



Influence of Family Headship on Students' Dropout in Public Secondary Schools in Rongo Sub County, Kenya

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Abstract: *There are certain socio-economic factors that influencing public secondary school students' dropout. The statement of the problem showed that the sub-county had a dropout rate of 43 percent as compared to the neighboring sub-counties which some had 25, and 28 percent despite the similar government's strategies available. Descriptive research design was used in data collection. Target population was 19480 students, 372 form 3 class teachers and 248 principals. A sample of 370 students was found using Saunders et al (2007) Table, 74 principals and 112 form 3 class teachers respectively using 30 %. Validity was done by using suggestions from supervisors before setting out to collect data. Reliability used test re- test methods which yielded alpha of 0.65. Researcher used questionnaires and interview schedules for data collection. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistical and inferential techniques using the Statistical packages of social sciences (SPSS) version 23. Findings revealed that family headship was 57%, hence high dropout was a result of family headship which lead to inadequate guidance/mentorship to the students. The study concluded that 64% where students are mostly sent home, had high chances that some never returned to school and 59% did not support the learners who were coming from poor background. It was concluded that family headship highly influenced the retention of students in secondary schools. The study recommended that the collaborative efforts by the government and other education stakeholders to support the learners who cannot afford the rising financial conditions of learning and family headship burden.*

Keywords: *Extent, Family, Headship, School, Students, Dropout, Kenya*

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1. Introduction

Students' dropout problem has caused negative economic development and resulted to wasted talents and the incompetent labor force in most parts of the world. The work of Batii (2014) on human resource management challenges facing the local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in America reiterated that this can be evidenced by economic and social stagnation in some parts of the world. Processes of change brought by student

dropout have become so rapid and intense that they give rise to major social economic challenges which can have disruptive effects on traditional lifestyles, morals, religious beliefs and everyday patterns without clear new values (Barton, 2015).

A study carried out by Mooney, Knox, and Schacht (2017), in the United States of America indicates that 13 percent of 16 to 24 years old dropout of high schools. They are not presently enrolled in any school and the dropout rate is as high as 55 percent a clear declaration that society

and the educational institutions are not providing for the welfare of its entire student (Giddens, 2011). However in the Netherlands, the dropout rate is near 0 percent due to stable and balanced socio-economic factors (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2004).

Furthermore, Carter (2019) opined that the increasingly global context, what is striking is the diversity of educational provision across the world a fact that can highly influence the environment from which the student hails from making him/her to remain or drop out from school. Some drop out due to poor family background or death of parents which sometimes result to family headship by young people.

In a survey done by Bruneforth (2016) on Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, and Nigeria on the characteristics of children, who drop out of school more than half of all children aged 10 to 19 years left secondary school without completion this was majorly due to lack of a combination of social and economic factors more specifically to income and social position. The low enrolment rate over the last decade in Kenya's secondary schools has been caused by high cost (The average annual unit cost for secondary education is five times higher than primary education) and poverty with an estimated 30 percent dropout rate, due to these socio-

economic factors alone (Sessional Paper No 1 of 2005). Many of the high school learners are going under challenging conditions with a relative lack of adult guidance and support (Achiyo & Yambo 2020).

Traditional notions of masculinity are under threat and there is no stable vision of the future due to the peer pressure the learners face while at school. For them, growing up against these turbulent back- drops, schools may appear irrelevant or too authoritative rather than a site for opportunity and advancement (Giddens, 2011).

A research done by Mutwol, Cheserek, Boit and Mining (2019), indicates that socio-economic factors has the highest effect in the participation of students in secondary school education. Some of the factors they listed include: poverty, low income level of the parents and family headship by young people. Every secondary school in Kenya has its own culture and have been allocated the task of achieving social equality, overcoming material disadvantages and eradicating prejudice (Giddens, 2011), as it is not the individual that suffers as a result of dropping out but also does the society. Table 1, shows the number of students who have dropped out from secondary schools in Migori County due to various socio-economic factors.

Table 1: The number of students who have dropped out of secondary school in Migori County

Years	Uriri	Rongo	Awendo	Nyatike	Kuria	Migori
2017	4	7	2	9	5	-
2018	3	9	-	3	2	8
2019	8	8	4	11	9	12
2020	4	10	3	2	3	5
2021	6	9	-	2	4	3
TOTAL	25	43	9	27	23	28

SOURCE: Migori County Education Office- 2021

Table 1 show that 43 students dropped out from secondary school in Rongo Sub-County for the last five years. This number is higher as evidenced in comparison to Awendo, Kuria, Uriri, Nyatike and Migori districts respectively and therefore possess an academic concern.

