

**SCHOOL BASED FACTORS AS DETERMINANTS OF SECONDARY
SCHOOL STUDENTS DROPOUTS IN BOMET COUNTY, KENYA.**

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ABSTRACT

This study was investigating school-based factors as determinants of secondary school dropout in Bomet County. The study employed the causal comparative design. The researcher used stratified random sampling technique to obtain 180 Form two students. The data from the field was mainly collected using questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis. The data was analyzed mainly through descriptive methods such as tabulation of frequencies, mean and percentages. The finding of this study revealed that the governments' objectives of retaining all students in secondary school have not been met in the study area. The study established that an average 10.2 percent of students dropped out of secondary schools in the study area. This was against the global commitment of attaining Education for All (EFA) as agreed in the Jomtien Conference in 1990 and Dakar, Senegal in 2000. The study recommended that, there is need to efficiently and effectively run the Constituency Development Fund (C.D.F) and bursary schemes operated by the Ministry of Education (MEO). There is need also for the government of Kenya and Non Governmental Organizations (N.G.O's) to assist parents to start up small businesses through micro financing.

Key words: School-based factors, Determinant, Drop out, students, questionnaire.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Education came to be viewed almost without question as an important and indeed crucial agent of rapid economic growth of nations. Education is the cornerstone of economic growth and socio-development and a principle means of improving the welfare of an individual. It increases the productive capabilities of the societies and the political, economical and scientific institutions. Abagi (1992) points out that girl's enrolment at the secondary school levels has been more dramatic since early 1960's. The enrolment of girls by 1980's for example increased from 30,120 in 1963 to 658,253 in 1996. The girl's share of total enrolment at independence was 31.8 percent. This improved to 41.8 percentages in 1996. The increase in the male to female student ratio at secondary school level reflects a higher drop-out rate for girls (Fatuma & Sifuna 2006).

High dropout rate problem draw back in Kenyan's education cycles, in a sense that it brings about wastage, a problem which produce citizens who are not adequately prepared to be absorbed into the country's labour force. This group, instead become a liability to those whom they depend on (Ngware, 1994). Despite implicit demand for continued attendance, students still dropouts from the education system. It is therefore hoped that knowledge of the determinants of dropping out will be a starting point in seeking solutions to the problem.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem that this study was investigating was school-based factors as determinants of secondary school dropouts in Bomet County, Kenya. Drop out in education is a big loss to individuals and societies in Kenya. Preliminary investigation by MOE (2007) shows that at the national levels drop out rates among female students in secondary school in 2004 registered 14.5% Bomet County inclusive. The government has endeavored to enhance the participation and access in education in Kenya. However, drop out across gender has continued to persist and especially the female gender. Bomet County like many other parts of Kenya has been experiencing dropout of female students in secondary schools. However, the cause of girl drop out from secondary school has not been investigated. Drop out of female students from secondary school is therefore an issue centered in this study. Dropping out in secondary school is considered a waste of human resources

(teachers who have already employed) and student time (time taken to attend school). Further also, the available data suggest that those who drop out without attaining a minimum of two years in primary school are likely to suffer from functional illiteracy (Mulwa, 1998). Illiteracy, on the other hand hinders attainment of national development of the country, a factor which is one of Kenya's educational objectives, (Eshiwani 1984). This is because illiteracy jeopardizes the Government to build a human capital base, which is essential for development in the country. It is therefore, necessary to minimize, or mitigate in our secondary schools, as it prevents the school system from achieving its objectives. Therefore, the problem that this study was investigating was school-based determinants of secondary school dropouts in Bomet County, Kenya.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study was to describe school-based factors that cause secondary school dropout.

