

“Why Are They Out?” Exploring School Heads and Teachers’ Views on Secondary School Students’ Dropout in Peri-Urban Communities of Zanzibar, Tanzania

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Abstract

The study purposed to explore school heads and teachers’ views on students’ dropout in peri-urban Zanzibar with the aim of understanding the factors influencing dropout of children in secondary schools from school heads’ and teachers’ perspective, strategies adopted by schools to address dropout and to identify challenges faced by head of schools in returning out-of-school children in Zanzibar. Employing a qualitative approach, the study used case study design with purposive sampling in understanding school heads’ and teachers’ views. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with respondents being 17 teachers and heads of schools. The research used frustration-self-esteem model and participation model by Finn to understand and explain why some students withdraw from school. The findings show that distance to school, failure and repetition in school, inability to cope with school demands, poverty, engaging in economic activity, conflict between parent and non-commitment, English as language of instruction, indiscipline and community factors such as game centre activities and entertainment clubs are some of the reasons for dropout. The findings indicate that dropout is caused at various levels including family, school, individual, and community level in Zanzibar. On strategies adopted to curb dropout, school heads and teachers are helping in ways such as counselling students, establishing English clubs to address the language problem and instituting community related engagements. The study results have implications on policy and practice towards addressing dropout.

Keywords

Out of School, Push Pull Factors, Dropout, Rural, Peri-Urban, Youth

1. Introduction

Following the formulation of various goals such as the Sustainable Development Goal four (4) to promote quality education and lifelong learning for all by the United Nations (UNESCO, 2015) and other policy programmes such as Education for all (EFA) by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation, UNESCO (1990) to improve student's enrollment and full participation in both primary and secondary school. Most students are still out of school with an appreciable number dropping out. According to the United Nations (2020), 1.48% of students with a corresponding number of 5.2 million girls and 5.7 million boys in secondary school risk dropping out of school in the world in 2020. These figures although can be attributed to COVID-19 pandemic, the issue of dropout persists in various countries prior to the emergence of the pandemic. The United Nation (UNESCO, 2012) noted that 42% of sub-Saharan African school children will drop out before the end of primary education. Relief Web (2017) while citing human rights watch in their study note 49 million girls to be out of primary education with 31 million of them out of the secondary education system in sub-Saharan Africa. The issue is also severe in Tanzania when the numbers are studied. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation, (UNESCO) and United Nations Children's Fund, (UNICEF) global initiative on out of school children in Tanzania on their study in 2018 concluded that 3.6 million children are out of school in Tanzania with 2.3 million children being within the secondary school age of 14 - 17 years and 1.3 million children being within the primary school age of (7 - 13) years. These numbers show the relevance of the concern on out of school children and warrant the attention of policymakers. Studies on school dropout in Zanzibar by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, MOEVT (2018) although not focused on only secondary school students observed that 140,000 children between the ages 4 and 15 years were found to be out of school. As Mishra & Azeez (2014) notes, various factors are attributed to dropout namely, lack of interest from child or parents, financial constraints, distance to school, school atmosphere and home environment. Sikdar & Mukherjee (2012) in their study on students' attributed reasons for dropout listed 20 reasons which are categorized under "school centric" and "parent centric" reasons with both of these categories crucial in explaining reasons for dropout.

On the pervasiveness of dropout in other countries, Hossain et al. (2018) observed that dropout is pervasive in the education system of Bangladesh and poses great challenge to their educational attainment. They also add that 50% of students admitted to class one across the country drop out before completing class 5 and 80% from secondary school.

A number of researches have also been done on the dropout situation in Tanzania and Zanzibar. A study carried out by Kalinga (2013) in Kilimanjaro, Mbeya and Dar es Salaam identified socio economic and political factors that cause dropout and government contribution to it. The study also sought parent views

and attitudes towards education of boys and girls. The findings showed that causes for students' dropout from school are: lack of awareness on education matters and lack of education in the families, parents' low income, cultural aspects such as early marriages, divorce, polygamy, lack of family planning and negative attitudes towards education especially for girls and parents' deaths were also found to be the problems leading to school dropout. Improper application of the Education Act on part of government was also seen as causing dropout. Dropout studies on Zanzibar although few also show that there are external causes for student dropout. *Morris (2020)* studies found that the youth don't drop out of school by their own volition but instead, youth leave school because they are pushed out by factors beyond them namely family, school and community related factors. Some reasons include failing high stake exams such as the form two (2) and form (4) exams, needing to earn monies for their families, falling ill, caring for an ailing relative, or not receiving the needed educational support.

