

Factors that Contributes to Dropout in Secondary Schools in Meru South Sub County, Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya

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Abstract

The study adopted descriptive survey research design to establish factors contributing to Dropout in Secondary Schools in Meru South Sub-County, Tharaka Nithi County. The population was 380 teachers and 2653 Form Three students in 44 secondary schools. The study employed stratified random sampling, proportionate sampling and simple random sampling to obtain a sample size of 85 teachers and 151 students Data collected was coded and analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics namely; frequency counts, percentages and means facilitated by the statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 11.5 for windows. It was established that the factors contributing to drop out were poor academic performance, pregnancy, forcing students to repeat, substance abuse and failure to pay other school levies. The study recommends: Building of information systems that can pinpoint students at risk of dropping out, in service programs for teachers, investing in reducing class size and student: counselor ratio, Initiation and development of a mix of communication channels.

Keywords: Dropout, students, Secondary schools, Meru South, Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya

1. Introduction

The delivery of education is marred with many challenges worldwide. Some of these challenges manifest themselves in form of Education wastage. In Kenya, secondary education faces many challenges, some of which manifest in form of declining retention and completion rates, grade repetition and dropout in schools (Ministry of Education, 2005). Persistent drop out among secondary school students, is an indicator that resources allocated in order to achieve Free Secondary Education (FSE) and Education For All (EFA) are not optimally used hence the goal may not be attained within the set period if the trend is not corrected.

Internal inefficiency in terms of dropout undermines not only the attainment of education for all goals by 2015, but also the process of national development. Dropouts are considered wastage because they do not complete their cycle of education to meet societal needs; a dropout is a liability to the family and society at large (Olwenya, 1996). Olwenya (1996) further argues that a dropout is an economic burden and even social misfit and female dropouts are more likely to result to prostitution, early marriages and premarital pregnancies whereas boys are likely to result to drug abuse and other antisocial behavior. Given the consequences of drop out, efforts should be made to minimize dropout in education. This gave an impetus to this study.

School wastage, which is derived dropout rates, can constitute an important obstacle to the realization of the goal of education for all (EFA) due to inefficiency in resource utilization. According to UNESCO (1998) when pupils leave school before the end of the term or the final grade of school (dropout), they are less likely to have obtained basic competencies, including literacy and numeracy skills, resource used on these pupils are

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wasted. Thus, instead of dropouts becoming instruments of production and hence adding to the national wealth, they drain the national resources (Bakhshi, 1971).

Following introduction of FSE, there is high enrolment in Form 1, especially in day schools, where there is virtually no fees payment unlike boarding schools, where one may pay up to Sh18, 000 (United Nations , 2008). However, some parents might consider it better to transfer their children to boarding schools for more quality education and the subsequent influx of students will not immediately coincide with an equivalent expansion of classrooms, addition of desks, teaching staff and other facilities. This inadequacy of facilities may contribute to the dissatisfaction of education consumers and lead to increased school dropout rates. According to the Ministry of Education, there has been a decline in the GER over the last decade and an estimated dropout rate of 30 % (Republic of Kenya, 2005).

Studies carried out in Africa, Europe and America on educational wastage has focused on three major areas: students' characteristics (Chapman, 1996) institutional characteristics and social economic and traditional factors (Olwenya, 1996). The relevancy and applicability of related research to the context of secondary schools in Meru South Sub-County has not been established. This study sought to identify specific factors contributing to dropout in secondary schools in Meru South Sub County, Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

Details of the dropout rate for sampled Sub-Counties in Kenya indicated high dropouts despite high admissions (UNESCO, 2005). A study conducted by Kiveu and Mayio (2009), identified that poor performance, absenteeism, pregnancy, illness, inadequate facilities, transfers, indiscipline, death and school fee lead to dropout hence contributing to internal inefficiency .

The Education for All Global Monitoring Report (2009), states that by 2015, around 900,000 children will be out of school due to poverty unless effective financing strategies are put in place, this study determined if poverty contributes to dropout and repetition in secondary schools in Meru South Sub County. The effectiveness of free secondary education financing can only be measured by assessing the internal efficiency.

