

EFFECTS OF PARENT'S FINANCIAL STATUS ON STUDENTS' DROP OUT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RONGO SUB-COUNTY, MIGORI COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

The study was undertaken to investigate the effect of parent's financial status on public secondary school students' dropout in Rongo sub-county, in Migori County, Kenya. Descriptive survey was employed as the research design. Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to identify various respondents fit for the study. With a population of 636 students, 50 class teachers and 20 principals, a sample size of 235 respondents was arrived at as follows: 30% of the total number of students and 30% class teachers were calculated, 200 students and 15 class teachers were sampled through random sampling, and then the 20 principals were sampled through purposive sampling. Geographical position and the nature of the schools were also considered. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview guide through qualitative strategies. Validity was administered by the supervisors and experts in Department after carrying out a pilot survey and reliability was determined through test retest technique, Pearson Product Moment formula was used to calculate the correlation of the research instruments. Data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages presented on tables then discussed. The study established that learners from families in low financial strata ended up dropping out of school as they are not able to pay all the school levies with a percentage rate of 81.25%. The findings of the study may be of help to the government and other sponsors who will prioritize the neediest learners to be sponsored in secondary education.

Keywords: Effects, Parent's financial status, Students' dropout

Introduction

The dropout problem has caused negative economic development and resulted to wasted talents and the incompetent labor force in most parts of the world. This can be evidenced by economic and social stagnation in some parts of the world. Processes of change brought by

student dropout have become so rapid and intense that they give rise to major social economic challenges which can have disruptive effects on traditional lifestyles, morals, religious beliefs and everyday patterns without clear new values (Barton, 2004).



According to Drewry, 2007, the problem of dropout did not begin until long after compulsory education laws came into being in the late 1800s and early 1900s in the United States of America. Societal turmoil after World War 1 created a need for consistency in behavioral norms and expectations and reinforced the need for compulsory education.

In the United States of America (*Mooney, Knox, & Schacht, 2023*), indicates that 13 percent of 16 to 24 years old drop out of high schools. Thus they are not presently enrolled in any school and the dropout rate is as high as 55 percent, a clear declaration that society and the educational institutions are not providing for the welfare of its entire student (*Jis, 2023*). However in the Netherlands, the dropout rate is near 0 percent due to stable and balanced socio-economic factors (*John, 2004*).

The parent and to some extent the government holds a major role of shaping up the student from childhood to adulthood as every step they take as parents will highly influence the fate or destiny of these young ones in academic cadre (*UNESCO, 2015*). Parents at middle or higher socioeconomic status can significantly influence their children academic achievements. This is because the most indicators that makes a parent influential to their socioeconomic status includes, educational level, income level, occupation and the social class (*Basri & Thamrin, 2023*) all leading to one being a role model in a child's life.

In contrary to NCES (*Basri & Thamrin, 2023*), when discussing the issues of the education in the global context, what strikes most is the diversity of educational provision across the

world (*Jis, 2023*), a fact that can highly influence the environment from which the student hails from making him/her to remain or drop out from school as academic achievement is not pegged on an individual background but it's about what you learn along the way.

In a survey done by Bruneforth (*Bruneforth, 2005*), in Burkina, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, and Nigeria on the characteristics of children who drop out of school, more than half of all children aged 10 to 19 years left secondary school without completion this was majorly due to lack of a combination of social and economic factors more specifically to income and social position of their parents.

The low enrolment rate over the last decade in Kenya's secondary schools has been caused by high cost (average annual unit cost) for secondary education which is five times higher than primary education and poverty with an estimated 30% dropout rate, due to these socio-economic factors alone (*Ministry of Education Science and Technology, 2019*).

Every secondary school in Kenya has its own culture and has been allocated the task of achieving social equality, overcoming material disadvantages and eradicating prejudice (*Jis, 2023*), as it is not the individual that suffers as a result of dropping out of school, but also does the society.

