
**POVERTY AND SCHOOL DROPOUT AMONG STUDENTS IN RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
UGANDA, A CASE STUDY OF KIHIFI HIGH SCHOOL IN KIHIFI TOWN COUNCIL KANUNGU
DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

Poverty has had significant contribution to school dropout of students from secondary schools located in rural area. This study which was under the topic „the impact of poverty on student dropout form schools in rural areas was undertaken in Kihifi town council Kanungu District southwest Uganda. The study was aimed at finding out how poverty impacted school dropout. Specifically, the study investigated the relationship between poverty and school dropout and its impact on student's dropout overall. It also looked at interventions that could be adopted to mitigate school dropout. The study used cross-sectional design to analyze data and data was collected from 80 respondents who were selected using stratified random sampling and census inquiry. Data was collected from respondents in the study area using questionnaires and interview guide. The study results revealed that poor students always have a quick entry into schooling and poverty in Uganda inhibits access to education because the full range of costs associated with attendance, particularly uniforms and transport, are unaffordable for households. Also, poor students have the inability to afford the direct costs of schooling and are often used in international documents to explain limited access to schools with children living in poverty have the odds stacked against them and may be more vulnerable to school failure. An uneducated parent may not send their child to schools, as they do not see education as a medium of increasing productivity and massive community sensitization on the value of education. Also, provision of bursaries to poor students will help to stop school dropout. Improving financial capabilities of parents will help to stop school dropout a well provision of quality and accessible education will help to stop school dropout.

Keywords: poverty, school dropout, students and rural secondary schools

Background to the Study

According to (Mark et al., 2023), in 1981, about 1.76 billion people in the developing world lived on more than US\$1.25 per day and 1.9 billion people lived on less than US\$1.25 per day. In 2005, about 4.09 billion people in the developing world lived on more than US\$1.25 a day, and 1.4 billion people lived on less than \$1.25 a day (1981 and 2005 figures are on an inflation-adjusted basis). The proportion of the world's population living in absolute poverty fell from 43% in 1981 to 14% in 2011, although early school leaving increased by 12% in most countries (Faridah et al., 2023). The absolute number of people in poverty fell from 1.95 billion in 1981 to 1.01 billion in 2011 (Christopher & Micheal, 2022). Economist Max Roser estimates that the number of people in poverty is therefore about the same as it

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was 200 years ago. This is because the world population was just over 1 billion in 1820, and the majority (84% to 94%) of the world's population lived in poverty. In 2012, using a poverty line of \$1.25 per day, it was estimated that 1.2 billion people lived in poverty (Vincent & Peter, 2023). Given the current GDP-based economic model, it would take 100 years for the world's poorest to reach the \$1.25 per day poverty line (Frank et al., 2023). UNICEF estimates that half of the world's children (or 1.1 billion) live in poverty. In 2015, the World Bank predicted that 702.1 million people live in extreme poverty, down from 1.75 billion in 1990. Extreme poverty is observed in all parts of the world, including developed economies (Oromo et al., 2023). According to the World Bank, between 1990 and 2015, the percentage of the world's population living in extreme poverty fell from 37.1% to 9.6%, falling below 10% for the first time. During the period 2013 to 2015, the World Bank reported that extreme poverty fell from 11% to 10%, however it also noted that the rate of drop in early school leaving had slowed by almost half compared to the 25-year average in parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Africa is returning to levels seen in the early 2000s (John et al., 2023). However, Amoni (2006) and Nuwagaba (2011) took a different view, noting that what has been missing in most cases since the previous decade is any conclusive evidence to show that government and stakeholders can fine-tune poverty reduction interventions so that to accommodate these differences. a way to achieve significant improvements in measured student learning outcomes (Victor et al., 2023). In fact, an entire vein of drug research called "attribute-treatment interaction studies" is generally acknowledged to have failed, thus warranting this study.

Problem Statement

Poverty has a far-reaching effect on anything that is meant to bring about transformation, such as girls' education (Joventa et al., 2023). Figures from the Kihiki Town Council indicate that many girls dropped out of school and were married at an early age, most of them under the age of 14 (District Community Development Office, 2020).

If the situation is not arrested, many girls will marry at an early age, parental trust in schools will disappear, but the products of the education system will be incompetent (Mercy et al., 2023). As a way of solving this problem, the government has ensured timely remuneration of teachers, supervision and facilitation of schools as well as payment of school fees for pupils in schools under the UPE programme. But it was all to no avail. Many educators and stakeholders in the education system point out that the problem of poverty contributes to dropout rates in rural high schools. And this with regard to absolute poverty, relative and situational poverty (Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022). Despite this belief and obsession with poverty, its effect on dropout rates in rural high schools is not well documented (Anthony et al., 2023). Researchers such as Mwiti (2015) investigated the social factors and academic performance of students (Zulaikah & Rebecca, 2023), Mwiti's main interest was on the influence of social factors and academic performance of rural secondary school dropouts and Okwalo (2016) studies on education of parents and student attendance, focused only on how parental education affected school attendance, but not the prevention of school attendance in rural high schools (Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022). And as far as the Kihiki Town Council is concerned, no study of that nature has ever been done. For this reason, there is a lack of research in this area, leading to a lack of adequate evidence

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on the impact of poverty on rural high school dropout, and thus the need for this research study (Richard et al., 2022).

