

An Investigation of School Characteristics Leading to Students' Dropout from Mixed-Day Secondary Schools in Bomet East Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract

Original Research Article

The Education Sector in Kenya has faced many challenges particularly school dropouts, which is an indicator of low internal efficiency during the past two decades. The Kenyan government came up with 100% transition rate from primary school to secondary school in 2018 to increase access to secondary school education which will in turn result in increased completion rates. This study sought to investigate School Characteristics Leading to Students' Dropout from Mixed-Day Secondary Schools in Bomet East Sub-County, Kenya for the period between the year 2019 and 2022. This study examined why students drop out of school and suggested recommendations on what can be done about it. This study was guided by the objective: to investigate the school-related factors leading to school dropout. The study was based on The Classical Theory of Equal Opportunities and Social Darwinism which assert that each person is born with a given amount of capacity, which, to a large extent, is inherited and cannot be substantially changed. Descriptive Survey Research Design was used to collect data from Principals, teachers and students of the sampled Mixed Day Secondary schools. Piloting was carried out. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data. Percentages and Frequencies were used to analyze the data. Analysis was done by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). It was found out that the following school characteristics lead to students dropout; poor performance, expulsion, school dislike, long distance to school, gender violence, inadequate learning resources, harsh punishment and hatred towards a teacher. The study suggests three recommendations to curb school dropouts. The findings are hoped to benefit the teachers, school principals and other school managers as well as the Ministry of Education to put necessary measures in place to curb the dropout problem. The findings will also add new knowledge to the existing one.

Keywords: School Characteristics, Students' Dropout, Mixed-Day, Secondary Schools.

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INTRODUCTION

Drop out is one of the major problems affecting the education sector in countries all over the world [1]. revealed that Mexico, like other middle-income countries, has reached almost universal enrolment rates in primary and lower secondary (grades 7 to 9), but its education system still faces important challenges especially in high school (grades 10, 11 and 12). Similarly in the years 2013-2017, the United States had an average high school dropout rate of 6% [2]. The state with the highest dropout rate was New Hampshire at 9.9% [2]. It is followed by Louisiana (9.6%), Nevada (9%), and New Mexico (8.6%) [3]. Massachusetts is the state with the lowest dropout rate at 3.8% [2]. Followed by the states of Maine, Hawaii, New Jersey, and Virginia, which all have high school dropout rates of

3.9% [3]. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has put the drop-out rate in South African schools to be at between 42- 56% [4].

In Kenya, a third of secondary school learners do not complete their education in spite of heavy investment to ensure 100 per cent transition from primary school by the Kenyan government [5]. Following the roll out of 100 per cent transition policy to complement Free Day Secondary School, primary to secondary, transition rates increased from 83.3 per cent in 2018 to 95 per cent by the first quarter (Q1) of 2020 [6]. However a report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) on the progress made by countries towards achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 indicates that close to 35 per cent of Kenyan secondary

school students will not complete upper secondary education by 2030 before factoring in the effect the Covid-19 pandemic [7]. On September 25th 2015, countries adopted a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda [7]. This is as stipulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) with its 17 goals with 169 targets between them to be met by the year 2030. Kenya, in particular has only eight years to come to the end of vision 2030, but the big question is: Is Kenya achieving inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all?

At the secondary education level in Kenya, there was a steady increase in enrolment; from 2.78 million students in 2017 to 3.26 million in 2019 which translate to 93% enrolment rate (MoE, 2019). This mean a great milestone in the country's education. However, according to [8], among the sub-county schools that were sampled for the survey, there was the highest dropout rate (4.7%) among those who were in form four and the least (1.3%) in form three. These points out a gap in secondary school education

