

Sociological Study Of Factors Affecting Academic Failure Among Students (Case Study: First-Level Secondary School Students In Khash City)

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ABSTRACT

One of the major social issues is the academic failure of students at various educational levels—a phenomenon considered a serious barrier to achieving the high goals of education. The main aim of this study is to examine the social factors influencing academic failure among first-level secondary school students in Khash city. This research employs a survey methodology. The statistical population includes all first-level secondary school students (aged 12 to 14) in Khash city, Sistan and Baluchestan province, who either dropped out or repeated a grade during the 2022-2023 academic year, totaling 376 male and female students. A census sampling method was used, and data were collected via a questionnaire, which showed an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.78. The findings revealed that the variable "interaction style between parents and teachers" has a significant inverse effect with a beta coefficient of -0.194; the variable "parental separation and divorce" has a significant direct effect with a beta of 0.169; "students' association with delinquent peers" has a significant direct effect with a beta of 0.618; "parents' socio-economic status" has a significant inverse effect with a beta of -0.161; "lack of study skills and academic planning" has a significant inverse effect with a beta of -0.144; and "parental addiction" has a significant direct effect with a beta of 0.107 on academic failure among first-level secondary students in Khash city.

Keywords: Academic failure, social factors, students, Khash city

Introduction

Academic failure is a significant issue often equated with early school dropout and grade repetition within a country's education system (Kakia, 2000, p. 27). This phenomenon encompasses various aspects of academic underachievement, such as complete absenteeism from school, student dropout before completing the prescribed years of education, repeating grades, poor quality of learning compared to expected standards, and rote memorization rather than true understanding (Kakia, 2000, p. 28). Soltani Fathi et al. (2024), in a study titled *New Learning Methods to Prevent Academic Failure in Schools*, identified that one major cause of academic failure—especially among elementary school students—is their excessive dependence on parents. Similarly, Golmohammadi et al. (2024), in their research on *The Impact of School Factors on Student Academic Failure*, found that academic failure, like other fundamental problems, is influenced by a variety of factors. These include individual student characteristics, family background, school-related issues, and broader social factors.

Schools, as the most important educational institutions, play a crucial role and share responsibility for educating students alongside families. Learning depends on dynamic interactions between students and their environment. If these interactions are ineffective, students may lose interest in learning, leading to academic failure. Experts categorize the causes of student disengagement into two groups: internal school factors and external factors. Internal factors include cultural, welfare, and educational aspects within the school, while external factors are more diverse. Since schools often fail to meet most students' needs or foster adequate interest and motivation, numerous reasons can be identified for students' disinterest and school avoidance—particularly among first-level secondary students. However, it is important to note that many of these reasons are rooted in school characteristics, societal conditions, family issues, and individual problems, some of which are features of modern societies (Rezaei et al., 2007, p. 18).

The first key aspect of the issue relates to parents' expectations of education. Historically, parents held different expectations, sometimes viewing schools primarily as centers for child-rearing, occasionally

emphasizing upbringing more than academic instruction. The second aspect concerns societal expectations of education. Society generally expects schools to produce productive individuals, thus schools must adopt the most effective and rational methods to fulfill this role. Local research indicates that in the academic year 2022-2023, approximately 15% of first-level secondary students in Khash city repeated a grade, and 5% dropped out. Data from the Khash Education Department shows a significant rate of grade repetition and dropout in this education level (213 repeaters and 163 dropouts out of 376 students). Specifically, among 329 seventh-grade boys, 91 repeated and 45 dropped out; among 131 seventh-grade girls, only one dropped out. For eighth grade, 84 of 305 boys repeated and 32 dropped out; among 128 girls, 12 dropped out. In ninth grade, 38 of 284 boys repeated and 39 dropped out; among 109 girls, 34 dropped out (Sida Student Information System). Therefore, this study aims to examine the sociological factors influencing academic failure among first-level secondary students in Khash city and to answer the question: Which factors most significantly affect students' academic failure?

Theoretical Foundations of the Study

Student Academic Failure

Academic failure, as an indicator of educational loss, broadly refers to any deficiency in literacy or the presence of illiteracy. More specifically, it describes the failure to meet educational goals and expectations, reflecting disruptions in the teaching and learning process. Academic failure can manifest in various ways such as school absenteeism, grade repetition, failing courses, and dropping out. According to this definition, even gifted students may experience academic decline and underachievement. Thus, academic failure is a widespread and relative issue (Kakia, 2000, p. 36).