Specific Objectives

1. To assess the relationship between poverty and school dropout among students Kihhi high school, Kanungu district.
2. To assess the impact of poverty on school dropout among students at Kihhi high school in Kanungu district.
3. To examine strategies that can be adopted to prevent school dropout among students at Kihhi high school in Kihhi town council, Kanungu district

Methodology

The research study used cross-sectional design using both qualitative and quantitative research approaches to analyze the influence of poverty on school dropout of students in rural secondary schools. This design helped the researcher to generate more sufficient data and relevant information that support the variables and objectives of the research study. The population consisted of 40 parents, 20 Local leaders, and 20 child welfare officers. Parents were chosen to participate in this study because they interact with their children daily and know the influence of single parenthood on their wellbeing while child welfare officers are selected because of their knowledge in management of children's services. Additionally, Local leaders were chosen because they have information given their experience in struggling youth issues. The study population was drawn from Kihhi high school in Kanungu district. The researcher used stratified random sampling to select respondents from student category. The goal of stratified random sampling was to achieve desired representation of parents and teachers' respondents in the study population and youth and local leaders were selected in such a way that they are more or less reproduced in the sample. Under stratified random sampling, parents and local leaders were selected from each village. The advantage of stratified random sampling is that it helped to ensure inclusion in the sample of a sub-group which otherwise would be entirely omitted by other sampling methods because of their big numbers in the study population. The researcher used self-administered questionnaire as research tool to collect data from the students and local leaders" category. Data processing was done through editing of the data which was coded for further data analysis. After data processing, quantitative data analysis was carried out by simple frequency tabulation using a Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) (Nelson et al., 2022).

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RESULTS**Table 1: Relation between poverty and student dropout of rural secondary schools**

QUESTION ITEM	SD	D	N	A	SA
Poor students always have a delayed entry into schooling	3(3.8%)	5(6.3%)	19(23.8%)	39(48.8%)	14(17.5%)
Poor students lack of financial resources may limit school attendance among the absolutely poor students from rural areas	1(1.3%)	26(32.5%)	42(52.5%)	11(13.8%)	11(13.8%)
Poor students have the inability to afford the direct costs of schooling and are often used in international documents to explain limited access to schools.	3(3.8%)	4(5.0%)	29(36.3%)	29(36.3%)	15(18.8%)
Poverty in Uganda inhibits access to education because the full range of costs associated with attendance, particularly uniforms and transport, are unaffordable for households.	1(1.3%)	10(12.5%)	19(23.8%)	37(56.3%)	13(16.3%)
Children living in poverty have the odds stacked against them and may be more vulnerable to school failure	5(6.3%)	13(16.3%)	24(30%)	29(36.3%)	9(11.3%)

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Poverty leads to low academic achievement thus leading to dropout	4(5%)	11(13.8%)	11(13.8%)	40(50%)	17.5(%)
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Source: Primary data, 2022

Poor students always have a delayed entry into schooling

The study investigated whether poor students always have a delayed entry into schooling. According to table 1 above, 3.8% of the respondents strongly disagreed that poor students always have a delayed entry into schooling in Kihhi town council sub-county of Budaka district, 6.3% disagreed, 23.8% were neutral, while 48.8% who were the majority agreed and 17.5% also strongly agreed. Therefore, from the above findings it is noted that poor students always have a delayed entry into schooling in Kihhi town council sub-county of Kanungu district (Moses, 2022).

Poor students lack of financial resources may limit school attendance among the absolutely poor students from rural areas

The study investigated whether in Kihhi town council sub-county of Budaka district, poor students lack of financial resources may limit school attendance among the absolutely poor students from rural areas and from the findings, only 1.3% strongly disagreed, 32.5% were neutral, 52.5% who constituted the majority agreed and 13.8% strongly agreed (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). This means that many youths in Kihhi town council sub-county of Kanungu district poor students lack of financial resources may limit school attendance among the absolutely poor students from rural areas.

Poor students have the inability to afford the direct costs of schooling and are often used in international documents to explain limited access to schools

On whether poor students have the inability to afford the direct costs of schooling and are often used in international documents to explain limited access to schools, 3.8% of the respondents strongly disagreed, 5% disagreed, 36.3% were neutral, the same percentage of 36.3% agreed and 18.8% strongly agreed. The findings imply poor students have the inability to afford the direct costs of schooling and are often used in international documents to explain limited access to schools (Moses, 2022).