Overseas Development Institute (2003), in its briefing paper, reports that enrolment rates are increasing but internal efficiency remains low in the school systems in developing countries. In most developing countries majority of the children attend secondary school but may dropout thereafter. Low completion rates reflect high abandonment especially by children of poor parents. Dropping out is often symptoms of a poor learning environment with low quality teaching by untrained teachers, inadequate textbooks supply and dilapidated premises. Wanjama, Muraya and Gichaga (2006) attest that enrolment is not enough and in order to take full advantage of education, one needs to stay in school and graduate. This is usually not the case for many girls; more girls than boys drop out of school at various levels. There are several reasons given for this, including: Early forced marriage after undergoing the rite of passage or female circumcision, unintended pregnancy, lack of resources to pay for the various charges demanded by school even in the era of free primary education. There is an assumption that the education of the boy is more important than that of a girl.

A study carried out in Barani areas of Punjab Pakistan by Mohsin, Aslam and Bashir (2004) on causes of dropouts at the secondary schools; found out that the major reason for dropout is educational weakness at primary level. The next major main factor indicated by teachers for the dropout is the non-availability of adequate teaching facilities in schools. Whereas 78% of the respondents said that things taught by teachers seemed to be far from reality and they got bored while attending lectures also they considered inadequate training and lack of refresher courses for teachers a cause. This study sought to find out if these factors contributed to dropout and repetition in secondary schools in Meru South Sub-County.

Study conducted in Kathua Sub-County of Jammu and Kashmir state in India on causes of school dropouts among rural girls, indicated that the main causes of dropping out of girls from school in rural areas were reluctance of parents and participation in domestic activities, problem of financial constraint and parents' educational status (Kotwal ,Nelima & Rani ,2007). The study in addition observed that one of the major reasons for children being kept out of school was the lack of education of parents. It was found out that parent's attitude

towards education have a major effect on education. The huge dropout rates, however, indicate that girls more often than boys are needed for other activities such as looking after other siblings, domestic work and help with the farm work. According to the study, Parents play crucial role in keeping young people in school.

According to UNESCO (2008) enrolment at the secondary school level in Kenya grew from 30,000 in 1963 to almost 500,000 in 1983, to over 700,000 in 2003, and now stands at over 850,000 with corresponding increase of schools to 3,891 in (2004) from 151 in 1963. However, there has been a decline in secondary school enrolment over the last decade caused by the following factors: high cost and poverty with an estimated 30% dropout rate due to this factor alone (Republic of Kenya, 2005). UNESCO (2008) further notes that other factors include high cost of learning and teaching materials, school uniform; transport and development levies; extra expenses for private tuition; unfriendly school environment; negative effects of HIV& AIDS pandemic; and rising repetition rates.

According to Achola (2007) pandemic secondary school drop out is alarming since every secondary school cohort suffered not less than 10% school dropout. Achola (2007) further highlights poverty, early pregnancies and marriages, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse and low self esteem to be some of the factors contributing to wastage in form of dropout.

3. Methodology

• Research Design

Descriptive survey research design was employed to obtain information concerning the factors contributing to dropout. Descriptive survey research design is appropriate since the researcher determined and reported the way things are (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999).

• Population and Sample

The accessible population was 380 teachers and 2653 form three students. The sample size comprised of 236 respondents comprising of 85 teachers and 151 students.

• Sampling Procedures

Public secondary schools in Meru South Sub-County were purposively selected for this study since through stratification they offered all characteristics common to public secondary schools. The schools were stratified based on two criteria. First public secondary schools were stratified into day and boarding schools. Boarding schools were stratified further based on gender into boys boarding, girls boarding and mixed boarding schools. Proportions of teachers and form three students from each stratum were obtained.

• Data Analysis

Data from the field was collected, cleaned, coded and recorded. Data collected by use of the questionnaire, was coded, and analyzed, using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 11.5 for windows. Data tape recorded during the interview was transcribed verbatim. Analysis procedures employed involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequency counts, percentages, and means. Data was presented in summary form using the frequency distribution tables, bar charts and pie charts

4. Results and Discussion

• Teachers' Responses on Factors Contributing to Drop Out

A total of eighty five (85) teachers participated in the study. Various factors contributing to dropout were given and the teachers were required to tick (✓) against the option which best suited their option towards a given factor. The responses to various factors in the attitude scale are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Teachers Responses to Factors Contributing to Drop out

