

Variance in Learners Expectation and School Dropout in Selected Secondary School in Kashongi Sub-County, Kiruhura District

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the variance of learners' expectations and school dropout in selected secondary schools in Kashongi Sub-county of Kiruhura District, Uganda. The article revealed that parents in disadvantaged districts still experience difficulty keeping their children in school. This is because, due to harsh climatic conditions and low socio-economic status, parents do not have enough money to pay for school expenses such as school uniforms, stationery, and building funds, among other school expenses. In light of this, the study recommends expanding the current free primary education to secondary schools. Furthermore, it is crucial to inform parents about the bursaries' existence, given the current lack of publicity. Clarify the bursary award criteria to ensure all parents are eligible to apply. These measures would have the net effect of reducing dropout rates among secondary school students due to their inability to pay for school fees. The fact that all respondents ranked lack of money for school expenses as the most influential school-based factor suggests this. Finally, the government of Uganda in collaboration with NGOs can assist parents to start up small businesses through micro financing. Through this effort, the parents can enable the students to attend most of their school lessons, which eventually leads to good performance.

Keywords: Learners' expectations, Micro-financing, School dropouts, Socio-development, Students.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the cornerstone of economic growth and socio-development, as well as a fundamental means of improving an individual's welfare. It increases the productive capacities of societies and their political, economic, and scientific institutions. It also helps to reduce poverty by increasing the value and efficiency of the labor offered by the poor and mitigating the population's health and nutritional consequences [1]. Uganda, like other nations, recognizes the importance of education as a pre-requisite for development, improving the human condition, and instilling self-confidence and self-reliance in an individual. Society demands that students attend school and participate in the activities offered; otherwise, their work would suffer [2]. In Uganda, there are various factors that hinder the achievement of universal literacy. Chief among them is the high rate of dropouts. The rate of dropouts in our secondary schools has risen despite efforts taken by various stakeholders to minimise it [3]. The dropout problem has been detrimental to Uganda's education cycles because it wastes resources and creates citizens who are ill-prepared to enter the country's labor force, making them a burden on their dependents. Despite the implicit demand for continued attendance, students still drop out of the education system. Dropping out of secondary school is considered a waste of human resources and student time [4]. In Uganda at the moment, the dropout rate is 6.9 percent and 6.2 percent for boys and girls, respectively. It is therefore necessary to minimize, if not stop, dropouts in our secondary schools, as they prevent the school system from achieving its objectives. Identifying the exact causes of student dropout is crucial for society to select and implement appropriate measures. This necessitated the present study, which examines the variance of learners' expectations and school dropout in selected secondary schools in Kashongi Sub-county of Kiruhura District, Uganda.

The Effects of Secondary School Dropout

According to Rumberger [5], high school dropouts are having a harder time finding and keeping jobs than individuals with higher levels of education; in fact, the district unemployment rate for high school dropouts in July 2011 was 15.4%, compared to 9.4% for high school graduates. For Brekke [6], young adult high school dropouts aged 16–22 face even more difficulty in the labour market. The consequences of dropping out of high school lead

to lower earnings and higher incarceration rates for young adult dropouts, resulting in a negative net fiscal contribution to society. In the words of Staff [7], young high school dropouts are much less likely to be active labor force participants than their more educated peers, and they frequently experience significantly higher unemployment rates when they do seek work. School dropouts also break out unemployment rates by various subgroups and find large differences. For example, girls who drop out of school with a 68.6% unemployment rate were most likely to be without a job compared to 53.9% of boys who drop out. The report attributes the below-average unemployment rates of female dropouts to the significantly higher employment rates of young girls [8]. Young high school dropouts' mean annual earnings in 2008 were only 100,000 shillings, compared to more than 300,000 for young high school graduates, due to their likelihood of employment and propensity for low wages [9].

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive survey design, which was suitable for making an accurate assessment of the incidence distribution and relationship of the dropout phenomenon.

Population of the Study and Sampling

The study's target population consisted of the five secondary schools in the district. We distributed the questionnaires to three students and two teachers from each school. More so, the researcher used stratified random sampling to stratify the schools into three categories. The researcher then used proportionate sampling to identify the three types of schools. Thus, five secondary schools (2 provincial, 2 district, and 1 private) participated in the study. This accounted for 30% of the overall population. We selected 55 secondary schools to participate in the study.