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

Blackmore and Cooksey (1981) observe that when a student is admitted into secondary school, there are certain routine procedures that take place. The student is subject to command from the teachers. Fatuma and Sifuna (2006) and Obura (1991) pointed out that in the African Society, there was the general misplaced perception that girls have to be socialized to be wives, homemakers, dependants and secretaries while boys are to be husbands, breadwinners, defenders and pilots. This provides a reminder of the influence of gendered thinking in education material of practice, which the study will seek to investigate. Brigeon (2005) in his survey on making school safe for girls in Rift valley revealed that girls and their families may find little reason to attend school if they are tracked to low paid occupations considered traditional for women. He observed that many developing countries practice gender streaming in secondary school, directing girls away from Mathematics and Sciences. Teaching practices like giving boys more opportunities than girls to ask and answer questions, use learning materials and lead groups may further discourage girls in actively participating in educational activities.

A study conducted by Mwandosya (2001) in Kenya and Tanzania on girls' education revealed that over 2000 teachers who participated maintained separate rows for boys in class and asked them male questions compared to girls. The extent of gender discrimination by teachers will be investigated in this study. While in school performance of girls is hampered by gender stereotyped attitudes among teachers, parents and students about the capacity of girls. These stereotyped roles that make girls easily misused in school include preparing tea and lunch for teachers at break time and lunchtime respectively, washing utensils and fetching water for teachers (Eshiwani, 1985). Abagi (1992) also observed that girls waste a lot of teaching time when they are sent to teachers' houses to take books which creates room for sexual harassments. While performing such roles the girls sacrifice their studies hence end up performing poorly in class. This can lead to girls dropping out of school. The study seeks to establish the relationship between gender roles and drop out.

Abidha (1998) raised a great concern on unsatisfactory performance and achievement of girls across the education system. The survey carried out in K.C.P.E results in Kenya revealed that girls perform poorly in almost all subjects compared to boys. This becomes even worse as they move up in the education ladder. This is also supported by Fatuma and Sifuna (2006). The fact that the curriculum

fails to address the needs of the girls who acts the role of mothers and are mostly absent from school is a great concern. This makes them also suffer from chronic fatigue, lack of concentration in school and forced repetition in classes. Their academic performance is hence impaired and self-image lowered and eventually these girls drop out of school (UNESCO, 2002).

Kigotho (2006) observed that educationists have identified a peer group culture that propagates abuse of schoolgirls through bullying, sexual harassment and gender violence as the main factors that causes girls to dropout of secondary schools in most countries Sub-Saharan Africa including Kenya, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Malawi, South Africa, Nigeria, Namibia, and Uganda. Kigotho (2006), further observed that according to Fiona, an education researcher at the institute of education, Sussex University, schools in Sub-Saharan Africa tolerate the bullying and serious sexual harassment and abuse, perpetrated mostly by the other males pupils and teachers. Although the Education Ministry has occasionally taken a stand against bullying, teachers in Kenya and elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa, may unwillingly or consciously contributing to the problem. Research finding in Kenya and Zimbabwe show that teachers undermine girls in the classroom, making them feel that they do not belong in school and eventually they dropout.' Teachers encourage boys' bullying of girls and have lower expectations about girls' academic performance, say the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) report in Kenya, (cited by Kigotho 2006). Sexual abuse of girls by male students and teachers is common, along with corporal punishment, verbal abuse, and bullying. The laxity of educational authorities to punish the perpetrators has allowed the abuse to flourish. Unchecked peer group culture has put great pressure on boys and girls to conform to male and female stereotypes at the time when their sexual identities are developing, says Leach in a study of Abuse of Girls in African Schools. The study which was commissioned by the British Department for the International Development show how sexual abuse of girls is linked to bullying in the school environment.

Studies focusing on girls' participation in primary schools in Meru and Maasai land showed that the problem of girls' dropout was alarming. A study by Ncebere, (1987) in Meru indicated that three quarters of the girls who enrolled in standard one in 1979, did not finish the primary cycle in time. This could probably be due to repetition, transfer to other schools or abandoning school.