There is growing evidence that high rates of HIV/AIDS infections and socio-economic status in Nyanza Region specifically, Rongo Sub-County are due in part to the weakened health of impoverished people (Achiyo & Yambo 2020). Due to deaths possibly caused by some of these infections, corona virus and the like, families are left to be headed by young children, who may be economically unstable and at the same time attending secondary education, or single mothers/fathers thus increasing the tendency to drop out of secondary school (Mutwol et al. 2019), Coleman (2018) in their studies stated that many researchers agree that attendance improved with increased networking among school personnel, parents, students and community members. The physical maturity of secondary

school learners in Rongo sub-county must be accompanied by a process of social learning if we are to develop as acceptable members of the society: the learners must be ready to learn, internalize and finally practice what is taken to be society's ways of life with keen supervision of the principals.

The principals should ensure that these factors as: peer pressure, family headship, parent's financial status and the relevant strategies are adequately sourced and manned by highly skilled personnel. Similarly, Drewry, (2017); Mutwol et al. (2019), Adhanja, Nyakan and Yambo (2016) concentrate more on social factors alone. The influence of family headship on secondary school students in Rongo District, Kenya has not been focused on to provide the insight into how it could be handled for effective retention in secondary school. Researcher therefore identified this wide gap to be filled with current and relevant information.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Ordinarily, the family headship influences secondary school students' drop out in schools and this has an overwhelming impact on young people. An environment with insufficient funds, indifference, ignorance, social discord, improper family care and guidance, permit deviant behavior among the youth. This make a student grow as an ill-trained person, socially maladjusted or fiddle minded individual and uncaring to an extent. The ability of such a student to learn is greatly compromised. The government's efforts through the Ministry of Education to appoint a guidance and counseling teacher in all schools with an aim of helping students to overcome this challenge. Despite the fact that guidance and counseling is being offered in schools, provision of bursaries, school feeding programs, class rooms built by Constituency Development Funds (CDF) and provision of subsidized secondary school fees, dropout rate possibly due to family headship by young school going students is still rampant in this sub-county as evidenced in table 1. Moreover, the government also help learners at all levels so as to remain in school and complete their studies. Most studies did not address the extent to which family headship influences secondary school students' drop out in schools hence creating knowledge gap for this study.

2. Literature Review

Influence of family headship on students' dropout in public secondary schools

Families have heads either by a mother, a father or both in most cases and sometimes headed by elderly children especially first born. Studies by Bell and Rhodes (2020) in Britain established arenas for education in the community in which learning is the norm, students feel obliged to learn and expedite the process of retention, failure to which may lead to the learner's dropping out. Further research done by McNeal, (2019) found that all females and African American male stay in school increased as their mother's level of education increased. Family heads are to encourage education. According to Kearney, González and Heyne (2021) children who attend school regularly, and adolescents who complete high school, are more likely to experience better quality of life and achieve greater success at social, academic, occupational, and other aspects of functioning during their lifespan than youth who receive little education. School attendance is thus a key foundational competency for young people. Youth who do not attend school on a regular basis, or who prematurely leave school before graduation, are also at risk for myriad economic and related drawbacks in adulthood (Filippello, Buzzai, Costa & Sorrenti 2019).

In a study done by Tawanda and Gordon (2014); Jordan and Stanovich (2012) which focused on family structure and parental practices as factors for high school completion San Diego, California found that, children in families with two birth parents receive more encouragement that is parental and attention with respect to educational activities than children from non-intact families at all. They equally established that, children from single parents and step parents families are more likely to exhibit signs of school disengagement than children who live with both birth parents. In this regard, students or children with foster parents should cooperate to achieve meaningful education (McNeal 2019).

In Malaysia, the work Shahidul and Zehadul (2015) postulated that the advantage of having female parents as household heads may be the result of increased autonomy of the females when males are absent in the decision-making process may be due to death. Interestingly, Shahidul (2016) examined data in Bangladesh and found that if a mother participates in the household's decision-making process, the dropout rate of girls decreased. Though female headship eventually gives advantage to girls, studies sometimes show controversial results. This is because, many studies found that single-female headed households face greater financial and time constraints than two-parent households in general which may impact differently on children's academic achievement (Guo & Harris, 2016). In fact, children in households headed by married women have higher educational attainment while children of widows are more likely to work. In the case of children heading households, according to Sarmistha (2017) it becomes more difficult for them to maintain a judicious balance between the home chores and academic performance hence school dropout becomes eminent. While the work of Shahidul and Zehadul (2015) dealt with factors contributing to school dropout among the girls in Malaysia, the current study considered influence of family headship on students' drop out in public secondary schools in Rongo sub County in Kenya, to fill the research gap.