Similarly, data from the Ministry of Education, Bomet East Sub County revealed an increased dropout rates between the 2018-2020 cohort and 2020-2022 cohort. The enrolment for the cohorts was 1269 and 1281 respectively for the cohorts. On the contrary, the dropout rates were 9.8% and 11.7% respectively. This is a clear indication that there are other factors that impacts on a learner's education and completion of the same. In a study on school based factors as determinants of secondary school students' dropouts in Bomet County found out that lack of money for school expenses such as uniforms and stationery led to school dropout [9]. According to [10], a range of factors have been shown to increase a student's risk of dropping out, including high rates of absenteeism, low levels of school engagement, low parental education, work or family responsibilities, problematic or deviant behaviour, moving to a new school in the ninth grade, and attending a school with lower achievement scores. However, no research has documented School-related factors leading to school dropout which thus propelled the researcher to carry out this study.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the school characteristics leading to students' dropout from mixed-day secondary schools in Bomet East Sub-County, Kenya. The specific objective of the study was therefore to investigate the school characteristics leading to students' dropout from Mixed-Day secondary schools in Bomet East Sub-county, Kenya. The study sought to answer the question: What factors within the school can make students drop out from mixed-day secondary schools in Bomet East Sub-County? Answers to this question will inform the school managers and the

ministry of education to put remedial measures in place to curb school dropout

The study was based on Classical Theory of Equal Opportunities and Social Darwinism. The theory asserts that each person is born with a given amount of capacity, which, to a large extent, is inherited and cannot be substantially changed. Thus, educational systems should be designed so as to remove barriers of any nature (economic, gender, geographic) that prevent bright students from lower economic backgrounds from taking advantage of inborn talents, which accelerate them to social promotion [11]. The theory demands for further going through education at primary and secondary level to which access would be determined on the basis of individual's merit and not social backgrounds.

According to [12], school structure, curriculum and size are factors influential to increased likelihood of a student experiencing academic risk factors. The school curriculum has been found to affect the likelihood of a student to drop out regardless of which courses the individual was taking. A growing number of randomized evaluations find that performance-based monetary incentives for teachers can increase student learning, and presumably reduce dropout, under the right circumstances. On the other hand, a study by [13], on the causes of school dropout among Ordinary level learners in a Resettlement area in Masvingo posits that unsafe school environment, labeling and stigmatization, too many students in a class, poor grades and teachers extended favours to learners from affluent families, were the main causes of dropout [10], on analysis of dropout levels in public secondary schools in Kericho District in relation to selected school characteristics revealed that dropout is highest in form two as compared to the other classes and prevalent in day schools than boarding schools due to community influence, peer influence, premarital pregnancies and early marriages. Data also revealed that dropout was common in mixed schools than single sex schools. Similarly, a study by [9] on school based factors as determinants of secondary school students dropout in Bomet County revealed that poor relationships between students and the teachers, rigid rules and regulations, bullying and 'not being in good terms with the administration' were some of the factors that contributed to school dropout. The policies in place will either promote school attendance or discourage it.

Within Bomet East Sub County in Kenya, no study has investigated and documented expulsion, school dislike, inadequate learning resources, long distance to school, harsh punishment, gender violence, hatred towards a teacher and boy-girl relationships in school, poor performance as possible causes of dropout. This study thus was conducted based on this gap.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed descriptive research design. This design helps researchers answer three types of questions: (a) descriptive questions, (b) questions about the relationships between variables and (c) questions about predictive relationships between variables over time [14]. Descriptive survey is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals [15]. It can be used when collecting information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits or any of the variety of education or social science issues [16]. This design was considered appropriate for this study because it offers an opportunity to obtain information from mixed-day secondary schools' head teachers, teachers and students on the school-related factors leading to school dropouts in Bomet East Sub-County, Kenya.

This study was carried out in Bomet East Sub-County which is the largest of the five sub-counties of Bomet County. Purposive sampling was used to select the sub-county as the study site since it has high dropout rates in the county. Through stratification, mixed day secondary schools were selected from other types of schools because this category of schools largely benefited from the government's introduction of 100 per cent transition rate policy in 2018 to complement Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) which was introduced in 2008. The target population was all the Principals, teachers and students from 25 public mixed day secondary schools in Bomet East Sub County. These schools have a combined population of

25 Principals, 375 teachers comprising 251 males and 124 females and 4896 students comprising 2574 boys and 2322 girls. The principals, teachers and students were targeted because they interacted with those who dropped out from school and probably have some reasons on why they dropped. Purposive sampling was used in the study. It refers to a group of non-probability sampling techniques in which units are selected because they have characteristics that you need in your sample [17]. In other words, units are selected "on purpose" in purposive sampling. The preliminary stage of the study was the development of sampling frame of head teachers, teachers, and students from sampled schools. The appropriate sample sizes for this study were determined based on [18] table of determining sample sizes.