Abolition of school fees in the late 1970's in primary schools was found to have had disillusioning effects, (theoretically, free education but in practice, pupils and parents were required to pay development funds) on parents and greatly contributed to dropouts, (Nguru 1980, Nkinyangi 1980). These studies confirmed most of dropouts came from low socio-economic backgrounds where dropout rates were alarmingly high (20-40%). Apart from Nguru's study (1980), Nkinyangi's (1980) study found that more girls than boys dropped out of school. Micheka (1983) researched on dropouts in Kisii District identified community and parents who are misinformed about the value of schooling ; suspension and expulsion of students from school and distance to school as causes of dropouts. Thus there was need to investigate on how school-based factors influences secondary school dropouts in Bomet District.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 STUDY AREA

This study was undertaken in public secondary schools in Bomet district which is situated in Bomet County, Kenya. It is geographically located between latitude O⁰ 25.3' North and O⁰ 53.2' North and

longitude 35° 24'4" East and 36° 04' East. The altitude is 2000 M above sea level. The mean annual rainfall is 1500mm and the average temperature range from 18°C to 28°C. There are 45 secondary schools in the district and the study focused only on fifteen schools.

1.3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study used causal comparative design because causes of dropouts which serve as the independent variables cannot be directly controlled by the researcher because their manifestations had already occurred and therefore not manipulable (Cohen & Manion, 2009; Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996; Kerlinger, 2000). Thus, the researcher was able to relate after-the-fact analysis to an outcome or the dependent variable (Kathuri & Pals, 1993).

1.3.3 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Data was collected from students in the selected schools. The researcher used questionnaires, interview schedule and document analysis as the data collection instruments. Data was collected from students in the selected secondary schools. The researcher used questionnaire for students as the data collection instruments.

1.3.3.1 RELIABILITY & VALIDITY OF THE INSTRUMENT

It is the precision or consistency of the test or it is the extent to which the test measures whatever it does consistently. Split-half technique was used to test reliability where it required only one testing session. In this approach, an instrument was designed in such a way that there are two parts. Respondents' scores from odd numbers correlated with scores from even numbers. Piloting was done to establish the clarity of meaning and comprehensibility of each item in the research instruments. The content validity of the instrument was determined by the researcher discussing the items in the instrument with the supervisors, and lecturers in the Department of Educational Management (Mutai, 2000).

1.4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1.4.1 School-based factors that influence students to drop out of secondary schools as perceived by the students Findings

Table 1: Students ranking of school-based causes of drop outs

Factors (ranks)	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
1	78.9	2.2	5.0	4.4	4.4	3.8
2	5.5	8.3	15.0	30.0	17.4	18.3
3	2.8	37.3	18.9	17.8	20.0	11.1
4	3.8	18.3	22.2	16.1	25.3	15.3
5	2.9	18.9	23.9	11.1	17.3	21.2
6	6.1	15.0	15.0	20.6	15.6	30.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

NOTE

T1: Due to lack of money for school expenses.

T2: Due to poor relationship between the teachers and students.

T3: Due to rigid school rules and regulations.

T4: Due to poor performance in class.

T5: Not being in good terms with school administration.

T6: Due to being bullied by fellow students in school.

From the table, it can be observed that the most influencing factor was lack of money for school expenses. 142, (78.9%) of the students' respondents ranked it as the leading factor causing students to drop out of school, 54, (30%) student respondents ranked poor performance in class as the second most influencing factor. Poor relationships between students and the teachers was ranked third most influencing factor. 46, (25.3%) of the student respondents ranked "not being" in good terms with school administration as the fourth factor.

Forty three, 43, (23.9%) of the respondents ranked rigid rules and regulations as the fifth influencing factor. The student respondents also ranked being bullied by fellow students in the school as the sixth factor. This was ranked by 55, (30.6%) of the student respondents.

Interpretation

From the table, it can be deduced that student respondents were of the opinion that lack of money for school expenses played a major role in causing students to drop out from secondary schools in Bomet County. This may be due to the fact that the area is a low potential area in terms of agriculture. This is because the area is hilly and characterized by poor soils. The area has unreliable pattern of rainfall. Further, the area is affected by pests and diseases particularly the lowlands. This is evidenced by the occasional outbreak of East Coast Fever.