Poverty in Uganda inhibits access to education because the full range of costs associated with attendance, particularly uniforms and transport, are unaffordable for households.

This variable investigated in Kihhi town council sub-county of Budaka district whether poverty in Uganda inhibits access to education because the full range of costs associated with attendance, particularly uniforms and transport, are unaffordable for households where 1.3% and 12.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively (Allan et al., 2023), 23.8% were neutral, 46.3% who were the majority agreed and 16.3% strongly agreed. Therefore, the findings of the study imply that Poverty in Uganda inhibits access to education because the full range of costs associated with attendance, particularly uniforms and transport, are unaffordable for households.

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Children living in poverty have the odds stacked against them and may be more vulnerable to school failure

Table 1 above shows 6.3% of the respondents who strongly disagreed that children living in poverty have the odds stacked against them and may be more vulnerable to school failure in Kihikihi town council Sub- County of Budaka district. 16.3% of the respondents equally disagreed, 30% were neutral, 36.3% agreed and 11.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that children living in poverty have the odds stacked against them and may be more vulnerable to school failure (Christopher, Moses, Muhindo, & Muhammad, 2022). The findings of the study therefore imply that children living in poverty have the odds stacked against them and may be more vulnerable to school failure and similar results were obtained from face-to-face interviews. Gupta (2009) further commented that children living in poverty have the odds stacked against them and may be more vulnerable to school failure.

Poverty leads to low academic achievement thus leading to dropout

The researcher further investigated whether poverty leads to low academic achievement thus leading to dropout, the findings indicate that 5% of the respondents strongly disagreed and 13.8% disagreed and neutral to the statement respectively. Meanwhile, majority who constituted 50% agreed and 17.5% strongly agreed. It is therefore true from the findings that poverty leads to low academic achievement thus leading to dropout. The findings of the study therefore imply that poverty leads to low academic achievement thus leading to dropout and similar results were obtained from face-to-face interviews where it was discovered that many youth are engaged in building and construction skill (Godfrey et al., 2023).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Relation between poverty and student dropout of rural secondary schools

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Poor students always have a delayed entry into schooling	80	1.00	5.00	3.7000	.95996

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Poor students lack of financial resources may limit school attendance among the absolutely poor students from rural areas	80	1.00	5.00	3.7750	.72871
Poor students have the inability to afford the direct costs of schooling and are often used in international documents to explain limited access to schools.	80	1.00	5.00	3.6125	.97427
Poverty in Uganda inhibits access to education because the full range of costs associated with attendance, particularly uniforms and transport, are unaffordable for households.	80	1.00	5.00	3.6375	.94459
Children living in poverty have the odds Stacked against them and may be more vulnerable to school failure	80	1.00	5.00	3.3000	1.07209
Poverty leads to low academic achievement thus leading t dropout	80	1.00	5.00	3.6125	1.08492
Valid N (listwise)	80				
Average mean				3.60625	

Source: Primary Data, 2022

The results in Table 4.12 indicate that poverty have had a very high (3.60625) contribution to school dropout in Kihhi town council sub-county of Budaka district. This means that poor students always have a delayed entry into schooling, poor students lack of financial resources may limit school attendance among the absolutely poor students

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from rural areas, poor students have the inability to afford the direct costs of schooling and are often used in international documents to explain limited access to schools, poverty in Uganda inhibits access to education because the full range of costs associated with attendance, particularly uniforms and transport, are unaffordable for households and poverty leads to low academic achievement thus leading to dropout

Impact of poverty and student dropout of rural secondary schools

Table 3: The Impact of poverty and student dropout of rural secondary schools

QUESTION ITEM	SD	D	N	A	SA
Poverty is structured into the higher educational system through the classification of schools into quintiles. Those in lower quintiles normally lack access thus dropout.	2(2.5%)	8(10%)	17(21.3%)	46(57.5%)	7(8.8%)
Poverty bites in relation to others: where children are equally poor they may be far likely to drop out than those where there is a greater socio-economic mix.	1(1.3%)	7(8.8%)	26(32.5%)	33(41.3%)	13(16.3%)
Poverty shows how inequalities Between learners may make learners more vulnerable to drop out.	0(0.0%)	23(28.8%)	0(0.0%)	39(48.8%)	11(13.8%)
The relatively poor often feel excluded from the schooling and	3(3.8%)	5(6.3%)	16(20.0%)	40(50%)	16(20%)

this leads to dropout					
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If poverty is felt in a relative way, then a simple concentration on fees and other access costs will have a major impact on school drop-out	0(0%)	6(7.5%)	21(26.3%)	34(42.5%)	19(23.8%)
A child's „decision“ to drop out of school is seldom related to poverty and an interplay of social and economic factors	0(0%)	8(10%)	29(36.3%)	36(45%)	7(8.8%)

Source: Primary data, 2022

Poverty is structured into the higher educational system through the classification of schools into quintiles. Those in lower quintiles normally lack access thus dropout.

