



Myers JDC
Brookdale

School Dropout in the Bedouin Population in the Negev

Ruth Baruj-Kovarsky Anat Gilad
Lilach Zohar Viacheslav Konstantinov
Brachi Ben Simon Irit Aizik
Lia Moran-Gilad

This study was part of a multifaceted research program for the Government of Israel's five-year plan to promote the well-being of the Bedouin in the Negev, carried out in cooperation with the Department for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bedouin Society in the Negev



Editor (Hebrew): Ronit Cohen Ben-Nun
English translation (Abstract): Hanni Manor
Arabic translation (Abstract): Jalal Hassan
Graphic design: Anat Perko Toledano

Statistical consultation: Dr. Dmitri Romanov

The study was commissioned by the Department for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bedouin Society in the Negev at the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs and funded with its assistance

Myers JDC Brookdale Institute

P.O.B. 3886, Jerusalem 9103702, Israel

Tel: 02-6557400

brookdale.jdc.org.il/en | brook@jdc.org

Jerusalem | December 2022



About the research program of the five-year plan for the Bedouin in the Negev

The research program was jointly funded by the Department for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bedouin Society in the Negev and the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute. It spanned 3.5 years and includes an array of topical studies, including education, children with disabilities, employment, and local government, as well as cross-cutting studies evaluating the five-year plan work programs; the values, strengths, and challenges of the Bedouin population and their leaders; key indicators of the health, economic, and social well-being of the Bedouin population; and an integrative assessment of the five-year plan.

The research program was carried out as a cooperative effort between the Department for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bedouin Society in the Negev and the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute (MJB). The Department led the choice of issues to be studied and provided feedback on the research. MJB coordinated the research program and was responsible for the quality of the studies.

Abstract

Background

School dropout is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon with socio-economic implications for both the dropout students and society, in general. It is the endpoint of a process unfolding over time and eventually leading to a student's decision to leave school. This process is influenced by various risk factors, including the school characteristics, the student personal characteristics, family characteristics, and community characteristics. The phenomenon of school dropout is particularly severe in the Bedouin population in the Negev, where dropout rates are disproportionately high compared with the dropout rates in the general population in Israel. Thus, for instance, while the Negev Bedouin students accounted for 4.8% of the general student population in Israel in the class of 2019 (the students who were sixth graders in 2013 and were supposed to graduate from high school in 2019), they accounted for 12% of all dropout students in that class.

This study was conducted as part of a large set of studies of the five-year socio-economic development plan for the Bedouin population in the Negev for 2017-2021 (Government Resolution 2397) conducted by the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute. The set of studies was used in the planning of the five-year socio-economic development plan for the Bedouin population in the Negev for 2022-2026 (Government Resolution 1279) and will be helpful in the future evaluation of its implementation.

Goals

1. To present an up-to-date picture of the phenomenon of school dropout in the Bedouin population in the Negev and its scope.
2. To examine the needs, barriers, and challenges in coping with the phenomenon of school dropout, as perceived by officials, key entities, and leading professionals from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs, and the Bedouin local authorities in the Negev who deal with the issue of school dropout.
3. To develop strategies to deal with the phenomenon of school dropout in the Bedouin population in the Negev.

Method

The study was based on four information sources:

1. **Review of the literature** on the phenomenon of school dropout that defines the phenomenon, discusses its risk factors and prevention strategies, describes intervention models and programs implemented in other countries, and presents studies of school dropout in the Bedouin population in Israel.
2. **Analysis of administrative data**, based on the data files available in the Ministry of Education's virtual research room, so as to learn about the scope and characteristics of the phenomenon of school dropout in the Bedouin population in the Negev over the years and compare trends with similar population groups and with the general population in Israel. The analysis of administrative data on school dropout rates provides the rate of students in the class of a particular year who dropped out of school before completion of 12 years of schooling and are not enrolled in any educational institution.
3. **Semi-structured in-depth interviews** with 43 officials, key entities, and professionals from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs, and the Bedouin local authorities in the Negev who deal with the issue of school dropout. Interviews were also conducted with five educational consultants and three dropout students and meetings were held with two officials from the five-year plan headquarters who are engaged in the field of education.
4. **Analysis of official documents** and information available on the Internet, so as to learn about the various school dropout prevention and intervention programs implemented in the Bedouin localities in the Negev and to examine the characteristics of each program.