East Coast Fever (ECF), which kills hundreds of livestock (Expensive to treat). Because of the above conditions, parents are faced with difficulties in meeting their children's school related expenses such as school uniforms and stationery. Students from such socio-economic backgrounds are always stressed whenever they are sent home to collect money. When these students are sent home they miss classes that make them lag behind in class work. Eventually such students pull out of school to go and fend for themselves.

The students ranked poor relationship between the students and the teachers as third leading factor that make them drop out. Poor relationship particularly, makes the students to hate teachers. This hatred is extended to the subjects they teach which eventually leads the students to perform poorly in class which eventually makes them to drop out of school.

The student respondents ranked "not being in good terms with the administration" as the fourth factor which make students to drop out. In this case, the student's view the administration as their enemy. Enmity, therefore, develops between the students and the school administration. Enmity

breaks the harmony that ought to be in school which leads to creation of a very hostile environment, which curtails the students from excelling in their class work.

Rigid school rules and regulations was ranked as the fifth factor causing students to drop out of secondary schools. Rigid school rules and regulations in schools do not act as guidelines to smooth running of the school but as traps to catch and punish those who break them.

Other schools further, have too many school rules to an extend that it becomes or less like “a remand prison” where students are always in fear. This makes students abhor schooling and hence drop out and be “free” in a “free world.”

Lastly the students ranked being bullied by fellow students in school as the least influencing factor causing students to drop out of secondary school in Bomet County. Bullying, in most cases, occur when the discipline of the schools is wanting. In such a school, students in senior classes bully the juniors physically, emotionally or psychologically. Those bullied will naturally develop hatred towards school since they are made to suffer, and yet, they cannot report the matter to school administration because they are threatened against doing so by the bullies. Such students eventually see the school as a place of “torture” and “insecurity.”

1.4.2 School-based factors that influence students to drop out of secondary schools as perceived by the Class Teachers

Findings

Table 2: Form Three Class Teachers ranking of School-Based Causes of Drop outs

Factors Rank	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
1	90	...	...	10	...	...
2	...	...	40	50	10	...
3	...	...	10	20	40	20
4	10	50	...	...	10	10
5	...	30	40	...	30	20
6	...	20	10	20	10	50
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

NOTE

T1: Lack of money for school expenses.

T2: Poor relationship between the students and teachers.

T3: Rigid school rules and regulations.

T4: Poor performance in class.

T5: Not being in good terms with school administration.

T6: Being bullied by fellow students in school.

According to Table 2, it was observed that the class teachers perceived lack of money for school expenses as the most influencing school-based factor that cause students top drop out of secondary schools in Bomet County. This was ranked by 11, (90%) of class teacher respondents. Poor performance in class was ranked as the second most influencing factor. This was ranked by 6, (50%) of the class teacher respondents.

The third most influencing factor, as ranked by class teachers, was due to not being in good terms with school administration. This was ranked by 5, (41.7%) of the respondents. Poor relationship between the teachers and students was ranked the fourth most influencing factor by the class teacher respondents. This factor was ranked by 6, (50%) of the total respondents. Rigid school rules and regulations was ranked by 5, (41.7%) of the class teacher respondents as fifth factor causing students in Bomet County to drop out. A study by Mwandosya (2001) in Kenya and Tanzania revealed similar finding where over 2000 teachers were interviewed.

Lastly, 6, (50%) of the class teacher respondents ranked being bullied by fellow students in school as the least influencing factor that causes secondary school students to drop-out of school in Bomet County.

Like the class teachers and students, the Guidance and Counseling teachers ranked being bullied by fellow students in the school as the least influencing factor that cause secondary school drop outs in Bomet district, 8, (66.7%) ranked so.

