

Parental Factors Associated with Students' Dropout in Lower Public Secondary Schools in Gasabo District, Rwanda

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the parental factors associated with students' dropout rates in lower public secondary schools in Gasabo District, Rwanda. Its objectives were to determine how the socioeconomic status of parents is associated with students' dropout and to assess how parental involvement is related to students' dropout rates. The study was guided by Maslow's theory of human motivation, which is based on the hierarchy of human needs. The target population of the study consisted of 125 students who had dropped out of school, their parents, and 10 head teachers. Simple random sampling was employed to select 95 students who had dropped out of school and 46 parents, while 10 head teachers were selected purposively. Data were collected through questionnaires from the students and interviews with parents and head teachers. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze quantitative data, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Based on the findings, the socioeconomic status of parents was associated with students' dropout rates, as shown by the overall mean: 69 out of 87 students (79.45%) had dropped out due to their parents' socioeconomic status, compared to 18 out of 87 students (20.55%) who had not dropped out for this reason. The study also revealed that parental involvement was linked to students' dropout rates, as the parents of students who dropped out of school were rarely involved in their studies, as indicated by the overall mean and standard deviation ($M = 1.62$, $SD = 0.569$). Based on the study's findings, it was recommended that the government should strengthen the welfare of families whose children show signs of dropping out. Additionally, parents should strive to create jobs that generate income to support their children's education, while school leaders should encourage parents to be more involved in their children's learning.

Keywords: Parental Factors, Parents' Involvement, Parents' Socioeconomic Status, Students' Dropout

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental element for the development of every nation. It is the basic for socio-economics and politics development for a country. For that reason when we want to change our society for good life, we must ensure that, every citizen obtains quality education. This was confirmed by Nelson Mandela when he said that the greatest weapon that can be used to transform the world in positive way is education (Arne, 2013). It generates opportunities and equips societies with a proficient workforce, and vital for fostering development (Govender & Stevens, 2004). In this line, education plays an essential role in society because it empowers the people for better life. Education emerges as one of the most powerful means to eradicate poverty and offer individuals valuable opportunities in society (UNESCO, 2005).

Unfortunately, many governments fail to sustain the students' continuation to complete a certain level of education, and the school dropouts become a serious problem throughout the world. This issue of school dropouts has escalated to epidemic levels on a global scale and presenting significant challenges for the education sector worldwide (Bridge et al., 2004). For instance, in Sub-Saharan Africa, it was found that 42% of its pupils dropout of school, and 33% of southern and western Asian students also leaving the school early (Allie, 2017). This means that many of the countries in Sub-Sahara Africa and Southern and Western Asia have still faced dropout issues. In New Delhi, only a small number of children manage to reach secondary education, the dropout rates at this level are alarmingly high where it reached 36.04 percent (Chugh, 2011). Based on Pakistan Education Statistics (2016-17), the survival rate up to grade V stands at 67% with an equal proportion of males and females, this indicates that the national dropout rate is 33% ((Dawood, Ghulam, & Tahir, 2019)Government of Pakistan, 2017). In 2022, the number of students who dropped out the school in Tanzania was 329918 students, where the majority of the students 182213 were the boys(Chanzo, 2023). In 2020/2021, although the gross enrolment rate (GER) in the primary education cycle reached 115% and the net enrolment rate (NER) reached 88%, the dropout rate in Burundi was approximately 260000 children each year (UNICEF, 2022).

Like other countries, in Rwanda the dropouts of students continue to appear. For instance education statistical year books (2019) showed that the dropout rate in lower secondary schools in 2018/2019 were 9.3% for male and 8.9% for female, in 2019/2020 dropout rate for male was 10.9% and 11.1 for female, while in 2020/2021 the dropout rate was 13.1% and 11.9% for male and female respectively (Ministry of Education, 2023). This was also highlighted in the study conducted by Ngabonziza and Sikubwayo (2022), where they found that around 672 students have dropped out in nine Years Basic Education only in Rutsiro District.