Social Theories and Academic Failure

1. Parent-Teacher Interaction

Ecological theory, particularly in the field of development, has been widely applied to study the relationship between parents and teachers. Bronfenbrenner argues that human development occurs within multiple environments, with the family serving as the primary context. According to this theory, if the interaction between parents and teachers does not support the development of students within their living and educational environments, and if the connection between subsystems such as home and school does not facilitate the student's growth, students' abilities in reading and writing will not flourish. This situation leads to academic failure (Mohseni Tabrizi, 2000: 61).

One of the most comprehensive theories integrating agency and structure, useful for explaining parent-teacher collaboration, is Giddens' structuration theory (Seyedman, 2020: 215). The core of this theory is to clarify the dialectical and reciprocal relationship between agency and structure, which cannot be separated—they are two sides of the same coin (Giddens, 2012: 702). According to this perspective, insufficient attention to the dynamic interaction between agency and structure in parent-teacher relationships, as well as the interaction between social actions and structural conditions, results in academic failure among students.

2. Parental Divorce and Academic Failure Theories

Goldenberg identifies marital discord and divorce, especially after sudden family bereavement, as major sources of stress (Goldenberg, 2016: 195). Sears, Koen, and Fresco suggest that marital conflicts and divorce manifest in various ways, such as depression in one or both spouses, addiction, disruptive behaviors in children, and adverse effects on family mental health (Vafadar Moradi, 2018: 57).

Behavioral exchange theory explains that marital conflicts depend largely on the reinforcement or punishment spouses apply toward one another. The cognitive-behavioral approach combines cognitive-behavioral theories with social exchange theory. This integrated approach is based on the works of Lieberman, Stewart, Jacobson, Margolin, Gottman, Peterson, Bernstein, Beck, and Ellis (Faiz, 2016: 50). According to this theory, if parents fail to communicate effectively, manage expectations, and resolve marital issues, depression and consequently academic failure in children may result.

Attachment theory posits that individuals adopt one of three attachment styles—secure, avoidant, or anxious ambivalent—when forming intimate relationships (Klinke, 2004: 55). Research indicates that after divorce, adolescents often experience significant academic difficulties, ambiguous feelings about well-being, and increased anxiety and depression (Johnson, 2002: 66).

3. Peer Influence and Academic Failure Theories

From a sociological viewpoint, anomie refers to a breakdown of social consensus regarding societal goals, shared expectations, and behavioral norms. This condition leads to absenteeism, erosion of authority, loss of moral regulation, and diminished social control. During times of social transition, many individuals experience disorientation, and traditional social values lose significance, while new values have not yet been established, creating a society where traditional and modern structures coexist (Saroukhani, 2017: 15).

One significant factor in academic failure is students' association with deviant or negative peers, particularly during adolescence—a critical period marked by potential identity crises (Massen et al., 1991: 325). Erikson defines identity as a dynamic, self-constructed internal framework of desires, goals, abilities, beliefs, and personal history, developed through a lifelong process influenced by social factors (Brzenski, 2005: 125).

4. Socioeconomic Status of Parents and Academic Failure Theories

A key determinant of academic success or failure is the socioeconomic status of students' parents. While many believe that hard work guarantees success, data shows that only a small minority achieve it. Even in highly fluid societies offering equal opportunities, only a few succeed (Giddens, 2014: 265). According to this theory, socioeconomic inequalities faced by students from lower social classes cause discouragement and academic failure. Functionalist theorists argue that education operates on meritocratic principles, distributing opportunities based on ability and competence, thereby maintaining social order (Coleman, 2018: 153). If meritocracy is not upheld in the recruitment of educational staff and social and economic capital among parents is not supported, students' academic performance suffers.

5. Study Skills, Curriculum Planning, and Academic Failure Theories

Ausubel's theory of meaningful verbal learning is particularly relevant to curriculum planning. It focuses on how new information is processed and how teachers can apply this understanding in instruction (Seif, 2004: 27). According to this theory, when new concepts are not meaningfully connected to students' existing knowledge, academic failure is likely.

