

Factors Contributing to the Student Dropout Among Internally Displaced People and Refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Challenges and Implications

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ABSTRACT

Returning to learning was a campaign carried out by the school social workers in the Ministry of Education – KRG (MOE-KRG) to encourage students to return to school and to raise awareness among parents and local communities, targeting Internally Displaced People (IDP) and refugee populations in addition to the general population. Despite intensive efforts on the part of the Kurdistan Regional Government to improve the education sector, there are still lingering socioeconomic, structural and cultural factors that negatively impact student dropouts, including amongst IDPs and Refugees. This paper explores these factors in more detail, including gender and IDP/Refugee disparities. Secondary data were obtained from the MOE-KRG. This paper adopts a quantitative approach to analyzing a secondary dataset, utilizing Pearson's Chi-square tests and cross-tabulation analysis, with results indicating significance at p-values less than .001. Results also indicate that child labour, disability, distance from schools, and risks of travelling to school figured amongst the more prevalent factors. These factors relate the story of dropout among IDPs and refugees, where cultural and socioeconomic factors interact. Therefore, it is crucial to review policies and the infrastructural elements of the field of education. In addition, raising parental awareness and improving economic circumstances in our region and among IDP and Refugee communities.

KEY WORDS: Dropout, Education Policy, Child Labour, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPS), Refugees.

1. INTRODUCTION¹

Throughout recent history, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) has been a safe haven for IDPs and refugees. Individuals and groups fleeing man-made crises have found stability in this region, especially during and after ISIS raids and attacks in the surrounding areas. For many years, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has provided security and integration services for these individuals and groups. Education is one of the integration strategies. Despite the efforts of the MOE - KRG for implementing inclusion policies of IDPs and refugees within the education system, the issue of IDPs and refugee students dropping out of school persists. The Kurdistan Region of Iraq's education system has undergone significant changes since the fall of Saddam

Hussein's regime in 2003. The system consists of multiple levels, with Kurdish as the primary language and Arabic and English in higher education. The Kurdistan Regional Government manages education through its Ministry of Education, but faces challenges like high dropout rates and poor quality (Mahmood, et.al., 2025).

To address these issues, the KRG has revised the curriculum, prioritized teacher training, and established partnerships with international organizations. The focus is now on inclusivity, aiming to improve access for marginalized groups and low-income families.

In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, around 127,115 children were not attending school, according to a 2015 United Nations assessment (Rudaw, 2015). A 2020 UNICEF report indicates that upper secondary out-of-school rates in the Kurdistan Regional Government

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areas—including Duhok, Sulaymaniyah, and Erbil—are at or below 30% (UNICEF, 2020). The situation is further exacerbated by teacher shortages and inadequate training, which undermine the quality of education (World Bank, 2021).

Many students leave the educational system, which not only restricts their economic opportunities but also perpetuates cycles of poverty within the region (UNESCO, 2021). This is particularly true for IDP and refugee students, who are often in a fragile, vulnerable position. Although several studies explore school dropouts in Iraq and the region (Taha et al., 2025; Shanks, 2019; Adely et al., 2025), they do not examine the specific factors that lead IDP and refugee students to drop out of school, nor do they include IDP and refugee communities in their analyses of the general population.

Therefore, it is important to explore and understand the issue of dropping out of school, specifically among IDP and refugee students, as approximately 25% of Iraqi IDP children were not attending school by 2020 (Hassoun, 2023). The high rates of IDPs and refugees in the region are linked to students dropping out of school due to limited infrastructure, economic hardship, language barriers, and psychological trauma (Hassoun, 2023). Furthermore, gender is also an imperative factor that should be addressed in research when exploring dropping out of school among IDP and refugee students due to the sociodemographic and cultural landscape of the IDP and refugee communities.

This study addresses the significant issue of high dropout rates among IDP and Refugee students aged 7 to 25 in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The persistent challenge of students leaving school before completing their education poses serious implications for individual futures and societal development. Many students exit the educational system, which not only restricts their economic opportunities but also perpetuates cycles of poverty within the region (UNESCO, 2021). In addition to the fact that KRG and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) emphasise the equality and inclusion of vulnerable groups, specifically IDP and refugee children, in the education system. Despite the critical nature of this issue, there remains a limited understanding of the specific factors contributing to these high dropout rates, particularly among IDPs and Refugees. Previous research has often overlooked the complex interplay of socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional barriers that influence student retention (Khan et al., 2020). This gap in the literature underscores the need for a comprehensive examination of the reasons behind student dropout in the Kurdistan Region, highlighting the necessity for informed interventions to address this pressing problem. Additionally, elevated dropout rates can have significant long-term effects, such as higher unemployment rates and greater dependence on social services. This

highlights the critical need to address dropout rates in order to improve educational outcomes and support societal progress (Catterall, 1998). In order to obtain a more in-depth insight into the issue of dropout students among IDPs and refugees, this paper seeks to:

- To examine and identify trends in dropout patterns and trends among IDP and Refugee students aged 7 to 25 in the Kurdistan Region based on demographic factors.
- To examine the socio-economic, cultural, physical and mental health factors as determinants of dropping out among this community.

The following sections of the paper delve into the literature on IDPs and refugee dropouts, describe the research methodology, present findings and discuss implications for policy and practice.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section delves into the literature and the theoretical framework for the paper and the analysis. It is divided into the following sections:

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Social Reproduction Theory, rooted in Marxist and feminist paradigms (developed by Pierre Bourdieu and Sylvia Walby), examines how social structures, specifically class, gender and race, are perpetuated and reproduced across generations mainly through institutions like school, families, and the labour market. In education, Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital and habitus are central. These concepts explain how schools often reward the norms and knowledge of dominant groups, thereby marginalising students from less privileged backgrounds.