Regular school attendance equally contributes to academic performance. As pointed out by Kearney et al. (2021) many youths live in tumultuous households, and do not have the stability in their lives to be present at school consistently hence affects their academic attainment (Wilson et al., 2017). Substantial portions of absentees come from an economically disadvantaged position possibly from households headed by children who are orphans (Drewry 2017). According to Gausel and Bourguignon (2020) school absenteeism and school dropout, are often considered critical public health issues as well for it calls for intensive strategies developed by professionals in multiple disciplines to address chronic and severe absenteeism and potential dropout. This has often, been mixed with substantial, broad contextual factors related to extreme psychopathology, family crises, school and community variables (Freeman & Simonsen, 2015).

In African, the issue of family headship and students' dropout has been a key concern. Research done by Shava and Tlou (2018) in South Africa, found that the household structure of the migrant workers was fluid and of concern. According to Mazibuko (2019), it was common for a number of children left in rural areas while others lived with their parent(s) in towns. Consequently, children were "in the absence of either one or both parents, brought up primarily by grandparents or other kin in a rural extended household" (Shava & Tlou 2018:42). Similar situations were observed in Nadowli District of Ghana by Feilmua (2020) who noted that political and social conditions were different in rural Ghana where the households also lacked employment opportunities and many people left their rural household and worked in towns. The concept of paying for basic education was not well accepted. In addition, schooling had a low priority in household expenditure hence more school dropouts (Huzeru, 2020). While the work of Feilmua (2020) used a sample size of 415, the current study used a sample of 556 to fill the research gap.

In Tanzania, Nyanda, Yambo and Getange (2018) dealt with financial challenges facing NGOs' in promotion of Education in Musoma District. They found that the combined traits associated with family structure and family headship, are likely hood of a student completing school by a slim chance. This would decrease by about 19.5% when a student only has one parent and multiple siblings to care for and by 22.5% when all three negative family structure factors (Single parent, multiple siblings, and no maternal college attendance expectations) are present. Similarly, in Serengeti District, Tanzania the same phenomenon has been experienced that in families where mothers are enlightened and educated, children go to school steadily without dropping out from school (Nyagiati & Yambo 2018).

When researching on the family based socio-economic factors, that affect students' academic performance in Rongo sub-county, studies by Ombuya, Yambo and

Omollo (2012); Adhanja et al. (2016) postulated family income was a burden. Moreover, available burdensome sources of income within Rongo sub-county such as sand harvesting, cane cutting, stone carving, motor cycle transport, tea and coffee picking in some areas have diverted some of the high school learner's attention from school as they have to double the work of being the providers of their families and attending schools.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study espoused a descriptive research design because it is a useful method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) it assesses the nature of prevailing conditions. Since it also involves the collection of data in order to answer research question on the influence of family headship on students' drop out in public secondary schools in Rongo sub county, Kenya

3.2 Population

The work of Saunders, Philip and Adrian (2007); Best and Khan (2006) defined target Population comprise of the entire group of individuals' events or objects having common observable characteristics which the researcher need to generate the results of the study. The study targeted 19840 students, 248 principals, and 372 form three students. This group was considered for they have been slightly longer in schools to understand the situations.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

From the targeted population, sampling was done as shown.

Table 2 Sample size distribution of target population in Rongo Sub County

Respondents	Population	Technique	Sample size
Students	19840	Saunders et al. (2007) Table	370
Principals	248	30 %	74
Form3Classteachers	372	30 %	112
Total	20640		556

The sampling technique applied here was Saunders et al. (2007) table used to get students because they were many. Moreover, Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) who also advocated for 30 % as statistically significant hence it was

used to find reasonably larger samples of 74 and 112 F 3 students from 248 and 372 target population respectively.

3.4 Data Collection Techniques

The study used questionnaire and interview schedule. According to Saunders et al. (2007) a questionnaire is a set of questions or respondent on the study. In order to collect data that precisely meets the objectives of the study, both open-ended and closed-ended questions are included in the questionnaire. The open-ended questions gave respondents room to give more information and express themselves to their satisfaction while the close-ended questions produced the kind of answers expected by the researcher. In addition, close-ended questions enable a researcher to form an opinion and make a valuable conclusion. Furthermore, Amin (2004) contend that structured or close-ended questions are easier to analyze, administer and are more economical in terms of time and finances. On the other hand, unstructured questions are simple to formulate, they encourage in-depth response and they permit the respondents to respond in their own words.