Eisner defines curriculum as a planned set of educational experiences intended to produce learning outcomes for students (Mehr Mohammadi, 2014: 126). According to this perspective, lack of purposeful curriculum design, misalignment between course content and student abilities, inadequate learning opportunities, and ineffective instructional and assessment methods contribute to academic failure.

6. Parental Substance Abuse and Academic Failure Theories

Hawkins and Weis's social development model suggests that adolescents' feelings of detachment from societal norms and lack of closeness to parents and role models predispose them to associate with drug-using peers. The model emphasizes how family, school, and peers influence adolescent behavior, which evolves with individual development (Golparvar, 2003: 239). This theory holds that students associating with deviant and drug-using peers are more likely to use substances themselves, lose interest in education, and consequently experience academic failure.

Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical framework of this study.

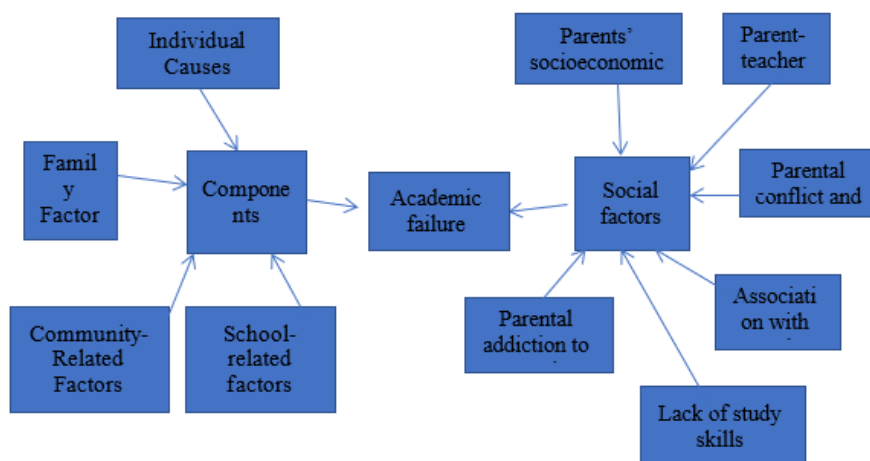


Figure 1: Theoretical Model of the Study

Research Methodology

This study is classified as an applied-developmental research in terms of purpose, explanatory in nature, and descriptive-survey in terms of data collection method. The statistical population includes all first-level

secondary school students in the city of Khash who either repeated a grade or dropped out during the academic year 1401-1402 (2022-2023). According to statistics from the Khash Education Department, this population consists of 376 students (329 boys and 47 girls). Due to the limited size of the population, a census sampling method was used. Data on the social factors affecting academic decline among these students were collected through a questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 99 items designed based on a Likert scale. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The dependent variable (academic decline) questionnaire (35 items) achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.75, and the overall questionnaire achieved an alpha of 0.78. These results indicate that the questionnaire items (99 items) have acceptable reliability ($\alpha > 0.7$) (see Table 1).

Table 1: Reliability Analysis Results of Variables Using Cronbach's Alpha Method

Variables	Reliability Coefficient
Parent-Teacher Interaction	0.74
Family Conflicts and Parental Separation	0.70
Students' Association with Delinquent Friends	0.71
Parents' Socioeconomic Status	0.77
Lack of Study Skills and Academic Planning	0.73
Parental Addiction	0.76
Level of Academic Decline	0.75

To assess the validity of the measurement tool, face validity was used. For data analysis, both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were employed. In the descriptive statistics section, central tendency indices were calculated. For inferential statistics, based on the research hypotheses, t-tests and regression analysis were conducted. Data processing was performed using SPSS software, version 23.

Findings

The results showed that 87.5% (329 individuals) of the students were boys and 12.5% (47 individuals) were girls. Most respondents were boys. The highest frequency percentage among boys was related to those with an average grade below 10 and between 10 to 12 (42.6% and 42.8% of all students, respectively). The frequency percentage of girls in the grade range of 13 to 15 was higher than that of boys (2.4% compared to 2.1%). The highest frequency percentage among boys was related to those whose fathers are illiterate (31.9% of all students and 36.5% of boys). The highest frequency percentage among girls was related to fathers with a high school education (31.9% of girls). The highest frequency percentage was related to boys whose mothers are illiterate (63.8% of all students and 73.0% of boys). Approximately half of the girls have illiterate mothers (48.9%). The frequency percentage of mothers with a bachelor's degree or higher education is very low.