Deriving from Bourdieu's (1986) Social Reproduction Theory in the case of IDP and refugee education, students experience multiple barriers that can lead to dropping out of school, for example: interrupted education and trauma from conflict/displacement; language barriers; lack of documentation; discrimination and marginalisation; economic pressure to work instead of attending school; poor integration policies and under-resourced schools.

More specifically, schools may unintentionally reproduce inequalities by failing to address the specific needs of IDP and refugee students. Discrepancies in cultural and social capital can also be an issue, as IDP and refugee students may lack the dominant cultural values in schools (language skills and fluency, familiarity with the schools' norms), which can result in underperformance and dropping out of school. Another contributor is economic pressure and structural constraints, as the assumption

that IDP and refugee families experience economic hardship may lead them to prioritise survival over schooling, reinforcing the cycle of poverty and low educational attainment. Gender is another factor that can contribute to IDP and refugee students dropping out of school. Gendered expectations of displaced girls, including early marriage and domestic responsibilities, compound the risk of dropping out, illustrating how the system reproduces gendered inequalities. Another issue is institutional neglect and symbolic violence, which help explain how schools may unintentionally delegitimise IDP and refugee students' identities and experiences, undermining their confidence and sense of belonging, leading to dropping out of school.

2.2 Relevant research

Relevant studies have examined the issue of education among IDPs and refugees in terms of negotiating identities and the quality of education in the KRI; however, they don't address demographic, cultural, and societal predictors of dropping out of school, other than those that are similar to those in the hosting communities or the general population. For example, Shanks (2019) discussed the issue of Arabs, Kurds, Yezidis, Assyrians and Turkmen in which she "highlighted key areas in which misunderstanding of identity politics has resulted in reduced quality education for displaced populations." Khedir (2021) discusses social integration, including in the education of IDPs in KRI. Mahmood et al. (2025) investigated the causes of school dropouts in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in 2021, examining factors linked to dropping out of school in the general population, including IDP and refugee students.

2.3. Background and Historical Challenges

Student dropout refers to the state in which a student leaves school before completing the necessary curriculum, resulting in the failure to earn a diploma or equivalent certification (Rumberger, 2001). This topic is typically counted using dropout rates, which represent the number of students who leave school during a specific period.

While there is no legal definition of who constitutes an "internally displaced person" in international law, the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, define Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as: "... persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or other natural or human-made disasters' and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border." (OHCHR, n.d.; Leus, Wallace, and Loretto, 2001). This definition is intended to be descriptive rather than

normative, highlighting the characteristics of IDPs that make them inherently vulnerable (OHCHR, n.d.).

IDPs have not crossed an internationally recognised border, in contrast to refugees. IDPs may be displaced due to widespread violence, human rights violations, and natural or man-made disasters, while refugees may claim refugee status based on persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution for five reasons: race, religion, nationality, membership in a specific social group, or political opinion. As a result, the IDP group is far more inclusive than the refugee category, especially when environmental and development-induced displacement are taken into account. Furthermore, the Guiding Principles' definition is descriptive rather than legal. A special legal status similar to refugee status need not and cannot be granted to internally displaced persons. Other significant distinctions between IDPs and refugees affect long-term solutions. The corpus of legal interpretation for internally displaced people remains in its infancy, whereas refugee law is supported by fifty years of national jurisprudence, academic research, and UNHCR Executive Committee conclusions. Established in 1951 to aid and protect refugees, UNHCR serves as the "guardian" of the 1951 Convention. Although the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs frequently serves in that capacity, there is no formal "guardian" of the Guiding Principles for IDPs. Additionally, no single UN organisation (with a reliable source of funding) is tasked with assisting and protecting IDPs; instead, under humanitarian reform, a more flexible approach applies in emergencies, when several agencies are responsible for specific "clusters." Since refugees are by definition unable or unwilling to employ their government's protection, an international agency is tasked with protecting them; yet, national authorities are in charge of IDPs because they are citizens or habitual residents of that nation (UNHCR, n.d. and UNHCR, 2005) Dryden- Peterson (2011) explained the importance of education is framed as an "enabling right," by the UNHCR in 2011 which is defined as "skills that people need to reach their full potential and to exercise their other rights, such as the right to life and health" (INEE, 2010: 7). Student dropouts among IDPs and refugees in Iraq have been a significant issue, largely due to challenges such as instability, limited access to quality education, and socioeconomic hardships.

Several key factors contribute to these dropout rates:

1. Conflict and Displacement: Numerous children in Iraq who are IDPs or refugees have experienced displacement as a result of conflicts involving ISIS and other ongoing tensions in the region. This relocation hinders access to education and creates learning gaps when families relocate to new locations or camps. During the peak of the conflict, Iraq had 3,427,768 internally displaced persons

(IDPs) (IOM Iraq Mission, 2019a). The majority came from Sunni-dominated areas like Ninewah, Anbar, and Salah al Din, while a smaller number came from diverse regions such as Kirkuk and Diyala. After security forces regained control of areas held by ISIS, IDPs started to return to their homes, but the rate of returns has since decreased, leaving 1,665,108 individuals still displaced. (IOM Iraq Mission, 2019a). This involves many IDPs impacted by the ISIS conflict and fewer displaced by ongoing instability in Anbar, Salah al Din, and Ninewah, civil unrest in Basra and other regions in southern Iraq, historical tribal, ethnic, or sectarian tensions, and territorial conflicts between KRI and the Federal Government. Some IDPs were forced to leave or are still being forced to leave their home regions due to various reasons and intricate relationships within their governorates. According to the Iraq Humanitarian Country Team (2018), the Education Cluster approximates that there are 776,000 IDPs of school age in Iraq. Although education participation is low for all conflict-affected children, it is even lower for IDPs: A 2018 assessment found that just 42% of IDP children aged 6-17 in camps attend formal education, compared to 60% of IDP children in host communities and 73% of non-displaced remainee children (REACH Iraq, 2018). Whereas the Refugee populations in the Kurdistan Region are primarily Syrian due to the ongoing conflict in Syria, since 2011 (See the results).