These observations make the understanding of the causes of dropout varied and will need specialized studies to understand the causes of dropout in various contexts. There is a need therefore to conduct an empirical investigation to know the reasons for dropout in Zanzibar since not many studies have been done. This study will seek to know the factors influencing dropout of children in secondary schools from the perspective of school heads and teachers; to find out the strategies adopted by school heads to reduce/prevent dropout in their schools; and to identify challenges faced by head of schools in returning out-of-school children in Zanzibar. The study is divided into five (5) sections namely, the Introduction, Literature review, Methodology and Methods, Data Analysis and Findings and Conclusion.

2. Theoretical Review

Frustration-Self-Esteem Model

Finn (1989) provides a theoretical view of why students withdraw from schools by using the frustration-self-esteem model. The problem of school dropout has become a national concern with many youngsters choosing to leave before their senior year. The frustration-self-esteem model has been used for a long time in studying juvenile delinquency. This model views school failure as the initial stage of the whole process of students' inability to complete his/her education or students being denied by the school. According to this model, school failure is termed as a causative agent of "problem behavior" at school which can then influence a student personally to drop out of school or be rejected by the school system itself. Model proponent adds that when the student is blamed for poor performance for instance, the student becomes frustrated due to impaired self-view and would slowly start showing negative behavior such as skipping classes and engaging in delinquent acts which automatically drives him/her out of school.

Participation-Identification Model

Another model by Finn (1989) is the participation-identification model which regards students' involvement or participation in school as a central idea for young people to stay at school. The model emphasizes the importance of students to abide with the school system as well as students' active participation in both school and classroom activities together with feeling identified with the school. When a student fails to cooperate with the school, problem behavior such as school dropout will be unavoidable. According to this model, lack of students' participation at school and in-class activities and little consideration by the school administration may influence them to withdraw from school before graduation.

3. Literature Review/Empirical Review

Research by Gil et al. (2019) through a questionnaire for teachers and management sought to establish the causes of school dropout from their perspectives. They found school, student and family commitment to learning as possible factors for dropout. In school, they note school infrastructure and educational resources as important in retaining students. Student-teacher relationships for overcoming problems of school failure was also highlighted of which nonexistent student-teacher relationship can cause dropout. On students' factors, various issues highlighted are those related to their learning problems. They note specific problems such as dyslexia and subsequent attention problems. Negative life events were also noted to be the cause where health and grief related problems. On family factors, they note that attributes such as family cohesion, positive peer association and favorable climate have some influence on the risk of dropout or otherwise. Mughal & Aldridge (2017) on teachers' view on school dropout from Pakistan notes that teachers and head teachers did not tend to believe that teaching practices and the school culture push some students to leave early. Instead, they hold individuals, parents, and other social factors responsible for children dropping out.

Factors Influencing Dropout in Literature

A study in Honduras in Latin America by Sekiya & Ashida (2017) reveals that repetition is one among the many causes of dropout but not major reason as there are other factors such as lack of quality education, child labor, domestic and social problems among others. This finding however varies slightly from Kibret et al. (2017) study in Ethiopia's Gojjam administrative zone which sought to understand the causes of dropout by categorizing them. They categorized some related factors causing dropout into pupil-related factors of students' dropout, parent-related factor to dropout and school-related cause of students' dropout. Mokibelo (2014) research in Botswana also reveals that various reason for dropout includes language of instruction used in schools, corporal punishments, and inhabitable hostel conditions. It can be pointed out that these factors are related to happenings in the school environment. Rumberger and Larson (1998) distinct model for dropout suggested that commitment is an important

determinant in student dropout. Social and academic component of commitment were also identified. Social component of commitment includes behaviors such as class attendance, compliance with rules and active participation in school-related activities and places. While academic commitment includes students' attitudes towards education and their ability to achieve expected performance. The nonexistence of such commitment can be a contributing factor to dropout.

Dakwa et al. (2014) also highlighted poverty related reasons for students' dropout in Zimbabwe where individuals from low socio economic status are affected and risk dropping out. They also found long distance of school as contributing to students' dropout.

Morris (2020) in their study in Zanzibar also notes that dropout in Zanzibar which is translated as "mtoro" in Kiswahili and literally means a "runaway" or "truant". While citing the Zanzibar education policy and international development reports, they note that students drop out of school because of deficit of motivation, skills, family support and financial resources, with early marriage and pregnancy being paramount for girls. Morris however contends that the deficit approach doesn't tell the full reasons for dropout and points out that Zanzibari youth are pushed out of the education system for a myriad of reasons including failing high stake exams, needing to earn monies for their families, falling ill and caring for an ailing relative. This results show some contention in what really causes students dropout in Zanzibar.

Strategies to Reduce Dropout Literature

Kibret et al. (2017) recommended strategies to reduce dropout which include parents' active involvement and engagement in their children's education in schools to increase students' progression rates. They admonish schools to provide support for students who are having difficulty succeeding academically and creating self-help mechanisms for economically poor learners and improve teacher's methods of instruction. Chouhan (2017)'s study in India also provides some strategies to reduce students drop out with emphasis on improving the school infrastructure, quality of education and huge investment in school education. They also recommend that alongside improvement in school should be considerable improvement in the economic status of households and a change in the social attitudes of parents towards achieving the universal goal of education for all.

