upon findings their reasons for leaving the studies in the middle of the courses. The semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed and provided them the opportunities to investigate the written texts. To establish its accuracy, the field texts and the transcription were triangulated several times. The research process was new to the research participants, nevertheless we established a research-participant relation revealing them (Mcdermid et al., 2014) that we are teaching faculty of the campus. Thus, we as researchers relating with their lived experiences being in an environment of collaborative relationship (Samaranayake, 2012) standing critical on my reflexivity in the research process.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research approach is addressed by four components credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Sandelowski, 1993'; Khalid Ahmad, 2024; Gunawan, 2015). Sandelowski (1993) notes that trustworthiness is a matter of persuasion in which the researcher is viewed as conducting all the research processes visible and auditable.

For the purpose of establishing credibility, we engaged ourselves in collecting data through documents, observations of patterns of dropouts and personally connecting with the dropouts through phone calls and social media. We established good conversations with the dropouts. We acknowledged our personal biases throughout the research process which are reflected in the write up. We followed the principle of triangulation in gathering field texts including semi-structured interviews, open interviews, key informant interviews, documents archived by campus, and student registers to verify the findings of the study.

To establish transferability of the study, we used the principle of thick description which provided contextual information in detail to enrich readers assessment towards the transferability of findings. We have vividly articulated the sampling process and samples were chosen to validate the findings.

We discussed frequently the challenges and problems in the collection of data. After discussion, we applied the method of data collection and coding and decoding were done throughout the research process. We applied intra-auditing of data and

themes building and with several changes were accounted. The field notes and journals were documented. The literature reviewed was shared to enhance the dependability of the research process.

We performed conformability tasks by briefing and debriefing the write up. We also engaged ourselves individually to determine and define the interpretations of data or field texts with colleagues and experts from another campus. This process helped us to minimize the biases from the viewpoint of researchers.

We involved some of our participants in the verification process which ensured their viewpoints and experiences and confirmed the accuracy of the findings. We also documented journal writing throughout the research process which processed our reflexivity of the study.

Delimitation of the Study

We used the term "delimitation" for this study to convey the limits which cannot be determined by the researchers but lays daunting effects in the research process. Kelly (2012) claims that any elements that the researcher could not control in the research process is communicated by delimitation. Thus, the only limitation practiced for this study was that the field texts were gathered through in-depth interviews using Seidman's three interview series as methodologically it demanded phenomenological inquiry (Serrat, 2020) in order to better understand the lived experiences of dropped out students of Bachelor level in UMC. This study is limited to only the dropped-out case of UMC with limited number of participants- as majority of them were unavailable during the telephonic interviews due to changed mobile number, abroad employment, unreachable and unavailable mobile networks, hence the result cannot be generalized in broader sense.

To particularize rather than to generalize (Creswell, 2009, p. 193) we applied the term delimitation which is a controlled characteristic of the research process. In this study, every research participant was interviewed based on her/his consent (Dixon-Woods et al., (2017) regarding the discontinuity of the study from the campus.

This paper accounts for the lived experiences of research participants' vocals supported by literature and the reflexivity in the whole research process. Field text collection process was not envisioned to generalize rather thus to particularize. Due

to the time and resource constraints, we used the drop out case of two consecutive academic year of BS 2075/76 and 2076/77 only.

Research Findings and Analysis

The research findings are presented in accordance with the research questions representing the participants' voice encoding their lived experiences (causes/reasons of leaving the study from the campus) and then the study discusses the second research question about participants conceptualizing their lived experiences of being dropped out from the campus. However, we believed it would be a significant idea to bring out the historical facet of UMC and the dropout facts or scenario before (re)presenting the findings or discussing the research questions in detail that we present here in brief.

Drop out Scenario of BBS, B. Ed and BA: Consecutive Academic Session of BS 2075/76(2018/19 AD) and BS 2076/77 (2019/20 AD)

UMC was established as a public campus in 2043 BS (1987 AD) during the Panchayat era then named as Panchayat Rajat Jayanti Campus. Since then, this institution has been providing higher education in the vicinity. In this campus, majority of the students come from local community. The dropout cases have become a common phenomenon in the national and international arena, and it applies to UMC. To find out the dropped-out scenario and lived experiences of the dropped-out students, this study used two consecutive academic years' enrolment as a base of study. The academic year of BS 2075/76 (2018/19 AD) was a devastating year for BA as only 22 students were enrolled out of which 13 and 19 were male and female respectively; out of those 11 students got dropped out in which 8 were male and 3 were female. In the case of academic year BS 2076/77 (2019/20 AD); 31 students were enrolled in which 17 and 14 were male and female respectively and ultimately 15 out of which 6 female and 9 males quitted the studies.