Findings

The study findings indicate the unique nature of the phenomenon of school dropout in the Bedouin population in the Negev, compared with school dropout in other population groups in Israel. The unique nature of the phenomenon is reflected in the high school dropout rates among the Negev Bedouin students as well as in the differences between the characteristics of the phenomenon in different groups in the Bedouin population.

Over the years, the school dropout rate has decreased in the general population in Israel while the corresponding rate among the Negev Bedouin students has remained significantly high compared with other population groups. Cross-cutting issues related to the characteristics of dropout students and the risk factors of school dropout were raised in the interviews and indicated by the data analysis. The interviewees highlighted risk factors related to structural characteristics of the education system and its institutions, e.g., the low maintenance level

of school buildings and infrastructure, school shuttles perceived as unsafe or school shuttle schedules that are incompatible with the extracurricular activities conducted in the after-school hours. The interviewees also noted the incompetence of the educational staff in improving the school climate, in attending and responding to the needs of students at risk of dropping out, and in dealing with at-risk students, in general. The interviewees further noted the importance of adapting the solutions offered and the school curriculum to the socio-cultural characteristics of the students as well as the need for a teacher guidance and training system that would equip the teachers with the skills required to provide solutions to the variety of needs arising from the field. The interviewees also emphasized the importance of parents' involvement in and support for their children's learning and the need for a change of perspectives on education and employment, so that the completion of 12 years of schooling would be an integral part of the students' "picture of the future."

Conclusions and Future Strategies

To lead students to the completion of 12 years of schooling, the systemic support of the school staff is required as well as the creation of opportunities for the development of relationships between the students and caring, attentive, and supportive adults. The involvement of the students in social and educational processes is likewise required. At the same time, it is necessary to foster and enhance students' abilities and perceptions associated with success in learning: positive self-concept, positive attitudes about the school, academic performance, and learning skills.

Given the scope of school dropout in the Bedouin population in the Negev, further prevention and intervention efforts are called for as well as creative thinking on and consideration of ways to cope with the phenomenon. Potential prevention and intervention strategies are suggested by the findings of the present study as well as by the professional literature – both the literature on work with indigenous and minority populations, which highlights the need to promote cultural adaptation and partnership, and the literature on work with students at risk of dropping out and dropout students.

The strategies suggested by the findings of the present study involve three action plans for the prevention of school dropout: the development of an integration and coordination system, optimal adaptation of the solutions to the needs, and the development of a series of solutions. As part of the development of an integration and coordination system, an official committed to the issue should be appointed to build collaborations among the various entities dealing with school dropout prevention and intervention, establish partnerships with the local community, map the school dropout prevention and intervention actions taken, and identify needs and deficiencies.

The integration and coordination system is designed to serve as a basis for the adaptation of the solutions to the needs and the development of a series of solutions for the various stages of education, with the focus on the needs of the Bedouin population from early childhood until graduation from high school at the completion of 12 years of schooling. The integration and coordination system is also designed to reduce the waste of resources and the redundancy of solutions.

The review of studies that examined solutions for the prevention of school dropout indicates that to cope with the complex phenomenon of school dropout, action is required on both the national policy and local levels. The review further shows that the most effective school dropout prevention and intervention programs generally involve a range of interventions at school level along with collaboration among various service providers as well as a coordinated action to reduce students' exclusion and enhance the school's ability to promote social inclusion, while strengthening the relationships of at-risk students with other students, with their parents, and with the school staff.