Factor	SA		A		UD		D		SD		Mean
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Poor Academic Performance	24	28.2	52	61.2	8	9.4	1	1.2	0	0	4.165
Poverty	30	35.3	43	50.6	6	7.1	6	7.1	0	0	4.141
Indiscipline	21	24.7	59	69.4	0	0	4	4.7	1	1.2	4.118
Substance Abuse	20	23.5	53	62.4	8	9.4	4	4.7	0	0	4.047
Failure to Pay Other School Levies	19	22.3	55	64.7	3	3.5	8	9.4	0	0	4
Forced to Repeat	15	17.6	56	65.9	4	4.7	8	9.4	2	2.4	3.871
Pregnancy	22	25.9	43	50.6	11	12.9	4	4.7	5	5.9	3.859
Unexplained Reasons	6	7	53	62.4	20	23.5	3	3.5	3	3.5	3.659
Death and Incapacitation	11	12.9	33	38.8	25	29.4	11	12.9	5	5.9	3.4
Lack of Interest in School	10	11.8	39	45.9	14	16.5	18	21.2	4	4.7	3.388
Family Break-Up	7	8.3	45	52.9	16	18.8	8	9.4	9	10.6	3.388
Sickness	0	0	56	65.9	11	12.9	7	8.2	11	12.9	3.318
Early Marriages	7	8.2	40	47.1	13	15.3	17	20	8	9.4	3.247
Impact Of HIV/AIDS	8	9.4	38	44.7	15	17.6	13	15.3	11	12.9	3.224
Failure to Adjust to School Environment	0	0	44	51.8	12	14.1	24	28.2	5	5.9	3.118
Lack of Community Support	5	5.9	27	31.8	19	22.4	20	23.5	14	16.5	2.871
Child Labour	6	7	29	34.1	7	8.2	24	28.2	19	22.4	2.753
Systemic Child Abuse	5	5.9	18	21.2	24	28.2	25	29.4	13	15.3	2.729
Perceived Gender Roles	1	1.2	12	14.1	21	24.7	35	41.1	16	18.8	2.376
Initiation and Cultural Practices	2	2.4	12	14.1	11	12.9	28	32.9	32	37.6	2.106
Civil Unrest	0	0	9	10.6	15	17.6	27	31.8	34	40	1.988

Regarding poor academic majority (89.4%) of the teachers' perceived poor academic performance a factor contributing to drop out. Since the mean score (4.165) is above the average mean score of 3 and was the highest, poor academic performance significantly contributes drop out. Pertaining to whether poverty is a factor contributing to dropout, 35.3% of the respondents indicated that they strongly agreed while 50.6% agreed. Further analysis produced a mean score of 4.141, poverty was considered to be a factor contributing to drop out. Regarding whether indiscipline contributes to drop out, a mean score of 4.118 was obtained. As majority (94.1%) of the teachers affirmed, it can be concluded that indiscipline significantly contributes to drop out.

The study sought to establish whether substance abuse contribute to drop out, majority (85.9%) of the respondents' perceived substance abuse to contribute to student drop out in secondary schools in Meru South Sub-County .and since the mean was above the average mean score of 3; substance abuse was found to contribute to drop out.

Regarding to whether students drop out of school due to failure to pay other school levies, 22.3% of the teachers strongly agreed while 64.7% agreed. The data produced a mean score of 4.000, since this is above the average mean score of 3, it was concluded that failure to pay other school levies was a factor contributing to drop out. The proportion of teachers who strongly agreed that students drop out of school after being forced to repeat classes was 17.6%, 65.9% agreed, 4.7% were undecided, and 9.4% disagreed while only 2.4% strongly disagreed. The data produced a mean score of 3.871, which was above the average mean score. On pregnancy as a factor contributing to drop out, a mean score of 3.859 was obtained. Since the mean score is above the

average and majority (76.4%) of the teachers' agreed, pregnancy was considered to be a factor contributing to drop out.

With regard to whether death and incapacitation contribute to drop out, the responses obtained produced a mean score of 3.400. The conclusion can be drawn that majority (51.7%) of the respondents perceive death and incapacitation a factor contributing to drop out. Since the mean score is above the average mean score of 3.000, death and incapacitation was considered a factor contributing to drop out. Another factor that the study explored was family break up. Regarding to whether this factor contribute to drop out, 8.3% of the respondents strongly, 52.9% agreed, 18.8% were undecided, 9.4% disagreed and 10.6% strongly disagreed. The responses produced a mean score of 3.388. On this factor the study reveals that family break up contributes to drop out as reflected by the majority (61.2%) of the teachers and a mean score which is above the average mean score of 3.