Random sampling is the most fundamental form of probability sampling where every member of a population has an equal chance of being chosen. Twenty two (22) schools out of 25 mixed day secondary schools were sampled for the study based on [18] table. The population of principals, teachers and students in the sampled schools was used to determine sample sizes for the study. The population for principals, teachers and students in the sampled schools were 22, 375 and 4896 respectively. Basing on [18] table, the number of sampled principals, teachers and students for the study was 22, 181 and 357 respectively. The derived number of teachers and students were then selected randomly.

Table-1: Table of Determining Sample Sizes

Item	Sampled Mixed day sec schools	Principals in sampled schools	Teachers in sampled schools		Students in sampled schools	
			M	F	M	F
Number	22	22	251	124	2574	2322
Total	22	22	375		4896	
Sample size	22	22	181		357	

Source: Researcher, 2022

To collect data in this study, the questionnaires and interview schedules were used. Questionnaires were administered to sampled class teachers and students. The questionnaire was preferred for its suitability to this study. It is suitable as a method of data collection since it can be used to gather both qualitative and quantitative data from respondents about their attitudes, experiences, or opinions [19]. Interview schedules on the other hand were conducted for head teachers.

Before proceeding to the field a letter of authorization to conduct research was obtained from the graduate school. This was used to facilitate the acquisition of a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation. Once permit to conduct research was granted, clearance to carry out research was obtained from Bomet Sub-

County Education Officer. The schools to be involved in the study were visited by the researcher to for introduction to the principal who in turn introduced the researcher to the teachers and students. Once the respondents completed the questionnaires, the instrument was collected on the spot. This was done in order to avoid contamination of data [20].

On completion of data collection and before embarking on compiling and coding the data, the researcher checked the data for completeness of the questionnaires. The quantitative and qualitative data were arranged and grouped according to the particular research questions. Coding was done by use of numerical values to make data reduction possible and manageable for analysis. They were then entered into a computer programme and the analysis was done using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Quantitative data were tabulated, analyzed and presented in frequencies, percentages and means.

RESULTS

Data analysis and report of findings was done using descriptive statistics in the form of mean, frequencies and percentages presented in the form of a figure. According to [21] academic writing in many subject areas requires the use of tables and figures to present data which should be integrated appropriately. Tables and figures can help make information available to your reader in an accessible way. He further states

that figures are advised when it is necessary to depict patterns, trends, and relations between data as opposed to tables since they are used to highlight the pattern rather than the data itself besides being used to visually describe a series of events, procedures, qualities or attributes or to summarize research results.

Figure 1 presents data on the school characteristics leading to students' dropout from mixed day secondary schools in Bomet East Sub-County. This data was obtained from the sampled principals, teachers and students in the sampled schools.