Chouhan (2017) also highlight some historical developments to promote education and reduce dropout in India which include: Operation Blackboard (1987-88) which aimed to improve the human and physical resources available in primary schools; Restructuring and Reorganization of Teacher Education (1987) which created resource for the continuous upgrading of teachers' knowledge and competence to assist learners; Minimum Levels of Learning (1991) laid down levels of achievement at various stages and revised textbooks; The National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education (1995) provided a

cooked meal every day for children in Classes 1 - 5 of all government, government-aided and local body schools District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) (1993) emphasized decentralized planning and management, improved teaching and learning materials, and school effectiveness. Movement to Educate All (2000) aimed to achieve universal primary education by 2010 through micro-planning and school-mapping exercises, bridging gender and social gaps. These initiatives they note improved enrollment and reduced student dropout.

4. Research Gap and Statement of Problem

As Gil et al. (2019) notes, the detection of critical factors or predictors that explain school dropout has become an important research topic among education professionals. Márquez-Vera et al. (2013) also notes that, school dropout is a problem of importance in the educational community in general with the major concern being the considerable percentage of young people who do not complete compulsory school studies. The dropout situation causes for worry due to its consequences on the individual and society. Citing Barton (2006) and O'Connell & Sheikh (2009) these consequences include fewer job opportunities and negative impact on the individual psychological wellbeing. In Zanzibar however, dropout rates in schools are increasing in peri-urban, rural, tourism and fishing communities. As the Zanzibar out of school report (2018) indicates, the factors causing for dropout are pull factors such as income generating activities namely tourism, fishing and farming which takes children away from the school system since they have to provide for themselves and families. The study recommended that Ministry of Education and vocational training (MoEVT) provide flexible schooling hours, particularly in schools near tourist areas and fishing communities so that children do not have to choose between education and economic activities. This study and recommendations however leaves out the role and views of head masters on dropout and how to address them in those communities.

World Bank (2016) "Improving students prospect in Zanzibar" also notes that the Zanzibar education system is currently failing to deliver potential market return for youth partly because of high dropout rates as there is high dropout rates before successful completion and also the low attainment of labor market relevant skills.

Although preliminary investigation suggests that there is high dropout in rural and tourist areas, little is known about schools' heads and teachers' views on why there are dropping in these areas. It was observed through the review of literature that although there are numerous literature assessing causes of student's dropout. There are few assessing teacher's views on causes of dropout and ways to remedy the situation in peri-urban areas.

Other researches are also narrow in scope and focused on only specific areas of parents views, student causes, and general reasons for dropout in school without location factors such as communities that are rural and peri-urban.

These affects the generalization of the results on causes of school dropout among students.

Some previous researches were also large scale and employed quantitative methods which are unable to understand the realities in full detail from school heads and teachers' perspectives the causes of students' dropout.

As [Zuilkowski, Jukes & Dubeck \(2016\)](#) also points out, school dropout is the complex result of the interaction of environmental conditions and events, including gender, poverty and opportunity costs. Therefore, an analysis of teachers' and school heads perceptions regarding the problem of school dropout could help in understanding the factors that make students not progress towards post-compulsory education since are important stakeholders in the education system where schools are part.

It is against this background that this study seeks to reach out to school heads and teachers to ascertain their views on dropout by asking the following questions. What factors in your view influence students to drop out in your secondary school? What strategies are adopted by school heads to reduce/prevent dropout in the schools selected? And what are the challenges faced by school heads in returning out-of-school children to the school?

Understanding the perspectives of school heads and teachers in Unguja Zanzibar through this study will contribute to addressing the challenge of young people succeeding less in the education system.

5. Methods

Study Design

Qualitative case study design was employed for this study. [Creswell \(2007\)](#) notes that case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system. Multiple case study design was adopted in order to help in having wider understanding of school heads and teachers' views of dropout in Zanzibar from various locations. As [Baxter & Jack \(2008\)](#) adds, multiple case study design in data collection is important as it offers an opportunity to examine more than one case and creates chance for generalization of the findings to a larger population.

Participants and Procedures

[Best and Khan \(2006\)](#) notes that population is any group of individuals or groups who have one or more characteristics in common that are of the interest to the researcher from which sample can be chosen. The target population for this study is all secondary schools in Zanzibar, their school heads and teachers. Also citing [Best and Khan \(2006\)](#), a sample is a segment of population in which the researcher is interested in gaining information and drawing conclusion. As [Blankenship \(2010\)](#) asserts using entire population to obtain information is more expensive and would likely lead to having inaccurate data, hence it is better to select a sample from the entire population for the purpose of having more accurate data that represent a particular population of interest.