The study investigated whether poverty is structured into the higher educational system through the classification of schools into quintiles. Those in lower quintiles normally lack access thus dropout. From the findings, majority 57.5% of the respondents agreed to the statement, 8.8% strongly agreed, 21.3% of the respondents were neutral, 10% disagreed and 2.5% strongly disagreed. As Abagi (1997) noted that Poverty is structured into the higher educational system through the classification of schools into quintiles. Those in lower quintiles normally lack access thus dropout (Richard et al., 2022).

Poverty bites in relation to others: where children are equally poor, they may be far likely to drop out than those where there is a greater socio-economic mix.

Respondents were asked whether poverty bites in relation to others: where children are equally poor, they may be far likely to drop out than those where there is a greater socio-economic mix and only 1.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed, 8.8% of the respondents disagreed, while other respondents who constituted 32.5% were neutral, 41.3% who were the majority agreed and

16.3% strongly agreed (Christopher, Moses, Muhindo, & Muhammad, 2022), Poverty bites in relation to others: where children are equally poor, they may be far likely to drop out than those where there is a greater socio-economic mix. Therefore, from above findings, poverty bites in relation to others: where children are equally poor, they may be far likely to drop out than those where there is a greater socio-economic mix (Ntirandekura & Alex, 2022).

Poverty shows how inequalities between learners may make learners more vulnerable to drop out

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According to the findings, 8.8% of the respondents disagreed poverty shows how inequalities between learners may make learners more vulnerable to drop out, 28.8% of the respondents were neutral, whereas 48.8% agreed and 13.8% strongly agreed that poverty shows how inequalities between learners may make learners more vulnerable to drop out. Furthermore, results from interviews also indicated similar opinions that poverty shows how inequalities between learners may make learners more vulnerable to drop out (Godfrey et al., 2023). The above findings are in agreement with Khan (2005) where he observed that poverty shows how inequalities between learners may make learners more vulnerable to drop out.

The relatively poor often feel excluded from the schooling and this leads to dropout

The study further investigated whether the relatively poor often feel excluded from the schooling and this leads to dropout and from the research findings in table 4.7, 3.8% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the tax rates are not high, 6.3% disagreed, 20% were neutral, while 50% of the respondents agreed and 20% of the respondents strongly agreed. The findings of the study imply that in Kihhi town council, the relatively poor often feel excluded from the schooling and this leads to dropout (Christopher, Moses, Muhindo, & Nturanabo, 2022).

If poverty is felt in a relative way, then a simple concentration on fees and other access costs will have a major impact on school drop-out

In Kihhi town council sub-county of Budaka district, if poverty is felt in a relative way, then a simple concentration on fees and other access costs will have a major impact on school drop-out as strongly agreed and agreed by 23.8% and 42.5% of the respondents respectively. Only 7.5% of the respondents disagreed and 26.3% of the respondents were neutral. Therefore, from the above findings, if poverty is felt in a relative way, then a simple concentration on fees and other access costs will have a major impact on school drop-out.

A child's 'decision' to drop out of school is seldom related to poverty and interplay of Social and economic factors.

The findings show that 10% of the respondents disagreed that in Kihhi town council sub-county of Budaka district, a child's „decision“ to drop out of school is seldom related to poverty and an interplay of social and economic factors, 36.3% of the respondents were neutral, 45% agreed and 8.8% of the respondents strongly agreed. Therefore, A child's „decision“ to drop out of school is seldom related to poverty and an interplay of social and economic factors. Similar data however were collected from face-to-face interviews where it was noted that A child's „decision“ to drop out of school is seldom related to poverty and an interplay of social and economic factors.

Conclusions

Undertaking a study in an area that has been virtually neglected by both private and public researchers is a pain staking experience. However, it helped unpack new knowledge about how poverty impacted on the dropout of students in rural setting. Respondents presented immediate and far-reaching consequences undoubtedly without bias that poor students

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always have a delayed entry into schooling. Occasionally, many poor students “lack of financial resources may have limited school attendance among the absolutely poor students from rural areas and poverty in Uganda inhibits access to education because the full range of costs associated with attendance, particularly uniforms and transport, are unaffordable for households. Poor students have the inability to afford the direct costs of schooling and are often used in international documents to explain limited access to schools.

Recommendations

Poverty in Uganda inhibits access to education because the full range of costs associated with attendance, particularly uniforms and transport, are unaffordable for households.

Poor students have the inability to afford the direct costs of schooling and are often used in international documents to explain limited access to schools.

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