

School Dropout Via School Failure

1- Definitions of School Dropout

- **Structural Definition:** School dropout refers to **early school leaving** before obtaining a diploma or certificate, reflecting broader **social inequalities** such as poverty, ethnicity, and geographic disparities (Hess & Hazel, 2021).
- **Process-Oriented Definition:** It is not a single event but a **gradual process of disengagement** from school, often beginning with absenteeism, low academic achievement, and weak attachment to school norms (Archambault et al., 2022).
- **Critical Sociological View:** Dropout is seen as a **socially produced phenomenon**, linked to systemic exclusion, marginalization, and institutional failure rather than only individual deficits (Fine, 1991).
- **Comparative Perspective:** The concept is also framed as “**early school leaving**” in European contexts, emphasizing its economic and social costs, including unemployment, welfare dependency, and crime (Rumberger, 2011).

2- Definitions of School Failure

- **Structural Perspective:** School failure refers to **systematic patterns of underachievement** linked to poverty, ethnicity, language barriers, and unequal access to resources (Hess & Hazel, 2021).
- **Social Constructionist View:** It is not merely an objective lack of achievement but a **socially constructed label** that emerges from everyday practices, teacher expectations, and institutional norms (Madan, 2020).
- **Critical Perspective:** School failure reflects **power relations** within education systems, where marginalized groups are disproportionately labeled as “failures,” reinforcing social inequality (Slee, 1998).
- **Process-Oriented Definition:** It is seen as a **gradual disengagement** from school life, often manifesting in absenteeism, low grades, and eventual dropout (Archambault et al., 2022).

3- The difference between School Failure and School Dropout

The difference is that **school failure** refers to *not achieving expected academic outcomes within the school system* (e.g., low grades, repeating years, poor performance), while **school dropout** refers to *leaving school before completing the prescribed level of education*. Failure may lead to dropout, but not all dropouts are the result of failure.

Key Differences Between *School Failure* and *School Dropout*

Aspect	School Failure	School Dropout
Definition	Inability to meet academic standards or expectations within the school system.	Premature exit from the school system before completing compulsory or expected education.
Nature	An <i>academic outcome</i> measured by grades, repetition, or standardized tests.	An <i>educational trajectory outcome</i> marked by leaving school entirely.
Process	Often gradual: poor performance, grade repetition, disengagement.	May be sudden or gradual: absenteeism, disengagement, or voluntary/involuntary withdrawal.
Causes	Learning difficulties, lack of support, poor teaching quality, socioeconomic disadvantage.	Structural inequalities, family responsibilities, economic pressures, school climate, or accumulated school failure.
Consequences	Stigmatization, reduced self-esteem, limited academic progression.	Loss of qualifications, reduced employment opportunities, higher risk of marginalization.
Sociological Lens	Seen as a socially constructed label reflecting institutional expectations and inequalities.	Seen as a structural phenomenon linked to systemic exclusion, poverty, and inequality.

References

- Archambault, I., Janosz, M., Olivier, E., & Dupré, V. (2022). Student engagement and school dropout: Theories, evidence, and future directions. In A. J. Reschly, A. L. Christenson, & S. L. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 331–355). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-07853-8_16
- Fine, M. (1991). *Framing dropouts: Notes on the politics of an urban public high school*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Gutiérrez-de-Rozas, B., Carpintero Molina, E., & López-Martín, E. (2022). Academic failure and dropout: Untangling two realities. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 11(4), 2275–2289. <https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.11.4.2275>
- Hess, R. S., & Hazel, C. E. (2021). Preventing school failure and school dropout. In P. J. Lazarus, S. M. Suldo, & B. Doll (Eds.), *Fostering the emotional well-being of our youth: A school-based approach* (pp. 395–412). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/med-psych/9780190918873.003.0020>

- Janosz, M., LeBlanc, M., Boularice, B., & Tremblay, R. E. (2000). Predicting different types of school dropouts: A typological approach. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92(1), 171–190. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.92.1.171>
- Madan, A. (2020). Sociological perspectives on everyday life and the social construction of school failure: A literature review. *Azim Premji University Working Paper Series*. <https://www.academia.edu/44118621>
- Rumberger, R. W. (2011). *Dropping out: Why students drop out of high school and what can be done about it*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Slee, R. (1998). *The politics of school failure*. London: Falmer Press.
- Viana, H. (2010). School failure: A sociological approach. *Revista Lusófona de Educação*, 15(15), 45–60.