The sample size for this study includes 17 respondents from 3 public secondary schools in peri urban Zanzibar. The 17 respondents entail 3 headmasters or assistant headmasters from the 3 schools selected and 14 teachers from 3 from of the three (3) secondary schools selected.

Schools

The locations of selected schools were purposively sampled due to their peculiar situation as peri-urban and rural areas and closeness to the ocean far from urban areas. Purposive sampling according to Cohen et al. (2000) refers to the picking of units most relevant in the subject matter to study. Purposive sampling was employed in the selection of secondary schools in the various locations since schools provide learning places for students as well as teaching and administrative avenue for teachers and school heads. Three public schools in those areas were chosen using purposive sampling.

Head Teachers

In purposive sampling, researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality (Cohen et al., 2000). Head teachers were among the targeted population of this study. Purposive sampling was used to sample them from selected secondary schools. The researchers used purposive sampling technique to sample head teachers because of the positions they hold as school heads thus have great experience and possess rich information on causes of students' dropout.

Teachers

Convenience sampling was employed in selection of teachers in the secondary schools. Convenience sampling involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size or information has been obtained (Cohen et al., 2000). Convenience sampling was to facilitate researchers' ability to simply choose the sample from individuals who were easier to access in school. Convenient sampling was used to select teachers who were available and willing to participate in the study on their views on student dropout.

Sample of Respondents

M	F	M	F	Grand Total
3	0	9	5	17

Information on Study Participants

Age: 20 - 29 [5] 30 - 39 [6] 40 - 49 [4] 50 - 60 [2]

Teaching and work Experience 2 - 5 yrs. [3] 5 - 10 yrs. [6] 11 - 20 yrs. [6] 20+ yrs. [2]

Source: Authors Field Work 2021.

Source of Data

Data for this study is from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include interview with respondents from field while secondary data was obtained from desk review of literature available online from journal articles on school dropout, reports and articles on web which are relevant to the study.

Data Collection and Instruments

The study employed various data collection methods, namely, interviews and focus group discussions. Interviews according to Creswell (2007) are personal conversations between two or more people (the interviewer and interviewee) and exploratory in nature. The researchers employed in-depth semi structured interviews in exploring school heads and teachers' views on dropout in Zanzibar. Semi structured interview was used for the study with questions on interview guide seeking to uncover the causes of dropout from the head teachers and school heads perspectives. Interview sections lasted for an average of 1 and half hours to 2 hours. According to Patton (2002) semi-structured interviews were found plausible as they are helpful in collecting rich qualitative data based on the informant's experiences and the meaning they make to that experience due to its flexibility, focus and time effective.

Focus Group Discussions/Interviews

Focus Group Discussion (FDG) refers to a research tool used to gather information from a group of informants based on specific topic (Patton, 2002). The potential of FGD is that it offers rich information and flexible in data gathering, at the same time allowing spontaneity of interaction among participants (Freitas et al., 1998). The study employed focus group discussions to enquire about teachers' views on what they think causes dropout among students and those at risk of dropout. Researcher used focus group because it gives room for the participants to express their opinions and ideas freely in their natural setting also people tend to feel allowed to express their views.

Documentary Review

The researchers reviewed literature from various internet sources and school records. Reviews range from journal publications, government reports in Zanzibar and other internally published documents. Reviews were also done on school documents and books to know about school data on dropout rates.

Data Coding

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The study analyzed data qualitatively and employed thematic analysis in analyzing data. In thematic analysis, data were put under various themes and summarized to complement important information in accordance with the study objectives. After data collection through face-to-face interview and focus group discussion, there was familiarization with data which was then transcribed according to patterns developed. Those raw data which were originally in Kiswahili were transcribed into English. After data transcription, the data were read thoroughly and reduced through coding them into major themes/ideas relevant to the study objectives. These processes followed Braun & Clarke (2006) procedure for data analysis.

Ethical Consideration

Researcher did not threaten, coerce, bribe or take advantage of respondents or their conditions to acquire data for the study. The purpose of the study was fully explained to the respondents which enabled them to make judgements whether

to participate in the study or not. The researcher also conducted the research without bias and was positive, open minded and objective about the study's purpose. According to the ethical guidelines of the Social Research Association, researchers have obligations towards their subjects of the study and hence, must protect subjects from undue harm arising as a consequence of their participation in the study (Social Research Association, 2003). The researcher followed all these ethical standards in the conduct of this study and made efforts to ensure that there is trustworthiness of result, credibility and confidence in research, and transferability and dependability in result.

It also followed ethical principles by acquiring permission from relevant bodies such as obtaining a letter from the State University to aid in data collection. And not coercing respondents to participating in the study. We also ensured confidentiality by not revealing the identities of the respondents.