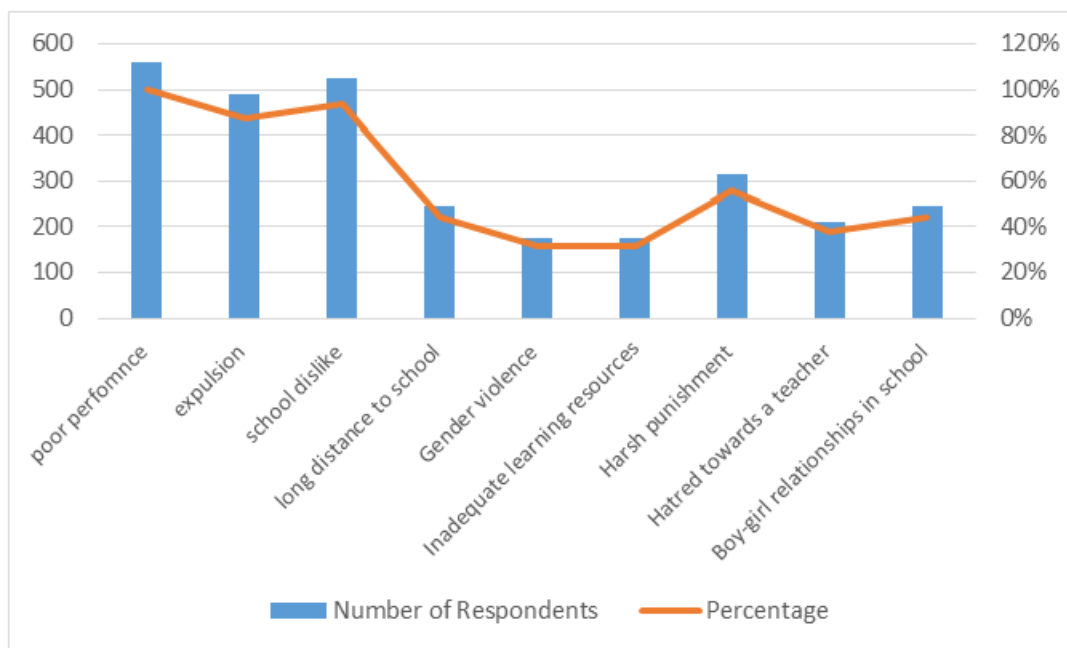


Figure 1: School characteristics leading to students' dropout

Figure above presents data on School characteristics leading to student's dropout from mixed day secondary schools in Bomet East Sub-County as stated by the sampled principals, teachers and students. The following characteristics were identified namely; poor performance expulsion, school dislike, long distance to school, gender violence, inadequate learning resources, harsh punishment, hatred towards a teacher and boy girl relationships in school. on the actual composition responses 560 (100%) cited poor performance as the reason. school dislike by 525 (93.75%), expulsion was stated by 490 (87.5%), harsh punishment by 315 (56.25%), long distance to school by 245 (43.75%), boy girl relationships in school by 245 (43.75%), hatred towards a teacher by 210 (37.5%) gender violence by 175 (31.25%) and inadequate learning resources by 175 (31.25%). It is noted that poor performance was stated by the highest number of the respondents which comprised of 100% response rate and gender violence and inadequate learning resources stated by the least number of respondents which comprised of 31.25% each. Students' dislike for

learning was also rated highly with 525 (93.75%) as school characteristic leading to school dropout.

DISCUSSION

The following school characteristics were identified as determinants of dropout listed from the strongest determinant downwards; poor performance, school dislike, expulsion, harsh punishment, long distance to school, boy girl relationships in school, hatred towards a teacher, gender violence, and inadequate learning resources. All respondents stated poor performance as the major determinant of students' dropout. This finding agrees with some other researchers' findings. Academic failure is an early indicator of potential dropout [20]. This suggests that in secondary school years, students at risk of dropout were perceived early as they perform poorly and ultimately lost interest in school, which is an essential argument of disengagement theory [22]. Academic performance has implications that play out across life stages and on multiple levels [23]. They further note that academic performance, including academic failure is often viewed in narrow terms, as an individual behaviour

limited to the early life course. However, on the individual level, academic struggles predict short-term problem behaviour and dropout, and can derail educational and occupational trajectories well into adulthood. On the institutional level, academic problems among students can create disorder and undermine the general mission of schools [23].

Students' dislike for learning was also rated the second strongest determinant for school dropout. According to [24], *low student expectations for payoff to education* played a significant role in dislike and dropout.

CONCLUSION

It was concluded that indeed there were school characteristics that forced students to drop out of mixed day secondary schools in Bomet East Sub-County that need to be addressed for attainment of 100 per cent completion Rates. The identified school characteristics were in the following order: 1. Poor performance, 2. School dislike, 3. Expulsion, 4. Harsh punishment, 5. Long distance to school, 6. Boy-girl relationships in school, 7. Hatred towards a teacher, 8. Gender violence, and 9. Inadequate learning resources:

Based on these findings, the following three recommendations have been suggested:

- a. The principals and teachers should come up with suitable programmes to keep students focused in academics and offer remedial classes to poor performers
- b. The schools should create programmes in schools that will keep students disciplined and enjoy their stay in school.
- c. Expulsion should be avoided unless on extreme unmanageable cases.

About the Author 1

Winny Chebet is currently pursuing Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education Management and Policy in Bomet University College: constituent college of Moi University in Kenya. She has a Masters degree in Educational Planning from Kenyatta University in Kenya. She is a teacher by profession, a teacher of English and Literature.

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