With regard to sickness, majority (65.9%) of the teachers perceived sickness to be a factor contributing to drop out. Responses on whether students' dropout due to the impact of HIV/AIDS pandemic revealed that 9.4% of the respondents strongly agreed, 44.7% agreed, 17.6% were undecided, 15.3% disagreed while 12.9% strongly disagreed. The responses produced a mean score of 3.224. The study therefore concluded that the impact of HIV/AIDS is a factor contributing to drop out as indicated by majority (54.1%) of the respondents.

Another factor explored by the study was early marriages, 8.2% of the respondents strongly agreed, 47.1% agreed, 15.3% were undecided, 20% disagreed while 9.4% strongly disagreed. The data produced a mean score of 3.247. The conclusion that can be drawn from this data is that majority (55.3%) of the respondents' perceived early marriages to contribute to drop out. With the mean being above the average mean score of 3, early marriage was considered a factor that contributes to drop out.

• **Students' Responses to Factors Contributing to Drop Out**

A total of one hundred and fifty one (151) students participated in the study. Various factors contributing to dropout were given and the students were required to tick (√) against the option which best suited their option towards a given factor. The responses to various factors in the attitude scale are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Students Responses on Factors Contributing to Drop out

Factor	SA		A		UD		D		SD		Mean
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Pregnancy	92	61	51	34	3	2	3	2	2	1.3	4.510
Poverty	78	52	53	35	9	6	4	2.6	7	4.6	4.265
Poor Academic Performance	70	46	58	38	7	4.6	14	9.3	2	1.3	4.192
Substance Abuse	85	56	37	25	9	6	11	7.3	9	6	4.179
Early Marriages	67	44	52	34	9	6	16	11	7	4.6	4.033
Indiscipline	61	40	61	40	5	3.3	12	7.9	12	7.9	3.974
Forced to Repeat Classes	50	33	61	40	8	5.3	23	15	9	6	3.795
Impact of HIV/AIDS	53	35	50	33	19	12.6	18	12	11	7.3	3.768
Systemic Child Abuse	54	36	43	29	21	13.9	22	15	11	7.3	3.709
Family Breakups	40	26	62	41	13	8.6	23	15	13	8.6	3.616
Failure to Pay Other School Levies	45	30	53	35	16	10.6	21	14	16	11	3.596
Child Labour	34	23	38	25	18	11.9	38	25	23	15	3.146
Sickness	25	17	48	32	24	15.9	27	18	27	18	3.113
Unexplained Reason	13	8.6	49	33	47	31.1	19	13	23	15	3.066
Lack of Community Support	29	19	38	25	19	12.6	41	27	24	16	3.046

Lack of Interest in School	31	21	41	27	11	7.3	31	21	37	25	2.987
Civil Unrest	18	12	39	26	33	21.9	42	28	19	13	2.967
Failure to Adjust to School Environment	11	7.3	41	27	30	19.9	32	21	37	25	2.715
Perceived Gender Roles	7	4.6	31	21	38	25.2	58	38	17	11	2.689
Initiation and Cultural Practices	12	7.9	16	11	27	17.9	43	29	53	35	2.278
Death and Incapacitation	11	7.3	11	7.3	12	7.9	62	41	55	36	2.079

The study sought to establish whether pregnancy contributed to drop out, a mean score of 4.510, since this mean score is above the average mean score of 3 and the Majority (94.9%) of the students agreed, pregnancy was considered to be the most significant factor that contributes to drop out by the students. Pertaining to whether poverty contributes to drop out, the responses analysed produced a mean score of 4.265, which was above the average mean score of 3. Since the mean score is above the average mean score of 3, it was concluded that poverty is a factor contributing to drop out.

Regarding to whether poor academic performance contribute to drop out responses produced a mean score of 4.192, which is above the average mean score of 3. Since the mean score is above 3, it can be concluded that poor academic performance contributes to drop out. The study also sought to establish whether students drop out due to substance abuse. It was established that 56.3% of the respondents indicated that they strongly agreed, 25.0% agreed, 6.0% were undecided, 7.3% disagreed, while only 6.0% strongly disagreed. From these responses a mean score of 4.179 was produced. From these findings it can be concluded that substance abuse contribute to drop out.