Table 2: Descriptive Findings of the Research Variables

Independent and Dependent Variables	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Interaction between Parents and Teachers	3.00	15.00	10.4793	-.266	-.565
Parental Conflict and Separation	5.00	25.00	19.3550	-.805	.919
Students' Association with Bad Friends	1.00	5.00	3.1598	-.025	-1.364
Parents' Socioeconomic Status	5.00	25.00	17.5385	-.313	-.058
Lack of Study Skills and Academic Planning	13.00	45.00	35.2959	-.652	.778
Parental Addiction	2.00	10.00	8.3254	-1.167	1.939
Academic Failure	29.00	125.00	94.1538	-.218	1.506

In the present study, the average scores were as follows: parental-teacher interaction was 15, parental conflict and separation was 25, association with delinquent friends was 5, parents' socioeconomic status was 25, lack of study skills and lesson planning was 45, parental addiction was 10, and academic failure was 125. Moreover, since the skewness and kurtosis values for all variables ranged between -2 and +2, the variables followed a normal distribution (Table 2).

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Parental-Teacher Interaction and Student Academic Underachievement

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Significance Level (p-value)
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
Student Academic Underachievement	2.322	131.	-	17.702	0.001
Parental-Teacher Interaction	-.205	054.	-.194	-3.822	0.001

The findings in Table 3 revealed that the variable "the nature of parent-teacher interaction" has a significant and inverse effect on the academic failure of lower secondary school students in the city of Khash, with a beta coefficient of -0.194 ($P < 0.05$). In other words, as the level of communication between parents and teachers decreases, students' academic failure increases. Therefore, this variable has had a meaningful influence on academic underachievement among lower secondary students in Khash.

Table 4: Regression Analysis of Parental Conflict and Separation and Students' Academic Failure

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Significance Level (p-value)
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
Student Academic Underachievement	2.413	112.	-	21.465	0.001
Parental-Teacher Interaction	174.	053.	169.	3.310	001.

The findings of Table 4 indicate that the variable parental conflict and separation has a significant and direct effect on the level of academic failure among lower secondary school students in the city of Khash, with a beta coefficient of 0.169 ($P < 0.05$). This means that as parental conflict and separation increase, the rate of students' academic failure also increases. Therefore, this variable—with a beta of 0.169—has been shown to significantly impact the academic failure of lower secondary students in Khash.

Table 5: Regression Analysis of the Relationship between Association with Deviant Peers and Academic Failure among Students

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Significance Level (p-value)
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
Student Academic Underachievement	2.505	134.	-	18.643	0.001
Parental-Teacher Interaction	179.	053.	172.	3.368	001.

Findings from Table 5 indicate that the level of association with deviant peers has a significant and direct effect on academic failure among lower secondary school students in Khash, with a Beta coefficient of 0.172 ($P < 0.05$). This means that as students' interactions with deviant peers increase, their level of academic failure also rises. Therefore, the variable "association with deviant peers" has had a statistically significant impact on academic decline among lower secondary school students in Khash.

جدول 6: تحلیل رگرسیون پایگاه اجتماعی و اقتصادی والدین و افت تحصیلی دانش‌آموزان

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Significance Level (p-value)
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
Student Academic Underachievement	2.482	135.	-	18.324	0.001
Parental-Teacher Interaction	-.172	055.	-.161	-3.145	002.

The findings of Table (6) showed that the parents' socio-economic status has a significant and inverse effect with a beta coefficient of -0.161 on the academic failure rate of first-level secondary school students in the city of Khash ($P < 0.05$); meaning that as the socio-economic status of parents weakens, the rate of academic

failure among students increases. Therefore, the variable of parents' socio-economic status was able to significantly affect the academic failure of first-level secondary school students in Khash with a beta of -0.161.

Table 7: Regression Analysis of Lack of Study Skills and Academic Planning on Students' Academic Failure

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Significance Level (p-value)
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
Student Academic Underachievement	1.738	146.	-	11.882	0.001
Parental-Teacher Interaction	152.-	054.	144.-	2.806-	0.001

The findings of Table 7 indicate that the lack of study skills and academic planning has a significant and negative effect on the academic failure of first-level secondary school students in the city of Khash, with a beta coefficient of -0.144 ($P < 0.05$). In other words, the absence of study and planning skills among students leads to an increase in their academic failure. Therefore, the variable of lacking study skills and academic planning has been able to significantly impact the academic failure of first-level secondary school students in Khash with a beta of -0.144.