6. Results

In line with the study purpose which was to explore school heads and teachers' views on school dropout in Zanzibar. The data collection seeks to know factors influencing dropout of students in secondary schools from school heads and teachers' perspective; finding out the strategies adopted by school heads to reduce/prevent drop out in their schools and to identify challenges faced by head of schools in returning out-of-school children in Zanzibar. The themes below were generated from the interviews conducted.

School Heads and Teachers' View on Causes of Students' Dropout

The first objective seeks to identify the factors influencing dropout of children in secondary schools from school heads and teachers' perspective. The findings revealed that schools in the peri-urban areas of Zanzibar have varying reasons and responses for student dropout.

Distance to school is identified as one the reasons for students' dropout in two schools. At two locations, the school heads lament the distance of school as causing dropout among students while the third school cited distance as not a problem since they are within the community.

Distance from School

An interview with a headmaster from school B notes that the distance of school from home causes some students to dropout in my view. Some students have to cover a distance of 3 to 4 kilometers to come to school, coupled with the irregular buses (called "daladala") that ply the route which is not many.

A school head from school C commented that:

Some students live very far from the school, we also run just one shift so if they are not able to wake up early to attend the first shift, they start missing school and classes. The cars are not there with students having to walk or use other means.

The findings highlight distance as a reason for dropout in some areas that are rural or have schools far from the settlement. It is also consistent with the Zan-

zibar out of school children report (2018) that distance of school plays a key role in student's dropout at the both rural and urban areas. The walking distance which could be attributed to the sparsely distributed population in peri urban areas and their far distant location away from school causes students to drop out. This finding is also consistent with studies on school geographies where rural schools spaces and students are handicapped due to the barrier of distance.

Academic Reasons

From the interviews, some responses were themed academic. It was noted that students' dropout was also based on form four (4) exams failure and repetition. Citing school teachers and heads, bad grades and the feeling of no opportunity after obtaining school certificate causes students to drop out. During the FGD, one teacher from school A remarked:

Repetition and failure in national exams can make some students to dropout. Some students get tired of repetition and failure so decides to quit because they see no need to continue. The feeling and reactions from their mates about their failure also makes them uncomfortable in school.

A head teacher in school B also commented:

Students drop out because they think they are not fit to study so they give up. They are unable to cope with school. This is termed in Kiswahili as "kukata tamaa", a feeling of despair...I think the repetition due to exam failure would have to be looked at.

The quotations above signify that teachers and school heads believe academic failure and repetition in some cases cause students to dropout. The feeling of "not good enough" in academics on part of students was observed as reason for dropping out. The finding in relation to repetition due to academics also confirms Finn (1989) frustration self-esteem model which notes that school failure is the beginning of all problems of students' dropout.

Economic and Financial Reasons

The interview and focus group discussion responses gave birth to the economic reasons theme. Some school heads note that family poverty, low economic status and child poverty causes students to drop out in the rural and peri-urban areas. As captured by the school head in school B:

Some students don't have food to eat after school so they prefer leaving school to go work in areas such as washing fish & other menial jobs close to the sea. Boys sometimes engage in fishing or helping returning fishermen empty their net, while girls prepare food and bites for sale to generate income.

They also note that during tourism season, students drop out of school and follow tourists to seek money. This is seen through the chasing of tourist cars as they drive or following them as they walk. Teachers were more particular about these economic reasons. They note that students who are poor and need money engage in "day work" such as farming and grazing. To quote the respondent who is a teacher from school A:

Some student missed school hours during rice cultivation season which is spring and winter since farmers provide opportunity for paid day labor on their

farms. The orange picking season also makes students leave school to pick oranges for transportation to the city for selling.

The seasonal and farming opportunities therefore provide opportunity for engaging in paid labor which causes student to miss class and eventual dropout.

A Focus Group Discussion also revealed the following from teachers:

“Students become truants and eventually dropout after taking ‘day job’ like boys engaging in “magari ya ngo’mba” in kiswahili which is translated as the use of “cattle assisted wheels” for business such as carrying load and water to earn small wages hence missing school” ... “Girls also engage in small businesses such as cooking and selling of locally made snacks such as “kachori” which is a pastry made from beans. “Students also engage in harvesting sea weed and sea food along the ocean to sell”.

The above responses show that working to earn a living or engaging in an economic activity took students away from school leading to dropout. These economic reasons are also in line with [Daly et al. \(2016\)](#) study in Gambia which observed that poverty at home and children’s contribution to household income put them at risk of dropping out.

Social and Community Related Causes

Schools heads and teachers also lamented some factors in communities that cause students’ dropout among other causes. Some of which include large religious weekend weddings, game centers activities, absenteeism on Friday due to prayers among others. As one school head in school C commented in an interview:

Friday wedding ceremonies causes truancy and dropout. Students go for these wedding following their parents and forget they are students by closing very late in the night from those weddings. The students’ attraction to “rusho roho” (songs) played at these weddings are a determining factor. ...These songs attract students with many missing class the following Monday.