Pertaining to whether early marriages contribute to drop out, 44.4% of the respondents strongly agreed, 34.0% agreed, 6.0% were undecided, 10.6 % disagreed while only 4.6% disagreed. The responses produced a mean score of 4.033. From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that early marriages contribute to drop out as indicated by majority (78.4%) of the respondents. With regard to indiscipline, a mean score of 3.974 was obtained. It is therefore adduced that majority (80.4%) of the students perceived indiscipline to contribute to drop out.

On whether students drop out of school because they are forced to repeat classes, 33.1% of the respondents strongly agreed, 40.0% agreed, 5.3% were undecided, 15.2% disagreed while only 6.0% of the respondents strongly disagreed. From these findings a mean score of 3.795 was computed. The findings therefore indicated that forcing students to repeat classes contributed to drop out. With regard to whether HIV/AIDS pandemic contributes to drop out, 35.1% of the students strongly agreed, 33.0% agreed, 12.6% were undecided, 11.9% disagreed while 7.3% strongly disagreed. The responses had a mean score of 3.768. It can be concluded from this study that HIV/AIDS pandemic contribute to drop out.

Pertaining to whether systemic child abuse contributes to drop out, the data obtained produced a mean score of 3.709. It can therefore be concluded that systemic child abuse contribute to drop out as cited by majority (64.8%) of the students. On whether family break ups contributes to drop out, a mean score of 3.616 was generated. From the findings of the study, it was concluded that family break ups contribute to drop out.

Pertaining to whether failure to pay other school levies contribute to drop out, a mean score of 3.596 was computed for this factor, indicating that it was a significant factor contributing to drop out. Regarding on whether child labour contribute to drop out, 22.5% of the students strongly agreed, 25% agreed, 11.95% were undecided, 25.2% disagreed while 15% strongly disagreed. A mean score of 3.146 was computed from these responses. From the findings it is clear that majority (47.5%) of the respondents are in agreement that child labour contribute to drop out. On whether community support contributes to drop out, analysis of the mean, produced a mean score of 3.046, slightly above the average mean score of 3. Majority (44.2 %) of the respondents perceived lack of community support a factor contributing to drop out.

5. Conclusions

The study established that students drop out school because of poor performance in their academics, this is in conformity to Kiveu and Mayo (2009) findings that poor academic performance lead to drop out and repetition hence contribute to internal inefficiency. Forcing students to repeat classes was also established to be a serious factor contributing to drop out as poorly performing students are either forced to repeat classes or are discontinued. This is aimed towards maintaining high academic performance and ensuring that the school is highly ranked by maintaining high mean score in the national examination. This contradicts the objectives of education in Kenya as stipulated in Sessional Paper Number 1 of 2005 (Ministry of Education, 2005) the policy framework spells retention and completion as the ultimate goal of education system in Kenya. Pregnancy, early marriages impact of HIV/AIDS were established to be significant factors contributing to educational wastage, these findings affirms views by Wanjama, Muraya and Gichaga (2006) that more girls than boys drop out of school at various levels due to early forced marriage and unintended pregnancy. Wanjama *et al* (2006) attest that in the era of HIV/AIDS if the parents are too sick or dead, the girl child becomes the worker at home, getting discouraged if the performance is poor and opting for marriage.

In line with findings by UNESCO (1998) poverty was established as a factor contributing to dropout. Many students from poor back grounds could not pay other school levies hence they are constantly absent in school, this in turn lead to poor academic performance. The students are then coerced to repeat classes or are discontinued. From the findings the study also concludes that substance abuse, failure to pay other school levies, lack of interest in school and unexplained reasons contribute to educational dropout. It was also concluded that sickness was a significant factor contributing to wastage.

6. Recommendations

Based on the study findings the researcher recommends that:

- i. Schools to build information systems that can pinpoint students at risk of dropping out. Prevention programs can be constructed by the deputy head teachers to enrich the school experience for those at risk of dropping out early in their school life.
- ii. In service programs for teachers by the ministry of education to ensure that they have sufficient subject knowledge and repertoire of teaching methodologies and strategies. Training programs should be relevant and responsive to the needs of the education system.
- iii. The government to Initiate and develop of a mix of communication channels to disseminate messages to motivate people to engage in a range of options to reduce the risk of HIV/AIDS pandemic and substance abuse.
- iv. The government through the ministry of education should support a strong individualized curriculum with career learning components for all students. Providing high level academic curricula that are connected to the real world through out of school experience, such as service learning and hands on learning in business and industry to arouse students' interest and academic performance in school. This keeps the students engaged and reduce the risk for dropping out.

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