Table 8: Regression Analysis of Parental Addiction and Students' Academic Failure

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Significance Level (p-value)
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
Academic Failure of Students	2.329	125.	-	18.637	0.001
Parental Addiction	098.	047.	107.	2.082	0.008

Findings from Table (8) showed that parental addiction has a significant and direct effect on the academic failure of first-level secondary school students in Khash city, with a beta coefficient of 0.107 ($P < 0.05$). This means that as parental addiction increases, the rate of academic failure among students also rises. Therefore, the variable of parental addiction has been able to significantly impact the academic failure of first-level secondary school students in Khash city with a beta of 0.107.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the social factors affecting academic failure among first-level secondary school students in Khash city. The results showed that the variable "interaction between parents and teachers" has a significant and inverse effect on academic failure, with a beta coefficient of -0.194. The interaction between subsystems such as home and school facilitates student growth and helps talents in reading and writing to flourish not only at school but also at home. According to structuration theory, paying adequate attention to the dialectical and reciprocal relationship between agency and structure in the interaction between parents and teachers in Khash, as well as the reciprocal interaction between social action and structure in these relationships, can help reduce students' academic failure.

The findings also showed that the variable "parental conflict and separation" has a significant and direct effect on academic failure, with a beta coefficient of 0.169. Based on behavioral exchange theory, if parents do not maintain proper communication, manage their expectations and beliefs, and solve marital problems adequately, it can lead to depression in students and consequently to their academic failure. According to attachment theory, the consequences of divorce and parental separation, along with lack of affection and intimacy between parents and with their children, lead to student depression, delinquency, and subsequently academic failure. Overall, if family conflicts are not reduced, if parents fail to manage their expectations of each other, and neglect their children's emotional and social needs, these factors over time cause anxiety and depression in students, resulting in academic failure.

The results revealed that the extent of students' association with delinquent peers has a significant and direct effect on academic failure, with a beta coefficient of 0.618. Student interaction with delinquent friends constitutes a form of social deviance that leads to unethical and deviant behaviors. This results in student depression and discouragement from studying, thereby contributing to academic failure. To prevent

or minimize students' association with delinquent peers, it is essential to strengthen communication skills, create healthy environments, raise awareness, support families, and provide counseling services, which can collectively reduce academic failure.

The results indicated that the parents' socioeconomic status has a significant and inverse effect on academic failure, with a beta coefficient of -0.161. These parents are mostly engaged in low-income and informal jobs, and based on their income and occupation, they receive little social recognition. In summary, socioeconomic status determines life opportunities, educational facilities, job positions, and health services and can contribute to the formation of social identity. People tend to join social groups, but those with low social status are less able to participate in these groups. Unequal distribution of power and social and economic disparities reduce parents' socioeconomic status and consequently increase student academic failure.

The findings also showed that lacking study skills and lesson planning has a significant and inverse effect on academic failure, with a beta coefficient of -0.144. Teaching study skills such as summarizing, note-taking, speed reading techniques, providing appropriate study spaces in schools, libraries, and homes, offering specialized guidance on study methods and lesson planning, and conducting practical training sessions can help students gain motivation and confidence to study effectively. Improving these skills among first-level secondary students in Khash can enhance comprehension, problem-solving abilities, self-confidence, reduce stress, improve time management, and thus decrease academic failure.

Finally, the findings showed that parental addiction has a significant and direct effect on academic failure, with a beta coefficient of 0.107. The data indicated that most first-level secondary students in Khash do not have addicted parents, though some students occasionally use drugs, and a smaller number are addicted, with addiction rates higher among boys. Similarly, most parents do not suffer from addiction, though some occasionally use drugs, and a smaller number are addicted. Most of the students' friends at school, neighborhood, and city levels do not use drugs, though some occasionally do, and some do use drugs, with a higher prevalence among boys.

Strengthening the school-family relationship through practical training and forming support groups (such as peer support groups) can minimize the negative effects of familial factors, even if small. The Parents and Teachers Association can take more serious steps toward this goal. Regarding individual factors influencing academic failure, programs can be planned to address students' emotional and behavioral challenges and strengthen their motivation, taking into account their potential talents through appropriate training.

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