2. Limited Educational Infrastructure: In refugee and IDP camps, there is often a shortage of schools, trained teachers, and adequate resources like textbooks. Overcrowded classrooms, poor school facilities, and limited language support also hinder the learning experience, making it challenging for students to stay engaged. The issues of a lack of infrastructure or insufficient infrastructure are less relevant in the Kurdistan Region than in other parts of Iraq. The only issue related to IDPs and refugees in the area is the availability of qualified staff. IDP teachers in the Kurdistan Region teach IDP students, funded by their home governorates' Directorates of Education. Staff shortages are filled by untrained parents and community members who volunteer or receive a small stipend from UN agencies or NGOs. Only a small number of teachers, whether they are professionals or volunteers, receive training on contemporary teaching methods or techniques to provide psychological assistance to students who have experienced trauma, resulting in low learning results. According to UNESCO assessments, 35% of fourth-grade IDP students surveyed struggled with basic addition problems, and 36% had difficulty reading sentences (UNESCO Iraq Office, 2019). Examination of data on learning outcomes also shows a connection between extended periods of displacement and decreased literacy and numeracy abilities (Global

Education Monitoring Report Team, 2018). Numerous students are above the typical age (UNESCO Iraq Office, 2019). Information from the records of Education Cluster partners shows that a significant number of students, especially girls, are dropping out of school from the primary level.

3. Economic Hardship: Many displaced families struggle financially and may prioritise income generation over education. Children are often required to work to support their families, especially in areas with high unemployment required to work to support their families, especially in areas with high unemployment rates. This economic necessity frequently leads to school dropouts. Many theorists have discussed the socioeconomic aspects of students dropping out of school in general; these theories apply specifically to the IDPs and Refugees, since these groups are considered a vulnerable group and frequently face economic hardship.

4. Language Barriers: Iraq hosts a diverse population, including Kurdish, Arabic, and other language groups. Language differences can become a barrier to education, especially for refugees from Syria and other bordering countries, where the primary language might differ from that used in Iraqi schools. Arabic-speaking IDP children in the Kurdistan Region face significant barriers to accessing education, as there is a limited number of Arabic-medium schools available. Furthermore, it remains unclear whether the Federal Government's Ministry of Education will recognise qualifications obtained from schools in the Kurdistan Region, given differences in curricula. Although the Federal Ministry has established schools for IDPs in the Kurdistan Region that offer the approved curriculum in Arabic, those IDPs residing in host communities often encounter challenges as these schools are distant from their homes. The associated transportation costs can impose a financial strain on families, and the considerable distance may raise safety concerns, deterring families from enrolling their children, especially in second- or third-shift classes that conclude in the late afternoon or evening (UNESCO, 2019). However, for refugees, the KRG offers the regional curriculum in Arabic (Hamza, personal communication, November 10, 2024).

5. Psychological Trauma: Displaced children and youth often experience trauma due to the violence they may have witnessed or endured. This trauma can impact their mental health and ability to concentrate in school, leading to increased dropout rates. Seidi, et al. (2023) found a prevalence of mental health concerns among IDPs in camps in the Garmian area of the Kurdistan region. Mahmood et al. (2019) found evidence of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder predictors amongst Syrian refugees.

6. Gender-Based Challenges: Girls in particular face

additional obstacles to education, including early marriage pressures, cultural norms, and safety concerns, which may prevent them from attending school consistently. From the cultural theoretical perspective, the number of girls dropping out of school should be larger than the boys dropping out of school. (Hunersen, et al., 2024)

7. Access to Secondary and Higher Education: While some primary education may be available, access to secondary and higher education is limited for refugees and IDPs. This often leads to higher dropout rates after primary school, as there may be no clear pathway to further education. (Lorisika, 2015).

Efforts are underway to address these issues, such as support from international organizations and NGOs that provide education funding, infrastructure improvements, and mental health support. However, continued investment is crucial for improving educational access and reducing dropout rates among Iraq's displaced students.

Therefore, examining student dropout among IDPs and refugees requires an analysis of the various factors that contribute to dropping out of school. These can be grouped into individual, familial, institutional, and societal categories, as well as into security and accessibility. Individual factors encompass academic achievement and personal Challenges include socio-economic background and parental involvement, while institutional factors relate to the quality of the school environment, including available resources and support systems. Societal elements cover economic conditions and cultural norms that may affect students (Finn, 1989; Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

2.4. IDPs and Refugees in Kurdistan Region

There are still about 1.3 million internally displaced people (IDPs) in Iraq, even though many of the six million Iraqis displaced during the Iraq-Daesh War have returned to their neighborhoods. By 2020, approximately 25% of Iraqi IDP children were not attending school (Hassoun, 2023). According to UNHCR, by the end of 2015, there were 65 million displaced people worldwide, while another UNHCR report estimated there were 233,224 Syrian refugees in Iraq. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports that there were 3.4 million internally displaced people in Iraq between 2014 and 2016 (Ameen, 2018). Dryden-Peterson (2011) outlined three central justifications for the provision of education in emergencies: 1. education should be a component of the immediate response to displacement (for example, in the case of IDPs and refugees); 2. access to education is a fundamental right, guaranteed by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights; 3. education is a long-term investment for society, interacting with society's social, economic political and

security spheres.