Interpretation

As the students, the class teacher who took part in the study indicated that lack of money for school expenses as the most influencing factor causing students to drop out of secondary schools in Bomet County. This could be due to limited income generating activities in the study area which leads to poor living standards making it difficult for parents to have enough money for school expenses such as uniforms and supplementary books. Therefore, students whose parents are unable to provide money for school expenses are likely to drop out. A similar study by Mbani (2008) in Awendo revealed similar findings where girls drop out of school due to school fees and lack of parental guidance.

Poor performance in class was ranked as the second most influencing factor causing students in secondary school in Bomet County to drop out. Because most parents in the district are unable to

meet their basic needs due to limited economic activities, students are always sent home to collect fees and money for other school expenses such as for buying additional class readers. Such students end up lagging behind in their class work. This resulted in them performing poorly in class, which discourages them, forcing some of them to eventually drop out of school.

The third factor was not being in good terms with school administration. As indicated earlier such students develop enmity with the school administration, which leads them to perform poorly in class. This is because as they continue hating the school administration, they end up hating the school. The final result is escaping from school leading to dropping out of school.

Poor relationship between students and the teachers was ranked as the fourth most influencing factor, causing students to drop out of secondary schools in Bomet County. Poor relationship between students and the teachers in the study area may result because the teachers may be hard on the students. They may be hard on those students who do not take their studies seriously, that are those who do not do their assignments on time. Students under such circumstances develop ill feelings against such teachers. This eventually lead to poor relationships between students and teachers. To avoid such teachers, some students leave school prematurely. The fifth factor ranked by the class teachers, as the most influencing, was rigid school rules and regulations. The students also ranked it as the fifth factor. Schools that adopt tough rules and regulations to be followed by the students end up losing some students who decide to pull out of school. As stated earlier, such students see schools as an extension of ‘prison like life’. They will, therefore, try to escape from such ‘prison like life’ by dropping out of school. Lastly the class teacher respondents, like the student respondents ranked being bullied by fellow students in the school as the least influencing factor, causing students to drop out from secondary in Bomet County. Though this is ranked as the least influencing factor, it still contributes to students dropping out of secondary schools. As indicated earlier bullying occurs in most cases where the discipline of the school is not up-to-date. The senior students in terms of age and grade torture their juniors physically, psychologically or emotionally making them feel like not part of the school community and eventually drop out.

1.4.3 School-based factors that influence students to drop out of secondary schools as perceived by the Guidance and Counseling teachers.

Findings.

Table 3: Guidance and Counseling Teachers Ranking of School-Based Causes of Drop outs

Factors	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
Rank						
1	83.3	8.3	8.3	...	...	...
2	16.7	...	25.0	58.3	...	...
3	...	41.7	8.3	25.0	8.3	16.7
4	...	16.7	41.7	16.7	25.0	...

5	...	16.7	8.3	...	58.3	16.7
6	...	16.7	8.3	...	8.3	66.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

NOTE

T1: Lack of money for school expenses.

T2: Poor relationship between students and teachers.

T3: Rigid school rules and regulations.

T4: Poor performance in class.

T5: Not being in good terms with school administration.

T6: Being bullied by fellow students in school.

According to Table 3, Guidance and Counseling teachers like the class teachers and students perceived lack of money for school expenses as the most influencing factor that causes secondary school drop outs in Bomet County. This was ranked first by 10, (83.3%) of the respondents. Poor performance in class was ranked second by 7, (58.3%) of the respondents. This was also ranked by the class teachers 6, (50%) and students 4, (30%). Like the students Guidance and Counseling teachers ranked poor relationship between the students and teachers as the third most influencing factor. The factor was ranked so by 5, (41.7%) of the respondents.

Rigid school rules and regulations was perceived by 5, (41.7%) of the Guidance and Counseling teachers as the fourth factor that cause secondary school drop outs in Bomet County. Seven, (58.3%) of the Guidance and Counseling teachers ranked not being in good terms with school administration as the fifth most influencing factor.