The students' dropout might be caused by different factors. According to the study conducted by (Ropafadzo et., 2017), revealed that the main contributing factors in school dropout were economic issues, the parents who have low level of education and lack of scholastic materials. Moreover, involvement of the children to bring money at home, take care of their younger siblings and taking responsibilities to help their parents at home play a significant effects on the absence of the students from the school which prompted the students to leave the school early (Şeyma, et., 2016). The finding of a study conducted by Hafashimana (2022), revealed that household activities such as caring for siblings, looking after domestic cattle, preparing meal for the family, seeking the firewood, and domestic chores were the main activities that children performed and lead 40 percent of them to not attend the schools in western province.

The parental factors such parents' socioeconomic status, and parents' involvements, could be the cause of students' dropout out from the schools in Gasabo District. For this reason, this study designed to investigate the parental factors associated with students' dropout in lower public secondary schools in Gasabo District. This would be significant for the policy makers, stakeholders, and any institution as well as people in charge of education to prevent students' dropout.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Rwandan government has implemented numerous initiatives to improve access to education and reduce dropout rates in lower secondary schools with the aiming to lower the dropout rate from 6.3% in 2017 to 1.7% by 2024 (Republic of Rwanda, 2017). Increased school completion benefits students' social, economic, mental, and emotional well-being and also positively impact society. However, dropout rates have been rising, with rates of 9.1%, 11%, and 12.5% reported for the years 2018/19, 2019/20, and 2020/21, respectively (Ministry of Education, 2023). In Gasabo District, the dropout rate was 1.8% (Gasabo District, 2019). Parental factors, such as socioeconomic status and involvement are believed to contribute to this issue. This study seeks to explore these parental factors on student dropout in Gasabo District, offering insights for policy makers and education stakeholders to address the problem effectively.

1.2 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions;

- i. How is the socioeconomic status of parents associated with students' dropout in lower public secondary schools in Gasabo District?
- ii. How is parents' involvement associated with students' dropout in lower public secondary schools in Gasabo District?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The study is guided by Maslow theory or theory of human motivation that was based on the hierarchy of human needs. It was proposed by Psychologist Mr. Abraham Harold Maslow in 1943. According to this theory; all people have a hierarchy of needs that must be achieved in order to satisfy their full potential and self-actualization (Hena & Shara , 2023). This theory is appropriate to this study because the students cannot complete their study when their learning environment did not favor to study. In other part the students have dropped out the school because they were not satisfied to their basic needs. Therefore, when parents understand what students need it gives the ways to support their children' learning.

2.2 Empirical Review

Parental factors refer to the various elements and characteristics related to parents that can influence the well-being, development, and outcomes of their children. These factors encompass a wide range of aspects, including parenting style, level of involvement in a child's education, socioeconomic status, emotional support, and overall family structure. It is significant mediator in various social factors that is essential for the development and growth of any child in society even the school (Ropafadzo et al., 2017). In this line, parental factors play a vital role in sustaining the children's education.

2.2.1 Socioeconomic Status of Parents

Socioeconomic status is often measured as revenue, employment, education level, and wealth condition of an individual or group. It is considered as significant determinant of various life outcomes, including access to education, healthcare, housing, and overall well-being. In education, the socioeconomic status of the family is mostly significant for journey of their children in schooling. For instance, the families experiencing low economic status face constraints in accessing public and social advantages including educational benefits (Olympia & Thomas, 2020). Socioeconomic status is essential for the parents to support the children to study. Socioeconomic status is composed by education level, income, and occupation. Education level of the parents is the main factor that enables that parents to be the role model of their children and encourages them to remain in the schools. Educated parents create a better environment for the continuation of their children's education (Sunila et al., 2015). The parents who are well educated are more effective in creating a better atmosphere for their children to access a quality education by sharing importance of education and offering all requirements for education (Ropafadzo et., 2017). In addition, the parent or the household head that have high education level increases the probability of the students' access, regular attendance, and lower dropout rates (Ainsworth, 2005). This was not far from Olympia & Thomas assertion (2020) who argued that, educated parents inspire their children's eagerness to learn, offer guidance and advice on effective school performance, and provide the essential resources which significantly influence the children's educational outcomes.

Parents' income is essential factor that influence the level of the students to access or not access the school. The parents who have high income is easy to deliver more required resources to facilitate their children's education such as private tuition, better schools, and monitoring studies at home. These are key factors that encourage the children to attend the school (Ropafadzo et al., 2017). On the other hand, the students who live from a moderately economic constant household have always participated in schools than their fellow students from a disadvantaged family (Yeboah-Obeng, 2016). Consequently, the students who come from low families' income usually left the school to work for some money generating activities in order to support their parents to increase the revenue for the family (Schargel & Smink, 2001).