2.5. IDPs and Refugees in the Educational System in the Kurdistan Region

Since 2003, the education system in the Kurdistan Region - Iraq has undergone a significant transformation, influenced by historical, cultural, and political contexts. The system consists of multiple educational levels, spanning nine years of preparatory education, and three years of high School. The MOE - KRG is mandated to manage education affairs and policies in the region. Despite efforts to include IDPs and refugees, security and lack of access to education are critical issues among refugees. In addition, socioeconomic and cultural challenges have led to increased dropout rates and concerns about educational quality; however, the clash between identities and politics remains a critical issue (Shanks, 2019). UNICEF (2020) reports that approximately 13% of children aged 5-17 are employed in the Kurdistan Region, highlighting economic pressures that influence dropout rates. Additionally, teacher shortages and insufficient training impede educational quality, worsening circumstances (World Bank, 2021). KRG, through MOE, seeks to address dropout rates among IDPs and Refugees in collaboration with local and international NGOs.

Partnerships with international organizations have been established to enhance educational outcomes and resource development. There is an increasing focus on inclusivity, characterized by policies that enhance access for marginalized groups and financial assistance initiatives for low-income families (UNESCO, 2020); for example, the Refugee Education Integration Policy (REIP) provides inclusive and quality education for all children in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq - July 2024. Hence, the education system in the Kurdistan Region has made notable progress; although it still faces considerable challenges, particularly concerning dropout rates and educational quality. A collaborative approach involving the government, communities, and international partners is crucial to ensure equitable access to quality education for all children in the region, including IDPs and Refugee children.

3. METHODOLOGY

This article used the SPSS 25 software package to analyses the data. Hence, a quantitative approach was performed. The dataset used for the analysis was obtained officially from the MOE - KRG) through a request letter, attached to this research paper. The dataset was collected through a 2021 survey as part of the Back to Learning campaign. This survey is conducted annually by the ministry across the three governorates (Erbil, Duhok, and Sulaymaniyah). While the specific methods of data

collection are unavailable, one can argue that this dataset is reliable because it was created by an official governmental institution (MOE-KRG) in 2021.

This paper carried out Pearson's Chi-Square tests (χ^2) for the categorical variables to determine whether observed differences between the groups or sets occurred by chance. To describe the relationship between two categorical variables, this article used cross-tabulation (also known as crosstab, two-way table, or contingency table). The data met the two requirements for conducting cross-tabulation analysis. The variables were categorical, and all analyzed variables included two or more groups (categories). Cross-tabulation is a statistical tool used to analyses the relationship between two or more categorical variables by displaying the data in a matrix format. It helps us to observe how different categories of one variable relate to categories of another. It is also used for exploratory analyses.

4. RESULTS

Therefore, this paper is about the story of the dropouts among the displaced population (IDPs and refugees) in Kurdistan, the sample size ($N = 23796$) of dropouts. The sample size was broken down to IDPs ($n = 21875$) and refugees ($n = 1921$); both categories were camp- and non-camp-based.

4.1 Demographic description of the population

Table (1) provides a description of the IDP and Refugee populations in the Kurdistan region, along with gender and age categories within the two populations. The Chi-square test was ($\chi^2=104.409$) with p-values less than .001. The Table indicates that dropouts among IDP females are higher than among IDP males until age 14, after which the number of dropouts among female IDPs is higher than among male IDPs. Among Refugees, the number of males is consistently higher. Therefore, we performed a second cross-tabulation to examine differences within each age group.

Table (1) Description of the IDP and Refugee populations in the Kurdistan region. Displacement

* gender * Age categories Crosstabulation

Age (years)	IDP			Refugee			Total
	Femal	Male	Total	Femal	Male	total	
(6-8)	1063	1047	2110	86	85	171	2281
(9-11)	1568	1406	2974	100	115	215	3189
(12-14)	3071	2988	6059	160	350	510	6569
(15-17)	2321	3755	6076	251	403	654	6730
(18-25)	1459	3197	4656	155	216	371	5027
(6-25)	9482	12393	21875	752	1169	1921	23796

Table (1) provides a cross-tabulation of status (IDP and Refugee) by gender and age groups (6–25 years) in the Kurdistan Region. The results show that there are statistically significant differences between the groups ($\chi^2 = 104.409$, $p < 0.001$).

The total number of IDPs shows that there are more males (12,393) than females (9,482). For example, at ages 6–8, there are 1,063 females and 1,047 males; at ages 9–11, there are 1,568 females and

1,406 males; and at ages 12–14, there are 3,071 females and 2,988 males. In the younger age groups (6–14 years), female IDPs drop out of school at a slightly higher rate than male IDPs. But the pattern changes after age 15, when there are a lot more male IDPs than female ones. There are 3,755 boys and 2,321 girls aged 15–17. There are 3,197 boys and 1,459 girls aged 18–25. This shows that the genders have switched, with girls more common in school-age groups up to 14 and boys becoming more common in older age groups.

The pattern is different for the Refugee population. In every age group, there are always more males than females. At years 6–8, there are 85 men and 86 females (about equal), but the gap grows starting at ages 9–11: 115 males and 100 females; 350 males and 160 females at ages 12–14; 403 males and 251 girls at ages 15–17; and 216 males and 155 females at ages 18–25. In total, there are a lot more male refugees (1,169) than female refugees (752). Table (2) shows the description of the IDP and Refugee populations in the Kurdistan region. Where the chi-square test was significant p-values less than

.001 ($\chi^2= 23811.711$). Ages 11 – 19 were more among Refugees whereas ages 12 – 19 where more among IDPs dropouts. Consistently, males were more than females among both IDP and Refugee dropouts: IDPs ($n= 21875$), females ($n= 9482$) and males ($n= 12393$); similarly, among Refugees ($n=$

1921), females ($n= 752$), males ($n= 1169$). It is clear from the data that the number of IDP dropouts is higher than the number of refugee dropouts (21875 n vs. 1921 n.) This can be due to access to education, and limited educational structures (Mahmood, et.al., 2025).

Table 2 shows the number of IDPs and refugees in the Kurdistan Region, divided by age group (6–25 years) and gender. There was a robust connection ($\chi^2 = 23,811.711$, $p < 0.001$) between age, gender, and mobility ($p < 0.001$). This indicates that the groups are quite distinct from one another.