RESULTS

Table 1: Respondents' responses on the school based factors that contribute to high school dropouts

Causes ranked	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Lack of enough funds for expenses	48	12	2	1
There is poor student-teacher Relationship	16	17	15	11
School rules, regulations and routine are too rigid	13	18	18	11
There is continuous discouragement due to poor performance	19	20	10	10
There is poor diet in school	6	7	20	25
There is bullying by fellow students	18	23	10	7

The table reveals that the primary cause of high school dropouts, accounting for 47%, is insufficient funds for school expenses. 30% of student respondents ranked poor performance in class as the second most influential factor. 25.3% ranked poor relationships between students and teachers as the third most influential factor. 23.9% of the respondents ranked rigid rules and regulations as the fifty most influential factors. The student respondents also ranked school bullying as the sixty-first factor, with 30.6 home-based factors ranking higher than this.

Table 2: Respondents' responses on the home based factors that cause high school dropouts

Causes ranked	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Lack of parental encouragement and motivation	21	17	12	10
There is depression and stress caused by family problems (fighting, separation, death etc)	18	13	23	6
There is casual employment hence no need to go to school	15	13	13	19
Low level of education among parents	27	18	9	6

The table reveals that student respondents believe a low level of education among parents, who lack adequate understanding of the importance of education, plays an influencing role in causing students to drop out of secondary schools in the Kiruhura district. Parental education is crucial in determining a student's performance in school. Parents' low education levels make them unaware of the benefits of education. Parents with a low level of education will also fail to motivate and encourage their children to attend school regularly, whereas literate parents will not only motivate and encourage their children, but also serve as role models who have excelled in their own time and will continue to do so. Parents' lack of encouragement and motivation ranked as the second most influential factor. This factor is closely related to the preceding one. Due to the parents' low levels of education in the study area, the students lack the necessary encouragement and motivation to continue their schooling. This is because the schooling and learning process is challenging and requires a lot of encouragement and motivation. Moreover, the students lack role models because their parents have not actively participated in their education. Therefore, because of the lack of encouragement and motivation, the students might opt out of school because they will not have seen the real benefits of education. The survey ranked frequent quarrels and fights among parents at home as the third most influential factor. According to the students' respondents, frequent quarrels and fights among the parents at home affect the students psychologically. This disturbs them and causes them to lack concentration in the classroom. To a very large extent, parents who frequently quarrel and fight are more likely to be drunk. Because of this, they became very disorderly, to the point of fighting in front of their children, who watched helplessly as their parents battered themselves to the point of even seriously hurting themselves. Such environments psychologically impact children, and when they attend school, they continue to remember these incidents. Children often find themselves compelled to choose sides in these disputes, leading some of them to skip school in order to protect the parent they have chosen. In most cases, children tend to side with their mothers because they experience the most abuse in such circumstances. Some students eventually become frustrated at school, leading them to drop out. The student respondent identified parental divorce-induced depression and stress as the fourth factor contributing to secondary school dropouts in the Kiruhura district. Divorce causes students to lack parental love. Single parents cannot give up. Parents love the other missing parent. The changing cultural setup has resulted in increased divorce cases. In the past, divorce cases were unheard of in the district. Consequently, the rise in divorce and depression cases impacts students, as peers avoid students from similar backgrounds, exacerbating their stress and depression. The students experience increased stress and depression, and their teachers often fail to understand their struggles. In most cases where there is a lack of understanding, teachers tend to treat all students equally, disregarding their individual differences. Teachers continue to perceive students from such backgrounds as undisciplined, despite their need for understanding. Lastly, the student respondents ranked attending casual employment to meet basic needs as the least influencing factor causing students to drop out of secondary schools in Kiruhura district. According to student respondents, students often leave school to take part in casual jobs, aiming to earn money for basic necessities like food and clothing. Most families in the study area force students to drop out of school to help their parents meet their basic needs.

Table 3: Respondents' responses on factors that cause high school dropouts

Causes ranked	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Teenage pregnancies and early marriages	29	15	12	4
Drug abusive and drug taking	23	13	8	10
Peer pressure	16	8	15	21
Chronic illnesses and medical related problems	26	16	11	7