3.5 Validity of the Research Instruments

The work of Best and Khan (2006) explained validity as the degree to which a test uses to measures what it purports to measure. It is in other words, the degree to which results from the analysis of the data actually represent the phenomenon under investigation. Validity is also the degree to which an empirical measure or several measures of a concept accurately represent that topic (Orodho, 2009). The issue of control invalidity is concerned with errors that may occur in the research process. It is concerned with systematic error biases rather than random errors. The researcher established content and criterion related validity. Validity was established by giving the instruments to the three experts in the department of education educational administration of Kisii University. They read and examined it for content and criterion validity and gave their feedback which was incorporated.

3.6 Reliability of the Instruments

Reliability is the measure of the degree of which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trial (Amin (2004). Before the actual data collection, a pilot study was conducted among the respondents who were not included in the final study population. This was done from the schools in Rachuonyo North Sub-County, where all 5 Principals, 20 student leaders and 10 Form 3 teachers were considered. These were the minimum number of cases required for conducting statistical analysis as recommended by (Orodho, 2009). The purpose of this was to enable the researcher to ascertain the reliability of the instruments, and also to be familiar with the administration of the questionnaires. Split-Half

technique was employed for the test. Pilot questionnaires were divided into two equivalent halves and their correlation co-efficient for the two halves computed using the Spearman Brown prophecy formula, describing the internal consistency of the test then if it showed that the instrument is reliable, correlation coefficient minimum of 0.65 was accepted as reliable because this fact is supported by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) who deemed it reliable.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

This is the collection of information to prove some facts as put forward by Kombo and Tromp (2006); the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Dean of Faculty of Education and then proceeded for a research permit from the National Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) for the on-going research to enable the researcher to collect data from the colleges. The researcher visited individual colleges to conduct the research on the actual dates of the study by administering the questionnaires and interview schedules while collecting them accordingly.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the categorizing, ordering, manipulating and summarizing of data to obtain answers to research questions. After the data collection, the researcher subjected data to editing before starting completion and coding of data. According to Kothari (2004) editing improves the quality of data for coding. The coded data was examined critically by making inferences (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics by means, percentages and frequency distribution tables. Obtained data was also analyzed, synthesized and presented using statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) version 23.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The researcher is fully aware that it is a voluntary activity for the respondents to participate in research. They were therefore assured of confidentiality of information since each respondent gave his/her own response/opinion from the questionnaire. The researcher consequently ensured that research questions do not invade personal lives of the respondents. Anonymity of respondents was ensured. The researcher endeavored to guard against plagiarism and also gave credit and acknowledged all the information which was referred to (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008). The contributions of the Principals decision making skills on teacher trainee academic

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Family headship and student dropout rate

In this objective the researcher wanted to determine the extent to which family headship influence secondary school student dropout.

4.2 Principals' opinions on family headship and secondary school student drop out

The principals gave their opinions on how family headship influence drop out and come up with the following results.

Table 3: Principals' opinions on how family headship influences secondary school students drop out rate

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very Large	7	6.25
Large	8	50.0
Fairly Large	4	25.0
Little	3	18.75
Not at all	-	-
Total	16	100

The principals were required to state the extent to which family headship influence students drop out. The study indicated that majority of the principals 50% agreed that family headship largely influence students drop out. 25% of the respondents state that it fairly large influences students drop out, 18.75% of the students stated that it had little influence while 6.25% stated that family headship very largely influences drop out. This fact was supported by Omollo and Yambo (2017); Barton (2015) who indicated that family headship has been an uphill task for the young generation.

4.3 Secondary school Students' opinions on classmates' dropout from school due to family headship

The researcher wanted to find out more from the students reasons for their drop out in relation to family headship. To respond to this the students were asked to state whether they are responsible for their siblings and the response was as shown in table 4

Table 4 Responsibility of secondary school students to their siblings

Response	Frequency	Percentage
No	67	44.7
Yes	80	53.3
Missing	3	2
Total	150	100

Table 4 shows that majority of the students 53.3% were responsible for their siblings. From the table it can be concluded that most students were responsible for their siblings hence the majority of students do have reasons of dropping out of school because of the responsibility they have as supported by Mooney et al. (2017), Tawanda and

Gordon (2014) for this shows how responsible they are at tender age.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

In general, both the Principals and secondary school students confirmed that family headship largely influence student drop out as the students have to play the role of being the provider to the family by ensuring that the basic needs like food, shelter and clothing are provided for at the same time attending school and paying for the school fees and any other school levies. From the findings most students headed their families; hence there were reasons for most of them dropping out of school because of being responsible for their siblings.

5.2 Recommendations

Recommendation noted for the study called for the collaborative efforts by the government and other education stakeholders to support and provide for the students who cannot afford the rising financial conditions of learning and the family headship burden.

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