Interpretation

According to Table 18 on page 69, Guidance and Counseling teachers were of the opinion that lack of money school expenses was the most influencing factor that caused secondary school drop outs in Bomet County. Those students whose parents could not raise money for school expenses such as school uniforms and stationary were sent home by the school administration. Students who were sent home will miss teaching and learning and therefore lag behind in class work. Such students end up performing poor academically, and will in the long run end up having negative attitude towards schooling. They therefore end up dropping out of school to avoid embarrassment.

Poor performance in class was ranked as the second most influencing factor causing secondary school students to drop out in Bomet County. As a result of being sent home for school expenses, and as a result lag behind in their class work and eventually perform poorly in examination. Such students will opt to drop out of school rather than continue getting frustrated.

Poor relationship between students and teachers was ranked as the third most influencing factor. Some parents support their children even when they are wrong. Such children will hate teachers which will eventually lead to poor relationship. These students will extend the same hatred to the subjects taught by the teachers. Eventually they perform poorly in their class work and will finally opt to drop out of school.

The Guidance and Counseling teachers ranked rigid school rules and regulations as the fourth most influencing factor. Since guidance and counseling teachers in touch with the students than the other teachers, they felt that rigid school rules and regulations made students deviant. Some students will attempt to oppose the 'prison-like atmosphere.' In the long run, they create conflict with school administration. Conflict eventually makes them to drop out of school.

Not being in good terms with the school administration was ranked as fifth most influencing factor. As indicated earlier, some students develop bad feelings against school administration which appears hard on them. The bad feeling eventually lead to enmity between the students and the teachers which lead to hostility. Eventually, since the students are affected they drop out of school.

Lastly, 66.6% of guidance and counseling teachers ranked being bullied by fellow students as the least influencing factor causing students in Bomet County to drop out of secondary schools. This factor was perceived as the least influencing because the guidance and counseling teachers viewed bullying as having been curbed by school administrators. Bullying has also been prevented because most students come from the same district due to the quota system adopted in admitting form one students by the government in 1980s.

1.5 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Students, class and guidance and counseling teachers all ranked the following factors as being the most important as to why students drop out from secondary schools within the study area.

1. Due to lack of money for school expenses.
2. Due to poor performance in class.
3. Poor relationship between students and teachers.
4. Being in bad terms with the school administration.
5. Due to rigid school rules and regulations.
6. Being bullied by fellow students in school.

1.5.2 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The research findings established that, apart from school and home based factors that caused drop outs in secondary schools in disadvantaged districts, there are also those factors that are neither school-based nor home-based. These are factors that have been noted to cause drop outs in secondary schools in Bomet County.

2. From the above findings, the research concludes that school characteristics and its environment play a vital role in causing secondary school students in Bomet County with limited economic opportunities to drop out of school. This factor has been worsened by the removal of grants in the

1990s, which made parents to carry a heavier load in educating their children. Further, due to parents' high expectations for their children to excel in their academic examinations, students feel frustrated when they fail hence; they prefer to drop out of school. The findings of the study revealed that the government's objectives of retaining all students in school have not been met in the study area. This is despite the government's efforts of providing bursaries to needy students in Kenyan secondary schools. Lack of money for school expenses such as uniforms and stationery has ensured this is not achieved. With such a trend, the government might not realize the global commitment of attaining education for all (EFA) as agreed in the Jomtien conference in 1990. These factors were ranked as the most influencing in making students to drop out of secondary schools. From the findings of the present research study the following recommendations were made: 1. There is need to efficiently run the bursary schemes operated by the Ministry of Education (M.O.E) and Constituency Development Fund (C.D.F). The government should ensure able parents do not corrupt their way to get these bursaries. Further, there is need to educate parents on the existence of bursaries due to limited publicity that is currently there. The criteria for awarding of bursaries should be made clear so that all parents apply. This measure would have a net effect of reducing drop outs among students in secondary schools. 2. There is need for government of Kenya and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to ensure that students are retained in school. The government of Kenya in collaboration with NGOs can assist parents to start up small businesses through micro financing. Through this endeavor, parents will enable the students to attend most of their lessons in school, which will eventually lead to good performance motivating them to continue schooling.

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