There are 21,875 IDPs, and males outnumber females in most age categories (12,393 to 9,482). People aged 12 to 17 are more likely than anyone else to drop out of school. 2,187 youngsters dropped out at 13, 2,153 at 14, 112 at 15, and 2,139 at 16. There are roughly as many girls as boys born in the first six years (6–11). But after 12, there are more boys than girls. There are 672 males and 246 females

in this group of 19-year-olds.

There are 1,69 more males than females among the 1,921 refugees, regardless of their age. People frequently drop out of school between the ages of 11 and 19. Most people drop out at age 16 (228 instances, 85 females and 143 males) and then at age 15 (205 cases, 74 females and 131 males). On the other side, there aren't many youngsters who drop out of school when they're 6 to 8 years old, and the number lowers dramatically after they turn

20. No one has said that refugees between the ages of 22 and 25 have failed.

IDPs had a substantially higher dropout rate than refugees of all ages when they were divided by age (21,875 vs. 1,925). Mahmood et al. (2021) believe that this huge difference could be because IDP groups don't have enough access to schools or the proper infrastructure.

Table (2) Description of the IDP and Refugee populations in the Kurdistan region. Displacement * gender * Age Crosstabulation

Age (years)	IDPs			Refugee			Total
	Female	Male	total	Female	Male	Total	
6	287	298	585	30	30	60	645
7	439	434	873	40	28	68	941
8	337	315	652	16	27	43	695
9	381	395	776	30	33	63	839
10	477	448	925	37	38	75	1000
11	710	563	1273	33	44	77	1350
12	932	787	1719	44	94	138	1857
13	1103	1084	2187	56	132	188	2375
14	1036	1117	2153	60	124	184	2337
15	899	1213	2112	74	131	205	2317
16	787	1352	2139	85	143	228	2367
17	635	1190	1825	92	129	221	2046
18	445	1012	1457	80	117	197	1654
19	246	672	918	53	68	121	1039
20	170	413	583	14	14	28	611
21	154	357	511	8	17	25	536
22	165	307	472	0	0	0	472
23	130	200	330	0	0	0	330
24	118	142	260	0	0	0	260
25	31	94	125	0	0	0	125
Total	9482	12393	21875	752	1169	1921	23796

This section includes age and gender distribution within the IDP and refugee dropouts. Similar to Mahmood et al. (2025) and Save the Children (2024), results indicated that males were more likely to drop out of school, which could

be related to economic, health and cultural factors. (Hunersen, et.al., 2024).

4.2 cultural, socio-economic, and physical and mental health factors

Table (3) presents the results of a cross-tabulation analysis, in which the chi-square test was significant, with p-values less than .001 ($\chi^2 = 12.654$). The lion's share shows learning difficulty as a reason for dropping out of school, especially among IDPs ($n = 6566$), comprised of more males ($n = 3720$) than females ($n = 2846$).

Similarly, the proportions were higher among male Refugees ($n = 373$) than females Refugees ($n = 277$). With respect to Social Disability as a reason for dropping out of school, IDPs ($n = 747$), female IDPs ($n = 377$) were slightly more than male IDPs ($n = 370$). Whereas, among refugees ($n = 155$), male refugees ($n = 82$) were more than female refugees ($n = 73$). Physical disability among IDP dropouts ($n = 314$) the share of males ($n = 208$) was higher than females ($n = 106$). Whereas, Physical disability among refugees was ($n = 36$), again male ($n = 19$) refugees were more than female refugees ($n = 17$). Physical and mental disabilities were contributors to dropping out of school. This might be due to deficiencies in inclusion policies, adequate infrastructure, and the lack of trained and professional personnel.

Lack of interest from parents as a reason for dropping out of school ($n = 5622$), the number was greater among female IDPs ($n = 3172$) than male IDPs ($n = 2450$). Cultural obstacles to education are relevant in the case of IDPs, since they come from backgrounds that don't consider girls' education important. On the contrary, Refugees ($n = 308$) the male ($n = 188$) refugees were more than female refugees ($n = 120$). This indicates that sociodemographic factors are more relevant among refugees, where acquiring additional income to support the family is more important, hence this gender difference in the number of dropouts.

Child labour ($n = 3130$) was more common among IDP males ($n = 2783$) than IDP females ($n = 347$). Similarly, among the Refugees ($n = 351$), the proportion of refugee males ($n = 290$) was more than that of refugee females ($n = 61$). Marriage as a reason for dropping out among IDPs ($n = 342$) was more common among females ($n = 303$) than among males ($n = 39$), as indicated by Hunersen et al. (2024). ($n = 63$) of Refugees were dropping out due to marriage where the number of female IDPs ($n = 55$) were more than male IDPs ($n = 8$).

Distance to school was a reason for dropping out of school entirely ($n = 2269$); again, male IDPs were more likely ($n = 1261$) than female IDPs ($n = 1008$). Whereas among the refugees ($n = 70$) males ($n = 32$) were less than females ($n = 38$). Danger to get to school as a reason

among IDPs ($n = 1865$) males ($n = 918$) were less than females ($n = 947$). Whereas among refugees ($n = 148$) males ($n = 89$) were more than females ($n = 59$). Once more, the cultural factor is evident for the IDP dropouts, whereas sociodemographic factors are more evident among refugees when it comes to gender differences in the number of dropout students.

Similar to the hosting community, the impact of friends and bullying was also a contributor to dropping out of school. The impact of Friends as a reason for dropping out of school among IDPs ($n = 558$). Males accounted for a greater share of the number of dropouts ($n = 373$) than females ($n = 185$). Amongst Refugees, the impact of friends as a reason for dropping out of school was ($n = 69$) with males ($n = 49$) numbering more than females ($n = 20$). Bullying was another reason for dropping out among IDPs (165). Males ($n = 98$) were more bullied than females ($n = 67$). Among Refugees ($n = 23$), again, males ($n = 15$) were more likely than females ($n = 8$) to drop out due to bullying.