In the same way in the year BS 2075/76 (2018/19) academic session, 89 students were enrolled in B. Ed out of which 16 were male and the rest were female and in the middle of their study tenure 35 discontinued their studies out of which 11 were male and 24 were female. In the academic year of BS 2076/77 (2019/20 AD), 128 students were admitted in B. Ed out of which only 24 were male and 104 were female in which 34 students discontinued their studies where 6 male students

dropped their studies, and 28 female students did not complete their studies from the UMC.

In addition, in the academic session of BS 2075/76 (2018/19 AD), there were 182 students enrolled in the BBS program in which 75 were male students and 107 were female students while 63 students did not complete the course in which there were 29 males and 34 females. Similarly, in the academic year of BS 2076/77 (2019/20 AD), there were 170 students enrolled in the BBS program comprising 68 male and 102 female however, only 113 were able to complete the session as 57 students dropped out of the campus out of which 19 comprised of male students and 38 female students.

The following subtitles discuss and analyze the causes/reasons of dropout and their perspective of living in their social world.

Marriage: A Familial Cause of Quitting the Campus

Specifically, girl after marriage may not pursue study due to socio-cultural disparity (Shrestha & Gartoulla, 2017) prevalent in Nepali society. The crooked and narrow notion of understanding and observing daughters-in-law or wife's performance at home do not provide space for personal development of a girl when she gets married.

Although, it has been observed much improvement in case of educated individuals at present, however; my research participant, Maunata (pseudo name) asserted:

It is quite not easy and probable to continue study after marriage if whole family is not so understanding and supportive. As a daughter in law or wife with children makes harder time to get involved in studies and family also do not sense it in good way.

Several non- governmental and governmental organizations are working against the gender disparity in Nepal exhibiting improvement in the report (UNFPA & UNICEF, 2019) but still in Nepali society marriage is a part of family concern specifically for girl. Thus, the girl alone cannot decide for herself for marriage and other major decisions like for study (Panta, 2023; Subedi, 2022) that cause them their study to be cut off in the middle although the constitutional provisions are made against any kind of discrimination. The girl cannot decide independently to

continue studying after marriage as her maternal home and in laws worry about her performance at her husband's home and pressurize her to discontinue the study as our research participant Meenu told her story:

> *My husband allowed me but my maternal parents and in laws compelled me to quit as they were worried about my performance of the house chores and study at a time. They were worried about my marriage future and the future of my children in different ways. I tried to convince them but could not do so, thus; I quitted study and staying as a housewife.*

The complexities of quitting the campus level study become more plausible when the girl bear a child after marriage and the health deteriorates. The child and mother's health condition determines the continuation of study although parents or husband allow. Many girls whose parents and family are illiterate leave their campus level study after marriage due to interwoven and extraneous circumstances that arise after marriage.

According to Howlader et al., (2023) in comparison to girls from highly literate families, the girls from lowly literate families are more likely to discontinue their study when they get to the age of being married. One of our participants claimed:

> *I was not allowed to fill in the form for the examination due to which I had to discontinue my further study. He was against my campus study. My campus life made him feel insecure about his marriage. I tried to convince him a lot but could not do so. As a result, I quit campus study. We are done with our marriage now.*

It clarifies that when spouse is not supportive of his/her counterpart it becomes the obstacle for carrying out further studies (Panta, 2023). Thus, marriage is one of the most viable causes or the reasons of being dropped out from the campus.

A Non-Responsive Scholarship Scheme: An Administrative Dilemma

Generally, every educational institution provides certain scholarships to genuinely hardworking and poor students. In addition, the category of scholarships account with ethnicity and Dalit as Vertex Consult Pvt. Ltd (2018) asserted such scholarship created the feeling of superiority and inferiority among the students. As such, it has raised a question mark even in the Urlabari multiple campus also as students find it negligence from the administrative point of view due to which the students were found being dropped out of the campus.

The UMC as a community educational institution runs to fulfil its responsibility of serving society by providing certain scholarships to the needy students every year of different faculty. However, the students were neglected during the filling up of the examination form. They were not responded genuinely by the office of the Campus's highest authority and other administrative units. They had made several attempts to remained about the scholarship that they had been already awarded by the campus scholarship cell by acknowledging application and passing through interviews.