The table below shows the rate of drop out of learners at different sub counties in Migori county secondary schools.

Table 1.1: The number of students who have dropped out of secondary school in Migori County

Years	Uriri	Rongo	Awendo	Nyatike	Kuria	Migori
2019	4	7	2	9	5	-
2020	3	9	-	3	2	8
2021	8	8	4	11	9	12
2022	4	10	3	2	3	5
2023	6	9	-	2	4	3
TOTAL	25	43	9	27	23	28

SOURCE: Migori County Education Office- 2023 [10]

Table 1.1 shows that 43 students dropped out from secondary school in Rongo District for the last five years. This number is higher as evidenced in comparison to Awendo, Kuria, Uriri, Nyatike and Migori districts respectively and therefore possess an academic concern.

The theory that was used in the study is System theory postulated by Ludwig Von Bertalanfy in 1928 (*Bertalanffy, 1964*). The theory states that all parts of the system are interrelated such that when one part of the school system (learners) are not able to stay in school(dropout) then the system (the school) functionality will be incomplete.

1.2 Parents' financial status and students drop out

There are major, out of school factors that hinder the students from accessing secondary school education. These hindrances directly influence the academic achievement and the retention of learners in secondary schools. They include: inability of many parents to raise school fees, lack of money for uniforms, books, pens and other costs associated with school (*Tawanda & Gordon, 2004*).

Survey done by UNICEF (*Suzie & Irine, 2022*) pointed out that there are also other school factors such as lack of proper school equipment and thefts that affect the retention of learners in



schools. There is substantial evidence in the literature that consumers are sensitive to the cost of education and that fee is a major barrier for many families (*Crowder & South, 2005*).

Rono, 2012 affirmed that in rural areas, it is a normal occurrence for poor families to endorse early marriage for girls to lighten the family's economic burdens, and becomes a reason for such girls to leave school prematurely. The high cost of schooling and the inability of poor students to buy uniforms and acquire other basic necessities may encourage them to seek sexual relationship with older and economically steady men and women (*FAWE, 2024*).

The effect of this relationship can result to pregnancy to the girls and boys might be infected with health related diseases, which can lead to discontinuation of such learners from schools, thus cutting short their schools careers. Even though *Corcoran, 2010* encourages that, such students should be encouraged to return to school after delivery of the baby and recovery from the ailments, it becomes a difficult task for them to fit back and that there could be nobody ready to take care of the new born baby or the victims themselves fear of being ridiculed or feel stigmatized.

Parents, at times may opt to withdraw their daughters from school during economic difficulties due to the mistaken view that educating boys is crucial given their ultimate role as family heads and bread winners and the belief that boys are more intelligent than girls; and the girls are less success-oriented than boys as reported and supported, in that the secondary school net enrolment rate for boys is approximately 51% while it is 48% for girls (*World Bank, 2009*).

While addressing socio – economic status and retention in school, *Drewry 2007* edifice that the two are inseparable, this is to say, socio – economic status of students affects retention in school and retention determines one's level in the society. A research further done by *ibid* on high school dropout, found that widespread differences in dropout rates among members of all races and sex groups can be explained mostly by the culture index or the educational background of the household, proving that, access to time and monetary assistance significantly related to completion of high school.

The highest proportion of school failures, dropout and adjustment problems and long disabilities occur among lower socio-economic class children, who often come from educationally un-stimulating home environment (*Texas Migrant Educational Development Centre, 2023*). Nonetheless, many parents want their children to perform well in school yet, they are often unaware of what they can do to help them. When socio-economic factors are taken into consideration then high retention can be guaranteed especially when learning conditions are favorable (*Steinberg, Blinde, & Chan, 2023*).

The dropout problem has caused negative economic development and resulted to wasted talents and the incompetent labor force in most parts of the world. This can be evidenced by economic and social stagnation in some parts of the world. Processes of change brought by student dropout have become so rapid and intense that they give rise to major social economic challenges which can have disruptive effects on traditional lifestyles, morals, religious beliefs and everyday patterns without clear new values (*Barton, 2004*).