In Kiruhura district, secondary school students drop out most frequently due to teenage pregnancy and early marriages. This mainly affects girls who engage in premarital sex. The changing cultural set-up in the district has made young girls engage in premarital sex at an early age. The media has also aggravated the situation. Early exposure to sexual messages bombards the students. FM radio stations, the internet, and other sources have influenced students to engage in sexual activities at a young age. Those who become pregnant end up dropping out of school. Some choose to stay home to raise their children instead of returning to school. Furthermore, some also choose to enter into situational marriages at an early age to avoid the stigma of becoming single parents. Student respondents ranked drug use as the second most influential factor. Drugs such as alcohol, cigarettes, and other substances have significant effects on students. The drugs interfere with mental and organ functions. Once they take these drugs, they fail to concentrate in class and, as a result, remain academically behind. This will act as a disincentive, and she will eventually decide to drop out of school. The Kiruhura district ranked the influence of peer groups' absence from school as the third most significant factor leading to students' dropout from secondary school. The secondary school level is where the majority of children transition into adolescence. The school level is where most children transition into adolescence. During such periods, students identify themselves with their peers. Therefore, in situations where a certain student's peers decide to drop out of school, the student will have no choice but to join the group, resulting in dropping out of school even when he or she didn't intend to do so. 43.9% of student respondents ranked chronic and medically related illnesses as the fourth most influential factors. Serious illnesses and medical issues, including related problems such as poor vision and hearing impairments, among other factors, contribute to students leaving school prematurely. Malaria, yellow fever, malnutrition problems, and rift valley fever are some of the common diseases within the study area. This is because most people do not seek treatment when a disease outbreak occurs, making it difficult to eradicate or cure. This is because, in most cases, when there is an outbreak of any of the diseases, it is difficult to eradicate or cure the disease since the people affected do not seek treatment. This is because such services are scarce in the area of study, and the few that are there are almost inaccessible since the roads are impassable and the distances are great. Due to the challenging circumstances in the study area, some individuals have turned to herbal remedies, which may not be effective in curing specific illnesses or providing assistance during emergencies. Students with medical-related problems such as poor eye sight, being mentally retarded, hearing impairment, or any other physical disability do not seek medical care early enough due to the scarcity of medical services within the study area. The study area's aforementioned problems force students affected by these diseases to drop out. Lastly, the student respondents ranked physical deviations such as overap and oversize (shortness, tallness, etc.) as the most significant factors. In the Kiruhura district, this factor has the least impact on students' school dropout rates. 72.8% of students ranked this as the least influential factor. Therefore, we can infer that students' physically marked deviation has a minor impact on their school dropout rates.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings show that the main causes of students leaving the school system early are a lack of funds for school expenses, poor performance in class, and strained relationships between students and teachers who are not on good terms with the administration. The findings of this research were reported by Abenawa [10], who found the cost of education to be the most vital factor determining school holding power. Abenawa [10] reported that the primary cause of dropouts was the obligation to pay school funds. The findings further concur with Musabe [11], who found that lack of school funds, school uniforms, stationery, and school facilities was the most important factor as to why pupils dropped out of secondary schools within Kiruhura district. Regarding poor academic performance, the research findings concur with the findings of Nabugoomu [12], who noted that one of the strongest correlates of dropping out among the students in school is a lack of academic success in school. Students who frequently receive low grades, fail subjects, and are retained in school are more likely to leave school before completing their studies. Therefore, I may conclude that students who have difficulty meeting their academic

demands at school tend to leave or be absent rather than continue in the face of the frustration often experienced in trying to obtain good grades.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the bursary schemes operated by the Ministry of Education (M.O.E.) and the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), parents in disadvantaged districts still experience difficulty keeping their children in school. This is because, due to harsh climatic conditions and low socio-economic status, parents do not have enough money to pay for school expenses such as school uniforms, stationery, and building funds, among other school expenses. In light of this, the study recommends expanding the current free primary education to secondary schools. Furthermore, it is crucial to inform parents about the bursaries' existence, given the current lack of publicity. Clarify the bursary award criteria to ensure all parents are eligible to apply. These measures would have the net effect of reducing dropout rates among secondary school students due to their inability to pay for school fees. The fact that all respondents ranked lack of money for school expenses as the most influential school-based factor suggests this. Furthermore, the government of Uganda and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) must work together to ensure the retention of these students in school. The government of Uganda in collaboration with NGOs can assist parents to start up small businesses through micro financing. Through this effort, the parents can enable the students to attend most of their school lessons, which eventually leads to good performance. All respondents identified poor class performance as the second most significant factor contributing to student dropouts in Kiruhura district secondary schools, indicating the need for this recommendation. Therefore, to improve regular attendance among students, we must empower parents to start small businesses. This will enable them to cover school expenses, thereby reducing the likelihood of sending their children home frequently. Finally, the Department of Adult Education (DAE) under the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development in Uganda needs to improve adult education. The government can do this by addressing the current challenges that face adult education, such as a lack of qualified teachers. The government should also address the issue of treating the adult education department as a unit in a separate ministry from education. Lastly, the government should sustain the efforts of donors who have come to the aid of adult education, such as the Germany Technical Cooperation (GTC), which initiated a three-year post-literacy project between 1996 and 1999 with the objective of developing critical literacy skills. With the strengthening of adult education, parents will be able to understand the importance of education and provide the intellectual assistance necessary for children's educational growth. As a result, more children will continue schooling in the company of more supportive parents.

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