One of the research participants claimed that she went to remind about the scholarship during the time of filling in the form for examination, but she was neglected every time she tried to approach as she complained:

> *I went to the campus chief office, department office, administrative block but no one was ready to listen to me about my achieved scholarship by following campus formed processes. I was not given attention, and I failed to fill up the examination form. Ultimately, I left the campus and now I am preparing for a language test for Korea.*

For the scholarship allotment, the campus calls for application from the genuine students and they are scrutinized by the scholarship cell of the campus and are selected for individual face to face interviews. After all the processing being completed, the deserving students are allotted with certain percent (25 to 75%) of scholarship as per their presentation during the interview and also the overall observation made by the scholarship cell of the campus. The students facing all these hurdles receive scholarship, nevertheless, when they are neglected during the implementation period then students fail to fill up the examination form and they get dropped out of the campus due to the lack of motivation.

Unaffordability: A Parents' Financial Burden of Economic Reliability

In many cases, the parents were compelled to withhold their dependent children (campus level students) from being enrolled due to financial problems of home. According to Petzl (2015) paying educational fees for family is the hardest time which is the common form of compulsion of poverty ridden family in the context of Nepali society due to which students were compelled to drop out of the campus.

The dependent children from low-income families do not get motivated for higher studies (Basnyat, 2022) consequently the students fail to fill up the form for

their examinations ultimately, they leave the campus without achieving degree. We believe majority of the students' families in UMC suffer from financial unaffordability although multidimensional poverty leads to quitting higher studies in general.

The research findings show that the parents were forced to withhold their children's examination form stating financial problems as one of our participants Uma assured:

When it was time to fill up the form for the final examination my father didn't allow me to fill it as he could not provide me the money. I felt guilty of being a girl from a poor family; however, it was the reality due to which I am supporting my parents doing a small job nowadays by leaving my studies of campus.

The poverty-ridden household cannot afford to make their children's demand fulfilled. According to Pokharel (2015) being poor has multiple features which accounts with lack of sharing resources and opportunities, lack of recognition, cannot take part in decision making process as a result face various challenges against their freedom in survival and life functioning and are entangled in the vicious circle of poverty.

Job Condition: Personal Economic Mobility Cause for Family Responsibility

Tiwari et al., (2016) found that there has been upward mobility in education that has created greater chances of getting employed within the country. As per the research (ibid) about 47% of the population remain in the same occupation as their parents, however, the rest of others flow in different occupations that provided space of being employed in different organizations and institutions within the country far of their hometown. In this context, my participants' job placement has been a hurdle for the continuation of the study in the campus. As Rupa and Sharan agreed together:

I could not continue my study in UMC due to my job condition in other places and transfer from one place to another place is frequent. Involving myself in job and quitting studies is a compulsion that I need to fulfil the family responsibility and support other siblings at home for their betterment.

This condition of helplessness of continuing study prevailed in the process of fulfilling the family responsibility to lift up the financial burden of parents by the dropped-out students in UMC. Another participant, Kala asserted her story:

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My mother expired when I appeared in my first-year examination, after that father was only the bread earner which was quite hard to maintain family expenditure; so, I joined a job and got engaged. Thus, I could not continue my further study at UMC.

Kafle (2007) stated that there is a trend of large number of students migrating from rural to urban areas for employment. In this context, the students who work lose their studies in the middle; it is a situation emerging out of acute financial problem of home which becomes a responsibility of the educated individual to fulfil the duty of being a member of the family. One of my participants clarified that as he got enrolled in the campus; the next year, he got job in Nepal army and had to go for it which derailed him from the study.

Several of the dropout cases in UMC occurs due to the mobility in the due to course of employment seeking as ILO (2023) asserts that Nepal produces about four lakhs new workforce annually. In this connection, research shows that about 86.5% of the workforce sought employment opportunities in the country including agriculture and modern economy (Bastola, 2020) as such that the students from UMC also have been found that due to the job placement in the increasing trend of modern economy, they dropped out of the campus in the middle of the campus. As the trend of agricultural employment is 66%, which is decreasing in status; and there is an increasing trend of modern occupation (K.C. et al., 2020) due to which students from the campus like UMC drop their studies as they fail to fill up the examination form on time. For job seeking purposes, the students (labour forces) have to move out from their original place for their job which ultimately lead to the discontinuation of the studies in the public campus as that of UMC.

According to the Ministry of youths and sports (2015) about 36% of the youths are employed in the internal labour market which is in increasing trend as the educational attainment and socio-economic condition prevail sound. Thus, internal job placement in the country has created mobility for job seeking individuals and that created hazards for leaving campus level studies. The research participants agreed that about 80% of her colleagues during her campus study used to get engaged in the job and majority of them get dropped out, in addition; 10% of them get married which becomes a hurdle for their study and 10% students opt for abroad. It indicated that the students who get enrolled in the public campus, they

opt for double standard occupation as student and professional and whichever favours them they opt quitting one as per the financial status of the family.