An occupation is a position of employment or role held by an individual, serving as their source of income, and it constitutes the third variable within socioeconomic status and is interconnected with both income and education (Satar et al., 2017). The parents' occupation are not only involved in providing the food, shelter, clothes, or other day to day requirements of their children, but also in finding out the ways that can make their children to be comfortable in the formal education which leads to completion of the required level (Korir, 2018). For this reason occupation of the parents may influence negatively or positively the completion rate of the students.

2.2.3 Parental Involvement

Parental involvement refers to the commitment of the parents to participate in all activities of their children's education in and out of the school in the purpose of supporting them to achieve academic performance and completing their studies. According to Ronak et al. (2021), the parents' involvement in the learners' education refers to the responsibilities of the parents in directing the learners in their process of learning in the ways of offering time to control the changes of their life and career. The parents' involvement significantly affects the educational success of children and diminishes the likelihood of students dropping out of school (Naranthiran et al., 2023). The parents involvement composed by various factors such as; parental participation in school program, parental advising, monitoring study habit at home, and discussing schooling progress.

Participation of the parents in school programs result a great impact on elaboration of new program that direct the school to their mission and vision, and also it involves the parents in implementation of various school plans. The parents' participation in school activities such as contributed in school events, school committees, school general assembly meetings or volunteering are very important for sustaining our children's education (Peter & Daniel, 2013).

The parents' advice to their children is very important because it helps the learners to understand the benefit of study and follow a right ways in the journey of study. This can be done by providing emotional support and motivational to the learners. Emotional support and motivation from the family particularly the parents play a vital role for creating interest in a child to go forward in his/her studies (Ropafadzo et al., 2017). For instance, the parental warmth and supervision assists the children in developing and maintaining comfortable behavior in contrast to those with tolerant parents (Simon & Jonathan, 2017).

The study habit is essential for the students to learn and reduce anxiety about their studies. Effective study habits are often linked to intrinsic motivation, and the students with strong study habits are more likely to stay motivated and committed on their education goals. Effective study habits significantly impact students' academic success and are considered one of the most influential factors in their learning outcomes (Ebele & Olofu, 2017). A successful parent creates a study habit for their child by creating consistent study routine and be involved in studying activities. For instance, the parents should give a time and supervise the children in home studies such as doing homework and making revision. Thus, the parents' participation in their children's homework in mathematics was

associated with the performance in mathematics and motivation (Giang-Nguyen et al., 2021). Therefore the parents' participation is essential for enhancing the students' motivation in their studies and decreases the probability to dropout the school.

A discussion of the teachers and parents to the students' academic progress is significant and constructive way to remain the parents to be aware of their child's performance in school. Thus, discussing academic progress is essential for monitoring performance, identifying challenges, promoting accountability, setting goals, building support systems, enhancing communication skills, addressing learning styles, encouraging reflection, preventing academic issues, promoting motivation, involving parents, and supporting future planning (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017).

III. METHODOLOGY

Convergent parallel design was used to guide this study. According to Creswell (2012), the use of a convergent parallel design allows to address limitations in either quantitative or qualitative approaches by combining both methods effectively. It was significant to this study because it assisted researcher to combine both quantitative and qualitative data for better understanding the research problem. The target population of the study composed by 125 students who had dropout the schools and their parents, and 10 head teachers in selected schools. A researcher classified the students who had dropped out the school and their parents into strata to be sure that each category is represented in the study. To be sure that every student and parent have an equal chance to be selected, a simple random was employed to select 87 students and 46 parents from each stratum. All head teachers were selected purposively. To assure the content validity of the instrument the expert judgement was employed. To check reliability of the instruments, test-retest method adopted, and the instrument was reliable as it computed 0.81 correlation coefficient. Quantitative data were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21, where it computed descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, and presented the findings using table and graph, while the qualitative data were analyzed thematically and presented using a text.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The first question guiding this study was about how socioeconomic status of the parents is associated with students' dropout in lower public secondary schools in Gasabo district. To respond this question, the respondents were expected to respond if the mentioned statement related to socioeconomic status were led her or him to dropout the school by selecting **yes**, or selecting **no** for the statement that they had not led her or him to drop out of the school. The following table summarize the responses of students.