Table (3) shows the reasons why boys and girls from IDP and refugee families in the Kurdistan Region leave school. The chi-square test showed a statistically significant relationship ($\chi^2 = 12.654$, $p < 0.001$), which means that cultural, social, economic, and health-related factors have a substantial effect on who drops out of school.

Kids drop out of school frequently because they are unable to learn. This fact led to 6,566 students dropping out of school, including 3,720 boys and 2,846 girls. There have been 650 occurrences of this happening to refugees, and it is more common among boys (373) than girls (277). This pattern shows that inclusive education faces challenges, including a shortage of trained teachers and inadequate support services.

The second most important thing is related to parents not caring about education. 5,622 kids left school for this reason, and the majority of them were girls (3,172 girls to 2,450 boys). This shows that cultural problems still make it harder for girls to acquire an education since some families still don't think it's vital for girls to go to school. There were 308 refugee students who reported incidents: 188 boys and 120 girls. In this case, the reason is more social and economic, since boys are often told to drop out of school to help their families make money.

Child labour was a big part of the problem, especially for people who had to leave their families behind. There were 3,130 cases in all, including 2,783 males and 347 females. There were 351 refugee pupils, of whom 290 were boys and only 61 girls, who faced this situation. People noticed that these kids had the same inclination. This indicates that boys are more prone to start working early to aid their families because money and society are hard for

them.

It was also crucial how far away and how dangerous it was to go to school. 2,269 IDP students said they dropped out because they lived too far away. There were 1,261 boys and 1,008 girls, which is a little more than the other way around. There were 70 refugees; 38 were females and 32 males. 1,865 IDPs felt it was dangerous to attend school. There were 947 females and 918 males in this instance. On the other hand, 148 refugee pupils were worried about being in danger. There were 89 males and 59 females. These differences show that refugees are more worried about their social and economic concerns, while internally displaced persons (IDPs) are more worried about the safety and freedom of girls.

People also left because they were getting married, which was especially true for girls. There were 342 IDP cases that had to do with marriage. 303 of them were females, and only 39 were males. Refugees exhibited a comparable trend, with 63 occurrences comprising 55 females and 8 males. These findings corroborate a prior study (Hunersen et al., 2024) indicating that early marriage adversely impacts females' schooling.

There were also symptoms of problems with mental or physical health and social life. Social impairment was an issue in 747 IDP instances. There were a few more ladies (377) than men (370). There were 155 refugee cases, and again, males (82) outnumbered females (73). There were 314 cases of IDPs and 36 cases of refugees with physical disabilities, with males being the majority in both categories. There were also health issues that afflicted 256 IDPs and 44 Refugees, such as sickness and autism, which impacted 37 IDPs and 3 Refugees.

#Peer-related factors had a small but important effect.

558 kids left IDP schools due to their friends, including 373 guys and 185 girls. Refugees said there were 69 cases of school dropouts for the same reason, 49 of which were males and 20 females. Bullying also made people leave school. There were 165 IDP cases (98 boys and 67 girls) and 23 Refugee cases (15 males and 8 girls).

Only a few girls dropped out due to pregnancy. Four girls who were displaced, and one who was a refugee, experienced this. This rationale, although uncommon, illustrates a significant issue in schooling for both girls and boys. In short, Table 3 demonstrates that the main reasons why displaced people drop out of school are because they can't study, their parents don't help them enough, and they are obliged to work as kids. IDPs are more likely to display cultural features like not valuing girls' education and getting married young. But for refugees, things like child labour seem to be more important. Health issues and problems with friends also affect people, but not as much. This indicates that there

are many reasons why kids leave school when they have to move.

Table (3): Cross-tabulation analysis for dropout students among IDPs and Refugees within the reasons for dropping out of school.

Dropout Reason	IDPs			Refugee			Total
	Female	Male	total	Female	Male	Total	
Pregnancy	4	0	4	1	0	1	5
Autism	9	28	37	1	2	3	40
Bullying	67	98	165	8	15	23	188
Illness	111	145	256	22	22	44	300
Physical disability	106	208	314	17	19	36	350
Marriage	303	39	342	55	8	63	405
Impact of Friends	185	373	558	20	49	69	627
Social Disability	377	370	747	73	82	155	902
Danger to get to school	947	918	1865	59	89	148	2013
Distance to school	1008	1261	2269	38	32	70	2339
Child labor	347	2783	3130	61	290	351	3481
Lack of interest from parent	3172	2450	5622	120	188	308	5930
Learning difficulty	2846	3720	6566	277	373	650	7216
Total	9482	12393	21875	752	1169	1921	23796

5. DISCUSSION

The findings are important for enriching the accumulated knowledge on education in emergencies. Factors influencing the increased dropout rates among IDPs and Refugees are complex, factors such as security, trauma, in addition to socioeconomic and cultural factors. This paper's objectives were to: 1. to examine and identify patterns and trends in dropout rates among IDP and Refugee students aged 7 to 25 in the Kurdistan Region based on demographic factors. 2. to examine the cultural, socio-economic, and physical and mental health factors as determinants of dropping out among this community, as indicated by the secondary data.

The IDP and refugee students suffer from a lack of qualified or trained teaching staff for students with learning difficulties, autism, social disability, physical disability and any illness in general. Another issue that can be under the focus of the KRG-MoH, when it comes to the issue of education among IDPs and refugees, is the lack of infrastructure or insufficient infrastructure to accommodate students with learning difficulties, autism, social disabilities, and any illness in general. In addition,

schools in rural areas are less accessible and less staffed.

Child labour, driven by economic circumstances, remains the number one reason students drop out of school. Unfortunately, this affects boys more than girls among IDP and Refugee populations. Additionally, IDP and Refugee parents' awareness is key to continuing education in both rural and urban areas in addition to improving the economic circumstances.