Abroad Trend: An Unemployment Cause of the Country

Is it a passion or compulsion to go abroad for work or studies? The research findings convey that the majority of the public campus students (like UMC) go abroad due to compulsion, not as preferred choice (Sharma, 2019) as their friends, relatives and neighbours chose it for good source of financial improvement. As majority of the public campus students like UMC come from lower middle-class families who feel compulsion to go abroad by any means as they see huge financial solution for their home.

According to CBS, 2021) 23.4% people live abroad which is observed in an increasing trend of opting for foreign employment as more than 450 thousand people leave for abroad annually (NPC, 2017). Many youths and students are found learning foreign languages especially Korean, Japanese, Chinese, etc. (Poudel & Baral, 2021). Many of the students in the campus are found with foreign language books rather than the text books they   study for their course. Two of the participants, Prasad and Dharma, put their opinion:

> *In Nepal, there is not a possibility of earning good amount sufficient to settle down, even we seek job after we complete this study. However, if we happen to pass the Korean language test, we may earn enough to live as our village friends and relatives have been doing so nicely. If you happen to enter into Korea and work for five to ten years, one can finish paying a loan and can earn good money for the family. Many of us think that going abroad is better than to seek any kind of job here in Nepal except government which is quite impossible for the average students like us. So, there is no way other than trying abroad.*

Currently, most of the unskilled youth population are utilized by the international labour market, therefore there is less pressure on the national labour market to provide employment (ILO, 2016). Many research asserted that the courses taught in the public campuses do not match the demand of international labour markets. The skills and knowledge required for the present new labour market do not resonate as a result the students seeking a job after completion of their course required certain professional training in order to get into the job which is an extra expense. Consequently, when students realize such implications of their four years of

studies in Bachelor level, they remain demotivated and their motive changes and seek for abroad. In such cases, students with sound financial background opt for western countries and apply for IELTS, TOFFLS, GRE and the like but majority of the UMC dropped out students opt either Korea, or gulf countries in the middle east. As our research participants believed:

> *Very few of our colleagues tried and succeeded in going to western countries for studies however, some of our colleagues went in labour visa too but there were many who studied Korean and Japanese languages and after all majority of them went to gulf countries because of the lack of proper skills and knowledge and after all we are also preparing to apply.*

Kafle (2007) stated that the work force of Nepal has established a trend of getting employed in the foreign job even in the harsh condition and many lose their lives or get impaired for the rest of their lives. Nevertheless, majority of the youths love to fly away from the country for foreign employment as it is a compulsion for them.

Many of the students follow the trend of the place around them as the relatives and friends go for foreign employment, they are compelled by the parents and also by socio-economic and cultural dimensions. It meant that they were forced by the social and economic status of the foreign job seekers around them. Hence, it becomes a compulsion for them to discontinue studies otherwise they must go through harsh words gossip from their family, relatives or neighbours. Our participants have the same kind of experience which is a representative story:

> *Our relatives and neighbours make a topic of gossip on us in our village since we were not necessarily a bread earner, we also feel our responsibility to be carried out as a grown-up member of family. Working condition in Nepal is not so attractive otherwise who chose to leave family and flow blood and sweat in other's county. So, on one hand it is being a responsible person of the family and on the other hand it's a compulsion of a foreign trend developed in the village, we need to leave the country.*

More than 450 thousand Nepalese youth migrate to the labour market annually (NPC, 2017). In this context, the out flow of the Nepalese youth migration into the international labour market indicates majority of dropouts from the campuses like UMC of the country. As a faculty member of the campus, we have observed that many bachelor's degree students attend classes with Korean or

Japanese or European language books rather than the textbooks that cover the course of study. According to (IFAD, 2023) Foreign employment has become a common livelihood strategy for Nepalese households over the last 30 years. Nearly half of all Nepalese households have at least one member of the family migrated for foreign employment and currently working or living in Nepal as a returnee migrant and are involved in different occupations or are self-employed.

ILO (2010) clarified that to absorb the supply of workers in the country higher levels of economic development is necessary. Foreign employment is now the most significant motivation for international migration from Nepal (ILO, 2016) due to which unemployment rate is decreasing (Macro-trends, 2024; Danish Trade Union Development Agency, 2023). The youth unemployment rate is decreasing due to the outmigration of the youths for foreign employment due to the enactment of the new labour policy, 2014, as the terms and conditions get improved (K.C. et al., 2023). Labour migration from Nepal is predominantly male, with more than 80% of the total labour migrant population between the ages of 18 and 35. The share of workers taking up low-skilled work is high at 59% in 2019 (Danish Trade Union Development Agency, 2023) which ensured the unskilled labour migration in the international labour markets.