Table 1

The Causes of Students' Dropout Associated with Parents' Socioeconomic Status

Statement	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Failure of the parents to give them school materials.	No	19	21.8
	Yes	68	78.2
Inability of the parents to pay school contribution.	No	7	8
	Yes	80	92
Failure of the parents to give them enough food to eat at home	No	27	31
	Yes	60	69
Inability of the parents to purchase the school materials.	No	17	19.5
	Yes	70	80.5
The family poverty that pushed the students to do some jobs to survive.	No	8	9.2
	Yes	79	90.8
Engage the students to take care of sibling.	No	27	31
	Yes	60	69
Embarrassment to bring old clothes to school.	No	19	21.8
	Yes	68	78.2
Absence of sources for the parents.	No	18	20.7
	Yes	69	79.3
Overall mean	Non	18	20.55
	Yes	69	79.45

The statistics results presented in table 1, showed that most causes of students dropout as indicated by the students frequency and percentage of their responses were inability of the parents to pay school contribution 80 out of

87 (92%), the family poverty that pushed the students to do some jobs in order to survive 79 out of 87 (90.8%), inability of the parents to purchase the school materials 70 out of 87 (80.5%) and absence of the job for their parents 69 out of 87 (79.3%). However the least causes of students' dropout were embarrassment to bring old clothes to school 68 out of 87 (78.2%), failure of the parents to give them school materials 67 out of 87 (77%), engage the students to take care of siblings 60 out of 87 (69%) and failure of the parents to give them enough food to eat at home 60 out of 87 (69%). Therefore, the parents socioeconomic status contributed to students' dropout as indicated by the overall mean of students 69 out of 87 (79.45%) who had dropped out because of their parents' socioeconomic status was greater than the overall mean of students 18 out of 87 (20.55%) who had not dropped out the school due to their parents' socioeconomic status.

In addition, most of the interviewed parents agreed that their socioeconomic status such as education level, income, and their occupations had prompted their students to dropout out the school. For example, one parents said that;

“My child had dropped out because I am poor and I have many children to feed and other responsibilities that required me to fulfill at home. For that reason, I can't get money to pay my children's educational fees. In addition my child is mature enough so that he can go to work for money in order to find out their school materials and other things her/his need”.

Moreover, 34 out of 46 (73.9%) of the parents through interview revealed that they had led their children to dropout the schools because they had no job or other business activity to earn money for supporting their children in schooling. In the same vein, interviewed head teachers supplemented that, the parents' socioeconomic status such income, education level and occupation contributed in students' dropouts. One head teacher said that;

“Most of the students who had dropped out the schools were the student from poor family. Consequently, it is not easy for the poor family or jobless families to afford their children' school materials, paying school feedings contribution, and giving other required material even at home. Due to those issues, most of the students from those families dropped out the school because they were worked for their survival and do not get support from their parents. In addition, most of dropped out students were from low educated where their parents cannot inspire them and provide constructive advice in the journey of studying.”

Based on above results, it was true that the parent socioeconomic status such as income, education, and occupation was associated with students' dropout. This finding concurred with of (Ropafadzo et al., 2017) which stated that the parents who have high income is easy to deliver more required resources to facilitate their children's education such as private tuition, better quality schools, and enough support for learning at home which was significant factor that causes children to attend the school. Furthermore, the study of Ainsworth, (2005) stated that the parent or the household head who has high education level increases the probability of the students' access, regular attendance, and lower dropout rates.

The second question guiding this study was about how parents' involvement was associated with students' dropout in lower public secondary schools in Gasabo District”. To respond to this research question, researcher developed a questionnaire using a five point Likert-scale and students were requested to provide their responses on all items regarding to parents' involvement by rating from 1 to represent never, 2 to represent rarely, 3 to represent sometimes, 4 to represent often and 5 to represent always. The Table 2 summarizes and present the student's responses on items related with the impact of parents involvement on students dropout.