They also note that young girls are sometimes lured and sexually harassed in communities by visiting tourists during the high season due to car lifts offered to students. This situation was not common in responses from all heads since it was only observed in one particular area.

Peer pressure was also identified as a cause for students dropping out. As one teacher note during the focus group discussion:

Student dropout as they start to meet other bad colleagues in school or in town causing them to voluntarily miss school and following those bad friends. Over age friends on the streets also lure students to join them to either play games or roam.

Teachers and school heads identified the game centre activities (play station games) in the community as making students to abandon school for hours, days and weeks to go play different type of games at the centre during school hours. They observed that the operation of these game centres during school hours causes student to be engaged with them. They suggest that community leaders

have to do more to stop game centres from admitting students during school time. Another social factor identified by a teacher was the operations of the local pub and night club in the community. A teacher remarks:

there is an officers mess and night club which serves as entertainment near our school environment and not far from here...it has no restriction by age too so some secondary school students of ours (boys and girls) to go there at night hence missing school in the day. There is also a bar around the area where students with other gangs from community meet to engage in drug use (marijuana) leading to them being out of school for weeks.

From the above quotations, it can be found that entertainment and social factors distract teenage secondary school students and causing them to drop out and others also being at risk of dropping out.

Family Related Causes of Dropout

The interview and focus group discussion session also found family related reasons by school heads and teachers as causing dropout. The head masters lament apathy on part of parents. Quoting headmaster from school A who noted:

Some parents just don't care. They don't ask their children to go to school. even those whose children go to school, the parents don't follow up to know if they are actually in school since some students who leave home for school do not reach school.

This response indicates that parents' apathy could be determining factor in students' dropout since students with low supervision are likely to go astray.

This is further confirmed by school head in school B who note that parents' apathy and illiteracy is the cause for dropout. In connection to the apathy, the school head notes this:

Only few parent turn up for meeting called by school and others parents not attending at all. The support from parents to the children is also inadequate since they don't like paying the contribution towards school facilities and exams which causes students to dropout.

A Focus Group Discussion response from teachers also noted the following:

"Some parents don't take care of their children, they don't monitor their progress and their commitment to their children's success is low". "Some parents depend on their children economically for survival so they are not able to tell the child to go to school when he/she becomes a truant". Some students also stay far away from their parents hence inability of parents to supervise them. (FGD Respondents)

It can be deduced from the above responses that the apathy can be caused by illiteracy and poverty since some parents may not be committed because they fear the cost component that might surface. Apathy towards children schooling also arise because of the dependence on their children for survival.

Again on family related causes, a headmaster from school B notes that:

Conflict between parents or divorce causes problem for children since they don't know who to stay with especially when there is divorce. They might want

to be with their mother but she is not having money so it causes them to dropout. It happens especially when one partner is not responsible. Students have divided mind on who to stay with during divorce which affects their performance and dropout.

This shows that stability in the family or otherwise has some influence on schools' factors of the child such as dropping out.

School Related Factors

Some responses detailing why students are out of school were themed under school factors in this study. School heads acknowledged limited school factors but those that stood out was language of instruction, school regulation and discipline among others. As the school head of school A notes:

English language is used with Kiswahili during teaching but students do not like the medium of instruction due to its difficulty causing for some to drop out due to frustration.

Interview with school heads also reveals that teachers had to mix Kiswahili with English while teaching to enhance students understanding but promotional and national exams at the Ordinary level are set in English which affects students understanding of questions and their answers which could also explain students' failure and dropout.

On rules, some school heads also note that "students hate rules and regulation while fearing corporal and alternative punishment." It was noted that students hate or dislike alternative punishment. To quote from the interview with the school head of school B:

Government directed the stopping of corporal punishment in schools since it is standard practice of child training but the students also hate the alternative punishment we give them causing them to drop out sometimes. Alternative punishment such as washing washroom, bringing broom stick, and local manure to grow school flower is deemed by parents and students as difficult which makes them to stop our school and go to other schools.

This problem behavior which was alluded to by Finn (1989) and the corresponding alternative punishment is also accounting for students' dropout in schools as observed by school heads.

It was observed through the findings that parents propose corporal punishment for disciplining their children but schools hardly oblige since it is against the school and government guidelines.

Another school factor is suspension or expulsion. As the headmaster puts it, "refusal to accept alternative discipline causes for fighting or disagreement between teachers and students which can lead to suspension by school board and eventual student drop out".

Although this school factors support Morris (2020) position that school can cause students to dropout, the results indicate that individual influences and exposure also play a part.