(Mutwol, Cheserek, Boit, & Mining, 2012), indicated that socio-economic factors have the highest effect in the participation of students in secondary school education. Some of the factors they listed include: poverty and low income level of the parents.

Research Methodology

The research design of the study was descriptive survey; *Orodho, 2015* states that, this is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering questionnaire to a sample of individuals. The design was identified as the most convenient and could ensure that the data obtained gave answers to the research questions. Descriptive survey is used when a researcher intends to describe a situation or a condition as it is (*Kothari, 2019*).

The cross sectional survey enable the researcher to provide numerical descriptions of the effects of socio-economic factors on school dropout rates in Rongo Sub-County (*Oso & Onen, 2011*). The study was carried out in 20 public secondary schools within Rongo Sub-County (*Ministry of Education, 2023*), with the following strata: girls boarding secondary School 1, boys boarding secondary schools 4 and mixed day secondary schools were 15. The study targeted specifically 636 form threes and form four students. To generate data 20 principals from the secondary schools were involved, together with 40 teachers who were the class teachers for form threes and fours. The institutions were selected based on their geographical positions within the Sub-County and on the provision on the nature of the school (day/boarding mixed or boys/girls boarding). Finally, the findings were generalized for schools in the whole of Rongo Sub-County Secondary Schools. In this study, three groups

of respondents namely; students, principals, and class teachers were involved. The sample frame was 20 public secondary schools within Rongo District. The selection of principals was purposive because they are already known and are few in the district. When the sample size is small, all the entities can be considered (*Mugenda & Mugenda, 2019*). To select the students, the researcher considered 30 percent of the total number of form threes and form fours within the Sub-County that were then picked through random sampling after obtaining a list of names from the class teachers. Similarly 30 percent of class teachers were picked through random sampling. The entire sampling matrix yielded a total of sample size of 235 for the purpose of the study.

Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect the required data. Questionnaires was designed for principals and students to form a major data collection tool as it allowed the study to include large samples for representativeness to inform the study on practices, opinions and attitudes of respondents (*De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2011*) with regards to socio-economic factors influencing secondary students' dropout. The questionnaire was divided into section A and B. Section A of each questionnaire collected data on background information of the respondents and section B targeted school strategies and student consideration on dropout with items of attitude scale positively worded statement for students with scores ranging from Yes to No. An interview schedules for the class teachers was designed to collect data to document adequacy, relevancy and availability of facilities and resources for school retention.

After examining the document, the department provided a feedback which the researcher incorporated in the final questionnaire and the interview schedule used in the study. Instrument validity ensured content items were representative through a pilot survey. A pilot study test was carried out on 10% cases drawn from the population outside the study population but within the study area (23). A total number of 20 students were used while 4 class teachers and 2 head teachers were involved respectively. This proceeded questionnaire administration which was meant to create good rapport with respondent and to reveal ambiguities, inconsistencies, bringing into light any weakness of questions (*De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delpont, 2011*).

To test for the reliability of research instruments, the researcher applied the test –retest technique (*Oso & Onen, 2011*). A reliability co-efficient was then calculated to indicate the relationship between two sets of scores obtained. Pearson product moment formula was used to calculate the correlation.

Pearson Coefficient of correlation

$$r = \frac{\sum xy - \frac{(\sum x)(\sum y)}{N}}{\sqrt{\left[\sum x^2 - \frac{(\sum x)^2}{N}\right] \left[\sum y^2 - \frac{(\sum y)^2}{N}\right]}}$$

Where $\sum xy$ = sum of the gross product of the values of each variable.

$(\sum x)(\sum y)$ = product of the sum of x and the sum of y.

\sum = Sum of the values.