The results of the current study are intricately associated with the topics discovered in the literature and can be considered through the framework of "Social Reproduction Theory". Education often reinforces prevailing social inequities, particularly when institutions disregard the needs of marginalised populations (Bourdieu, 1986). In the KRI, despite important hard work by the "Ministry of Education" and its global allies to promote inclusion (UNESCO, 2020), IDP and refugee students constantly face basic barriers that lead to increased dropout rates.

The descriptive statistics in Tables 1–3 clearly show that students drop out for many multifaceted reasons, including health, cultural, and socio-economic factors. These results align with previous literature that has recognised economic deprivation, language barriers, and inadequate infrastructure as the main obstacles to education for displaced groups (REACH Iraq 2018; UNESCO Iraq Office, 2019; Shanks, 2019). The high dropout proportion amongst IDP males due to child labour (Table 3) strongly supports the claim in the literature that displaced families put making money before getting an education because they need money (Finn, 1989; Rumberger & Lim, 2008). This inclination clearly specifies how Bourdieu's theory enlightens how having or not having money affects a person's chances of acquiring an education.

Culture and gender can play an important role in dropout rates. The finding show that early female marriage significantly affects the dropout rates of girls inside (IDPs) and refugees validating Hunersen et al.'s (2024) claim that cultural norms often constrain girls' educational chances.

This links with Social Reproduction Theory's assertion that gender norms and opportunities are continued through home structures and official governance (Walby, 1990). Schools in the KRI want to be open to everyone, but they often lack the resources to challenge these cultural norms. This keeps gender inequality going when it should not.

Table (3) shows that homework burden was the top reason students leave the school. This applied to refugees

and IDPs. The findings align with studies on underfunded schools, unskilled instructors, and a lack of special education (World Bank, 2021; UNESCO, 2019). Bourdieu argues that this is symbolic violence, as schools ignore marginalised students' learning demands and cultural capital. Institutional incompetence and economic and cultural constraints marginalise IDP and refugee students.

The literature evaluates the past and political background of replacement, for example, the greater distance from schools, the risks of accessing education, and those affected by conflict. These matters may indicate an interrupted habitus, in which movement uncertainty disrupts children's educational progress and reduces their capacity to acquire the cultural and social capital required for academic success. These results indicate that the high school dropout rates among IDP and refugee teenagers in the Kurdistan Region arise not only from individual choices or shortcomings but also from systemic inequalities. Economic deprivation, cultural barriers, and institutional flaws mutually reinforce one another, limiting the educational opportunities of displaced children and perpetuating cycles of poverty and marginalisation.

This research contextualises the findings within Social Reproduction Theory, demonstrating how educational systems in hazardous contexts may unintentionally perpetuate inequality rather than reduce it. This has a big consequence on KRI's instructions and applies. To keep children from working, first, we need to help families make a living. Second, we need programs that take culture into account to solve gender inequalities, particularly when it comes to early marriage and

how parents feel about girls' schooling. Third, the system needs to be enhanced so that the special education system, teacher training, and trauma-informed teaching methods function better.

Even though the KRG has made a lot of improvement towards inclusion, the fact that many IDPs and refugees are still dropping out of school recommends that the economy, culture, and institutions need to change a lot further to stop the cycle of social reproduction and educational elimination.

6. CONCLUSION

All the issues that were more evident in the findings and discussion section were related to the following areas despite the extreme efforts from the Kurdistan Regional Government to improve the education sector.

Although, on paper, all students, boys and girls, have the right to education, there are still obstacles to achieving

"education for all." IDP and refugee girls and boys are entitled to the right to education guaranteed by the Iraqi constitution and education policies in both Iraq and the KRG. However, cultural, socioeconomic, infrastructural and institutional obstacles stand against this entitlement. The evidence shows that socioeconomic, individual and structural factors are central in shaping the school dropout rates among IDP and refugee students.

Despite the KRG's and its local and global partners' hard work, IDP and refugee children in the Kurdistan region of Iraq still face distress when going to school. The findings show that low-income levels, gender, language problems, insufficient facilities, and mental health challenges may force children to withdraw from school.

These consequences support Social Reproduction

Theory that says the educational structure preserves difference by not providing displaced students with the cultural and social resources they need to do well. Children who are encouraged to stay in school without clear solutions to the issues they face will face a harsh struggle and remain poor and alone. For the future of society, it is important to provide everyone with a fair and stable education.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the insufficient numbers of school social workers, the phenomenon of dropping out of school because of bullying and other disabilities, such as social, physical, autistic and illnesses in general, is more common among the dropouts. Therefore, it is crucial to employ and increase the number of school social workers and shadow teachers in schools, both among IDPs and Refugees.

Enhancing structural and socioeconomic circumstances is one of the crucial aspects, in addition to raising parents' awareness, that need to be addressed by the government and NGOs.

Revising and improving education policy in order to enhance and increase the inclusive of children with disabilities, both physical and mental.

Finally, this persistent issue of dropping out of school needs to be further researched and discussed within academia, as well as among IDP and refugee communities to understand the issue of dropouts within the context of emergencies.