Strategies to Reduce Dropout by School Heads and Teachers and Policy Implications

Findings from the study also indicated that there are strategies adopted by school heads and teachers to reduce or curb drop out in their schools. A teacher in school B notes the following:

I write letters to parents on student absenteeism and sometimes following up by going to the family to talk to parents about the situation or know the reasons. I also call students to sit down together where I provide guidance and counselling.

This shows that teachers have adopted student counselling and advice as some of the measures to check dropout since counselling helps in identifying at risk students and providing the necessary help to prevent their dropout.

On the language of instruction, teachers note that “English language clubs have been instituted and formed to help assist students in English language”. Also they add that students have been advised to use the school library regularly to read in order to improve but the effectiveness is yet to be realized.

On what Headmasters are doing to address dropout, a headmaster remark that, “teachers usually handle dropout issues but extreme cases are referred to me as the headmaster”. The headmaster in school C also adds that “names are usually compiled on truants for the term by teachers with my secretary writing letters to parents”. Names of dropout are sent to the chairman of school parent committee to look out for them; extreme cases are forwarded to the school board for decision.

It was observed that board discussions are held, in which Sheha (community leader) are sent to follow up on the students & families who have dropped out or are truants. Shehas for instance also reports gangs in town to police to help in arresting. The headmaster in school B notes that:

We also organize awareness meetings for PTAs where we discuss issues of dropout and challenges facing student, the meeting is with parents on reported students’ behavior which are likely to put them at risk of dropout such as discipline and truancy. School management committees invite all members including chairperson, parents and teachers to discuss issues affecting students that might lead to dropout.

The headmasters also note that they conduct routine checks on teachers & students to know the problems they face in order to address them and also randomly following up on children at home. The headmaster in school B also commented on how they curb dropout. He notes:

Shehas are constituent of school management committees so they help address dropout by following up and giving information to school on situations in community that might cause or are causing dropout such as bad gangs that disturb students.

Head master also notes that they work to reduce dropout through career guidance so students can know the relevance of education. quoting the headmaster:

We invite guest speakers to speak to students about drug abuse and also careers after school which is intended to help them know the importance of school

and be motivated to continue hence preventing dropout.

Another measure adopted by school heads is to report the situation on dropout to regional commissioners' office (RC) in cases that are beyond the school.

Challenges Faced by Teachers and School Heads in Returning out of School Children

Some school heads note that parents don't like alternative discipline, quoting one respondent: "They like stick and canes as punishment instead of "bring broom" & "clean washroom" as type of assignments.

It was noted that alternative punishment such as making broom stick waste time and put enormous stress on students. Alternative discipline also takes enough time for execution which makes disciplining students a problem.

Some public leaders are not effective which poses a problem for school heads. This is shown in how community leaders who are also known locally as "Shehas" miss meetings and not cooperating with school authorities in some situations of following up on students and their parents.

Noncooperation from parents was also identified. One headmaster notes that "sometimes with uneducated parents, you send letter and they don't respond or follow up". Quoting one school heads frustration:

There is little cooperation from parents...call them, and they don't come on time, they don't honor invitations or respond to teachers call, and some parents also depend on their school children to support them financially so they cannot advise their children when abandon school.

Student inability to open up on their challenges makes identifying those with need difficult and eventual student dropping out.

Opportunity for students to boost their English skills is less patronized. As noted by the Teacher in school A.

We have an English language club as part of an extracurricular activity to support students learning but only few members attend regularly. Out of the about 150 students only 30 attend the English club making the language barrier still a problem.

Another school head note that:

Our school is also a rural community so students mostly interact with others in Kiswahili within and outside of school. Teachers also speak Kiswahili in order to help students understand.

Students' indiscipline and deviant behaviors also affects teachers concern towards them. As the school heads put it:

Some students don't behave well so teachers don't care about whether they drop out or stay in school which affects the support teachers and school give them.

7. Discussion

Consistent with literature related to dropout by Kibret et al. (2017) and Sekiya & Ashida (2017), results from the field show that the dropout causes are common