The value of r lies between + 1 or -1 positive values of r indicate positive correlation between two variables (*Oso & Onen, 2011*). A value nearer +1 or -1 indicate high degree of correlation and can be used to judge the instrument as reliable the value for r after the correlation was 0.937 for the head teachers' s and 0.931 for the students' questionnaires were obtained indicating that the instruments were reliable for use. Schedules of activities were drafted, showing activities to review, successes to uphold and failures to address on a daily work plan so as to tackle areas that needed improvement and to help avoid omission. After collection of instruments they were examined for completeness, comprehensiveness, consistency and reliability.

After data collection, the responses to the questionnaire were coded, and then data was entered into the computer for analysis. Qualitative data was analysed where the use of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used (*De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delpont, 2011*). Simple tables were adopted to form a basis of drawing conclusions.

Ethical consideration was observed from the beginning to the end and informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study (*Oso & Onen, 2011*).

Results and Discussions

To realize the objective stated, the respondents were asked to answer items in questions 1 to10 in the questionnaire. The responses were coded and then entered into the computer for analysis through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme.



The study sought to establish the influence of the parents' financial status on secondary school students drop out and the head teachers came up with the following findings.

Table 1.2: Head teachers' response to parents' financial status and student drop out

Response	Frequency	Percentage
High	13	81.26
Moderate	3	18.75
Low	-	-
Total	16	100

The findings revealed that most head teachers accepted that parents' financial status highly influence students drop out and none could deny this fact. This show that fee payment is a major contributing factor to school dropout. The head teachers confirmed that if the parents' financial status cannot sustain and provide for the basic needs of the family then, they will not be able to pay for their children the required levies in schools (Steinberg, Blinde, & Chan, 2023).

Similarly, the class teachers, when interviewed on the same, 92 percent mentioned that lack of school fees and poverty as the major reasons for school dropout. Crowder and South, 2005 expounds that there is substantial evidence in the literature that consumers are sensitive to, and that the cost of education and that fee remains a major barrier for many families.

3.2 Students opinions on the person responsible for the payment of their school fees and other school levies

When the researcher wanted to find out from the students the persons responsible for paying their school fees and other levies which could lead to their retention or being sent home hence dropping out, the response was as shown in table 4.8

Table 1.3: Students response to fee and other school levies payment

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Parent	109	72.7
Sibling	17	11.3
GOK/Bursary	7	4.7
NGO	6	4.0
Any other	9	6.0
Missing	2	1.3
Total	150	100

Table 4.8 indicates that majority of the students' fee and other levies are mostly paid by their parents followed by their siblings, government bursary, other sources and non-governmental organizations respectively. If the parent's financial status is low, then they will not be able to pay for their children the required levies in school and this will make them drop out of school (Tawanda & Gordon, 2004).

Conclusion

Parents form the highest percentage for those who pay school fees and that, students consider fees arrears as a major factor that lead to them being sent home this may escalate to them dropping out from school. 76 percent of the

students have their school mates who have dropped out, the main reason being school fees.

Recommendations

From previous research findings and from this present study, several recommendations have been made for consideration by the government, TSC, MOEST, KIE, County Directors, Principals, Teachers, Students, Parents/ families and the community as a whole.

The government should ensure that all the needy students within the county are given priority during bursary allocation and there should be equal distribution of infrastructure within the public secondary schools in the county as a whole.

The county directors through their relevant offices should find ways of expanding their roles by employing important factors of utmost significance in students' dropout.

Strategies that put learners to be at the same level should be enhanced and projected by the principals and teachers in order to break the cycle of poverty and deprivation.

Close interaction between the students, teachers and the government should be encouraged to help create student friendly environment. The families/parents should be sensitized on the importance of secondary education by the MoE, so that they can be positive towards it and always support their children on matters pertaining to education like school fees.

Principals should adopt democratic leadership style where all the teachers, non-teaching staff and the students are involved in decision making that affect their day to day activities in school.

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