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دراسة تسرب الطلاب من المدارس النازحين واللاجئين في إقليم كردستان- العراق التحديات والتجارب

المخلص

كانت حملة العودة إلى التعلم تم تنفيذها من قبل المرشدين التربويين في المدارس في وزارة التربية- حكومة إقليم كردستان (MoE-KRG) لتعزيز العودة إلى المدرسة وزيادة الوعي بين أولياء الأمور والمجتمعات المحلية ، حيث تم استهداف النازحين واللاجئين. على الرغم من الجهود التي تبذلها حكومة إقليم كردستان لتحسين قطاع التعليم، لا تزال هناك عوامل اجتماعية واقتصادية ومؤسسية وثقافية مستدامة تؤثر على تسرب الطلاب، بما في ذلك النازحين داخليا واللاجئين. تبحث هذه الورقة هذه العوامل بمزيد من التفصيل بما في ذلك التفاوتات بين الجنسين والنازحين داخليا واللاجئين. تم استخدام نظرية رأس المال الاجتماعي ورأس المال الثقافي كإطار نظري. تم الحصول على البيانات الثانوية رسمياً من وزارة التربية - حكومة إقليم كردستان كحملة العودة إلى التعلم. نفذت هذه الدراسة نهجاً كميًا لتحليل مجموعة بيانات ثانوية من خلال استخدام مربعات كاي بيرسون وتحليل الجدولة المتقاطعة ، حيث تشير النتائج إلى مستويات دلالة القيم p أقل من 0.001 أشارت النتائج أيضاً إلى أن عمالة الأطفال ، البعد الجغرافي عن المدارس ، ومخاطر الوصول إلى المدرسة كانت أكثر شيوعاً بين العوامل. تدل هذه العوامل ظروف الطلاب المتسربين من النازحين داخليا واللاجئين، حيث تمت الإشارة إلى العوامل الثقافية والتفاعل بين العوامل الاجتماعية والاقتصادية. لذلك ، من الضروري مراجعة السياسات وعناصر البنية التحتية في مجال التعليم. بالإضافة إلى توسيع وعي أولياء الأمور وتحسين الظروف الاقتصادية في منطقتنا وبين مجتمعات النازحين واللاجئين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التسرب ، سياسة التعليم ، عمالة الأطفال ، النازحين داخليا (IDPs)، اللاجئون.

ليكوئينهوه له داپرانی قوتاییه ئاوارهكان و پهنا بهران له خویندن له هه‌رمیی كوردستان ئاسته‌نگ و ئەزمونه‌كان

پوخته

هه‌لمه‌تی گه‌رانه‌وه بۆ قوتابخانه له‌لایهن رێنمایی‌کاری پەرۆوه‌رده‌یی قوتابخانه‌كان له وه‌زاره‌تی پەرۆوه‌رده‌ی هه‌رمیی كوردستان به‌رپه‌وه‌چوو بۆ هاندانی داپراوان له خویندن و گه‌رانه‌وه‌یان بۆ قوتابخانه. هه‌روه‌ها به‌رزكردنه‌وه‌ی هۆشیاری له نێو دایك و باوكان و كۆمه‌لگه‌ خۆجێیه‌كاندا. سه‌ره‌پای هه‌وله‌ زۆره‌كانی حكومه‌تی هه‌رمیی كوردستان بۆ په‌رپێدانی كه‌رتی پەرۆوه‌رده، هه‌شتا هۆكاره‌ كۆمه‌لایه‌تی و ئابووری و دامه‌زراوه‌یی و كه‌لتوو‌ریه‌كان كاریگه‌ریان له‌سه‌ر به‌رده‌وامبوون له خویندن هه‌یه، له‌نیوانیاندا ئاواره‌كان و په‌نا به‌ران. ئەم توێژینه‌وه‌یه له‌م هۆكاره‌ به‌ وردی ده‌كوئینه‌وه له‌وانه‌ جیاوازی جێنده‌ری و ئاواره‌كان و په‌نا به‌ران. تێوری سه‌رمایه‌ی كۆمه‌لایه‌تی و سه‌رمایه‌ی كۆلتوو‌ری و ده‌ك چوارچێوه‌یه‌كی تێوری به‌كارده‌هێنرێت. داتای لاوه‌كی وه‌ك هه‌لمه‌تیه‌ك بۆ گه‌رانه‌وه بۆ خویندن له وه‌زاره‌تی پەرۆوه‌رده‌ی هه‌رمیی كوردستان به‌ فهرمی وه‌رگه‌راوه. ئەم توێژینه‌وه‌یه رێبازی چهن‌دتی بۆ شیکردنه‌وه‌ی كۆمه‌لێك له داتای دووه‌می ئه‌نجامداوه به‌ به‌كارهێنانی كای سكوی‌ری پیرسۆن و شیکردنه‌وه‌ی خسته‌ی یه‌ك‌تێر، كه‌ ئه‌نجامه‌كان ئاماژه‌ داوه به‌ ئاستی گرنگی نرخی p كه‌مه‌تر له 0.001 هه‌روه‌ها ئه‌نجامه‌كان ئاماژه‌ یان به‌وه‌دا كه‌ كاركردنی مندالان و كه‌مه‌ندامی و دووری له قوتابخانه و مه‌ترسی گه‌یشتن به قوتابخانه له نێو هۆكاره‌كاندا به‌ربلاوترین. ئەم هۆكاره‌ چیرۆکی وازه‌نیانی خویندگاری ئاواره و په‌نا به‌ران ده‌گێرینه‌وه، كه‌ هۆكاره‌ كه‌لتوو‌ریه‌كان و هۆكاره‌ كۆمه‌لایه‌تییه‌ ئابوو‌ریه‌كان ئاماژه‌ دارن. بۆیه‌ پێداچوونه‌وه به‌ سیاسه‌ته‌كان و پێكهاته‌كانی ژێرخانی بواری پەرۆوه‌رده زۆر گرنگه‌. سه‌ره‌پای به‌رزكردنه‌وه‌ی هۆشیاری دایك و باوكان و باشت‌كردنی بارودۆخی ئابووری له هه‌رمه‌كه‌مان وه‌ تابه‌تی له‌ناو كۆمه‌لگه‌ی ئاواره‌كان و په‌نا به‌ران.

وشه سه‌ره‌كیه‌كان: وازه‌نیان له خویندن، سیاسه‌تی پەرۆوه‌رده، كاركردنی مندالان، ئاواره‌كانی ناوخۆ، په‌نا به‌ران.