and related. Distance of school was found in 2 out of the 3 schools who participated in this study. 2 of such school had some rural features since they were far from town and needed students finding means of transport to be able to reach school. This finding is consistent with the report on out of school children in Zanzibar by [Ministry of Education and Vocational Training \(2018\)](#) which found that the distance of school to home can cause students to dropout. The school heads in this study agree. Students face difficulty walking long distances of 2 kilometers and back every school day which put enormous pressure on them. They are usually tired from the long distances causing sleeping during study hours or being hungry leading to dropout. The distance also become a barrier when the weather changes. Also on academic reasons, the study found poor performance or failure in exams and repetition as factors causing for dropout from the view of school heads and teachers from all schools visited. This indicates that those factors are all too common. It fits into the [Finn \(1989\)](#) frustration-self-esteem model which note that students withdraw from school when problems such as poor academic performance and repetition begin. And the participation model where they absent themselves when they feel they don't belong. On economic reasons, poverty at home, and students assuming care responsibilities as a cause of dropout was found to impact on dropout. Activities of students during seasons such as picking fruits, pulling cow, picking see weeds, washing fish and selling pastries by girls affect their retention in school. This is consistent with the study by [Mughal & Albridge \(2017\)](#) where engagement in economic activities takes a tow on students' concentration school. This study however found that some students engage in economic activities not because of poverty but rather to satisfy their entertainment needs such as having money for paying gate fee at pubs and game centres. Family and parental factors were also found where there is apathy on part of parents partly due to illiteracy, poverty and other factors the school heads could not explain. Parents' inability to appreciate the relevance of education makes them commit less efforts towards their children's education. Poverty which causes for child assuming responsibility at home also prevents any advice from parents. Divorce and conflict within family also truncates the studies of students in the area in some instances. [Daly et al. \(2016\)](#) on their study in Gambia suggest adult education to curb parent apathy towards children's education. The adult education initiative can be adopted in Zanzibar to also address same. On school related factors, language of instruction, indiscipline issues on part of students was identified by school heads as pushing students out. And on community factors, weddings on weekends and entertainments areas such as night clubs make students become truants and dropping out from school.

On curbing the situation, the study found that school heads and teachers are doing their part such as counselling students, establishing English clubs to address the language issue and also institution measures such as writing letters, following up on students, working with community heads such as "Shehas" and school boards to address dropout. Challenges faced in addressing dropout how-

ever bothers on uncooperative aren't, ineffective leaders in community, poverty related factors which still continue, students' inability to open up on issues affecting which we think could be a result of bad teacher student relationship and issues bothering on corporal punishment in school.

8. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand the various factors impacting students' dropout in Zanzibar from the perspective of school heads and teachers. Through various data collection methods such as interviews, focus group discussions and document reviews with teachers and school heads. A myriad of factors was found to be affecting or causing students' dropout in Zanzibar ranging from academic, economic, and family factors. As well as individual, school related, and community related factors.

Distance of school was found as one of the reasons affecting student dropout in areas on the outskirts of the island since school facilities are far from homes with fewer buses to transport students.

Peculiar themes that this research found could be broadly characterized as academic, economic, social and community related factors and family related causes of dropout.

On academic causes, the study found failure in critical exams such as the form 4 exams and repetition as a cause of students' dropout. Other academic factors found stress of school, stigma suffered associated with failure or repetition and the perception of non-relevance of education.

The economic factors the study found include poverty and hunger after school as a cause for dropout, engaging in work or economic activity to cater for their needs and entertainment such as fishing or washing fishes, picking seaweed, pulling cow and picking fruits. And girls also engage in petty trading.

Family related causes of dropout found, parent apathy and lack of concern towards their children's education, divorce of parents or conflict in the family which disturb or disrupts child schooling and parents' low socio-economic status which impacts the funding of child educational needs which causes dropout.

Social and community related factors causing dropout that the study found include: school pupils attending of social events late into the night such as wedding on weekends and community related socials which causes truancy. Peer pressure among students where students join bad gangs and others engage in drug abuse, patronizing activities of the night club and game centers.

On school related factors causing dropout, the study found difficulties in language of instruction which is English, punishment bothering on corporal and alternative punishment, and indiscipline and suspension as contributing to dropout.

Current strategies being implemented by schools to reduce dropout in their schools however include: writing letters and following up on students, teachers providing guidance and counselling to students, school committees including community leaders (Sheha) following up on students identified to be truants and

missing school, awareness through parent-teacher association meetings, routine checks by school heads to understand students and teachers issues in order to address them, establishment of English language club in some schools to help students address the language barrier and invitations of speakers to speak to students on careers and relevance of education in order to develop and enhance their interest in school.

Findings also show that, in spite of the challenges, school heads and teachers have ideas on the causes of dropout since they work with students and are attempting to solve them.

Recommendation

The study recommends that adequate sensitization needs to be done on the need for parents to support their children and take some responsibility for their children's educational journey. Public awareness and education campaigns to promote education for all by government through the ministry of education will aid in that regard.

Head masters and head mistresses should also strengthen the link between parents and schools through improved communication channels and school inclusion committees strengthen the communication between school and parents, through avenues like the parents-teachers' associations and e-communication will help in reaching out to the parents in the communities, and provide awareness on the relevance and benefit of education to both parents and their children.

Government should also make efforts to ensure that education is truly free in order to remove those costs components that still hinder participation and dropout and also create a conducive economic environment to reduce poverty. Livelihood empowerment programmes can also be implemented to reduce poverty in the rural areas.

Findings from this research can be taken into account by teachers and school heads as they work towards addressing the challenge of students' dropout in their schools.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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