Lack of Financial Guidance from Parents or Independence Requirement

As per the research findings, those who enter into the university have just completed teen age who require flexible guidance. However, the parents and the guardians fail to provide moral and emotional support to them, which leads to a dropout. It does not apply to all the dropouts, but it depends upon what friend circle do they have in their campus life (Antonio, 2001). Sometimes, the continuation of study in the campus level stands with how well is the relationship with friends and what kind of friend he or she possesses (Panek & Johnson, 2022). We believed that if one has good circle friends, they have good chance to continuing study otherwise fail to do so.

In the campus going age, the requirements grow and the demands for material things absolutely grow, and expenses have to be met in order to fulfil the daily needs, but such expenses can't be maintained from the parental afford. For this

reason, campus time is the crucial time for students who transfer themselves from dependent to independent financially which marks the commencement of financial independence and achieve higher responsibility by making financial decisions on their own (Maharjan, 2022) which makes quitting of campus to earn and live to a standard position against the friends in the campus.

At this age, they feel shame to ask for money required for their extravagant fulfilments, thus, they look for employment opportunities and get engaged which ultimately led them to quit the study. one of the participants shared his feelings:

> *I did not get good guidance and enough pocket money from my parents to fulfil my extra campus expenses like; spending money on tea and snacks with friends, purchasing good shoes, clothes, other expenses and so on. In addition, showing cashing girl friend at this age is paramount attitude for boys and managing expenses for her cannot be asked from parents all the time, this life condition led me to discontinue study and thus, I am working abroad now.*

As per the findings, the students who get dropped out easily come from the households in which parents are illiterate and cannot guide their grown-up children physically, academically and professionally. When their children get ready to join campus, the parents feel that they are free from guiding perspective and the students who joined campus also preferably want to get away from the grip of their parents and elders due to which students from campus level fail to continue their studies. The guidance here refers to different aspects of their emotional, moral and sexual orientation during the campus level studies as they are not out of the hangover of adolescents as emerging adults (Lowe & Dotteren, 2018). In this connection, the campus level students feel more freedom from their parents, teachers and the like. Age wise, it is the end gate way to the adolescent which is a transition from puberty to adulthood (Koirala, 2023) which suggests that they have more chances of getting involved in various activities that can cause dropout. One of the participants regretfully delivered his story of getting independence during campus life as:

> *Everyone believes that when one join campus, they should be free from the parents' guidance, and I felt the same. My parents were not so literate, and I thought that I can decide what I would do and run my life on my own way. I met and made new friends of*

Bishnu Magar (Assistant Lecturer-UMC) & Ambika Gautam (Associate Professor-UMC)

different perspectives and halfway around I had to leave the campus due to more freedom from the parents.

As per research findings, the drop out cases are more in the campuses in which easy employment opportunities around it and its vicinity are lacking. The students who need self-support financially other than from their parents require ample employment opportunities to support their campus level studies and to meet their personal expenses. However, the students hailing from campus like UMC lack self-financing condition due to the lack of easy employment opportunities around the city.

Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the essence of the shared lived experiences of bachelor's degree dropped out students of UMC which can represent the wider whole of the campuses like UMC in the country. The phenomenological methodology helped to navigate the dropped-out lives. The conversational engagement between research participants and the researcher self-provided a space to connect with each other and critically raised questions of dropout reasons. It also placed research participants and the researcher in the position of creating and constructing perspectives upon the lives living the social world. The reasons include personal, social, family, job placement, financial reasons of the family including job seeking in the foreign land. The research in this regard have been scarce so there are several areas of causes of dropout in the contexts of campuses like UMC affiliated to Tribhuvan University.

Implications

The following implications could be taken in action by the campuses in the future for sustainable retention of the students:

i.   Regular career counseling program should be conducted in the campus
ii.   Effective academic training based on skills should be rendered to the students
iii. Practical orientation training of the studies should be prioritized, like; internships and workshops
iv.   Students' scholarship program should be effectively regularized and should be provided without discrimination

v.   An industrial connection should be made for career and professional placement during and after study.

vi.   Timely, effective and impartial result declaration

vii.   Academic procedures should be decentralized from top to bottom with a proper policy framework (TU to affiliated campuses)

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