As indicated in the Table 2, the students who had dropped out the schools their parents involved differently in their educations. Referring to the mean the parents involved rarely in the parental participation in school program ($M=2.1$, $SD=0.735$), and parental advising ($M=1.58$, $SD=0.529$) and the standard deviation (SD) indicated that there was small variability in students' response. This means that although there were some involvements of the parents in the student educations, the parents' involvement of the students who had dropped out the school were poorly. Since the parents involved rarely in above practice, the parents attend sometime in the meeting invited by school leader ($M=2.61$, $SD=0.768$). However, the parents never involved in monitoring study habit at home ($M=1.35$, $SD=0.476$), and discussing academic progress ($M=1.45$, $SD=0.535$) by considering the mean, and there was small standard deviation which implied homogeneous in students response. The practice that the parent worst involved was to make sure that their child was doing their homework at home ($M=1.29$, $SD=0.455$). Furthermore, the parents of the students who had dropped out the school were rarely involved in their children's education as indicated by the overall mean ($M=1.62$, $SD=0.569$). This implied that the parent involvement were associated with students drop out because the students who had dropped out the schools their parents rarely involved in their studies.

Table 2*The Parents' Involvement of the Students who had Dropped Out the School*

Function	Item	Mean	Std. Dev.
Parental participation in school program	Attend the meeting invited by school leader	2.61	0.768
	Attend school events such as end of terms, and school ceremony	1.78	0.689
	Interest in communicating with the teachers	1.9	0.748
	Parental participation in school program	2.1	0.735
Parental advising	Discuss with the students to the problem faced at school	1.66	0.546
	Encourage students to attend school regularly	1.61	0.491
	Discuss with students the importance of studying	1.6	0.493
	Praise students effort and good attitude about school work	1.45	0.586
	Parental advising	1.58	0.529
Monitoring study at home	Make sure the child do their home work	1.29	0.455
	Help students to set high expectations in his studies	1.34	0.478
	Check students' school report and test marks and advise accordingly	1.33	0.474
	Get the students books to study at home	1.44	0.499
	Monitoring study at home	1.35	0.476
Discussing academic progress	Monitor students' success or failure at school	1.47	0.502
	Discuss with the teacher about their child test marks	1.43	0.497
	Inform the teacher when the students will be absent next day	1.46	0.606
	Discussing academic progress	1.45	0.535
Overall mean		1.62	0.569

The findings in Table 2 are not far from the head teachers' interview where most of them revealed that the parents' involvement is associated with student dropout in their schools. For instance, one head teacher said,

“Most of the parents who had dropped out students were less involved in their students' education. For instance, they could not create a good environment for studying at home and school, they are not interested to know the problem that their children are facing at school and at home and they cannot advice accordingly. Furthermore, when the parents sent their children to school, they consider their responsibilities were already be finished, they cannot take time to check and see if their children really went to school by checking their home works, school report or class visit”.

Furthermore, high number of parents who have the students who had dropped out the school through interview confirmed that they rarely involved in their children's education to support them to complete their education. For example, one parent said

“Apart from sending my children to school, I didn't have a time to be involved in my children's education such as advising to the problem that they faced at school, ensuring that they had already done the given homework by the teacher, or communicating with my teachers' children.

In generally, the findings of the study from respondent questionnaire of students, interview of head teachers and parents shown that the parent involvement contributed to students' dropout. This attributed to the finding of Giang-Nguyen et al., (2021) which stated that the parent involvement plays a crucial role in increasing or reducing high school dropout rate of students. Moreover, the intention of students to dropout is prompted by parental involvement (Naranthiran et al., 2023).

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the finding of the study, it was concluded that the parent socioeconomic status was associated with students' dropout where the inability of the parents to pay school contribution and purchase the school materials, the poverty of the family that pushes the students to do some jobs, and jobless of the parents were the most cause of students' dropout. It was also concluded that the parents were not effectively involved in their children's education, which prompted the students to dropout the school. In general, the parental factors were associated with student's dropout in lower public secondary in Gasabo District.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study the following recommendations were suggested. Government should strength the welfare of the families which have the children who show the sign of dropping out. This should be done by elaborating programs for supporting those families, parents should do their best in order to create the jobs which can generate income to support their children' learning, school leaders should encourage the parents' involvement in their children's learning, and parents should be involved in their children' education. Lastly, further researcher should investigate how government program such as *Vision Umurenge Program (VUP)* that has been elaborated to change vulnerable families' situation to socioeconomically empowered with a solution to their children dropout.

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