

Exploring concealed socio-economic perpetrators for girl students' drop out rising in Tanzania secondary schools within Simiyu region

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Abstract

Mainly, this study aimed to explore researchers' experiential perceptions about clandestine dominant socio-economic amplifiers contributing to lower equal girls' opportunity to access Tanzania lower secondary school education in terms of rising drop out behavior and proposals to control it within Itilima district council. Specifically, one of its objectives had triple tasks: to determine social perpetrators rarely reported contributing girl students not to complete their compulsory four-year cycle in lower secondary schools in Itilima district council. Then, to determine rarely reported cultural perpetrators on the same. Finally, to obtain research participants' way forward proposals to lower the dropout behavior rise. The qualitative approach and exploratory research design were used. It involved 40 research participants. It used multiple methods including: primary documents and semi-structured interviews along with interviews, documentary guides, and non-parametric Likert scale instruments to collect data. Sorting, coding categorizing, and thermalizing analyzed data. Descriptive analysis analyzed nominal and ordinal data like percents and frequencies implying categorical labels, were tabulated and constantly compared. Triangulation of multiple methods, techniques for data collection ensured trustworthiness and dependability of findings. The findings revealed common reported perpetrators: pregnancy, marriage and peer groups. However, low parents' education level and family divorce are rarely reported perpetrators for girls' dropout trend in the area. The findings suggested a conclusion that the dropout behavior deters girl student's noble goal of accessing secondary education. It was recommended that the ministry of education should involve educational stakeholders to educate parents on the importance of girls' education.

Keywords: dropout, enrolment, retention, completion, a girl student

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1. Introduction

This paper is organized into: introduction, background, research methods/materials, findings, discussion; conclusion, and it ends with recommendations for action and further studies. It presents the study that explored researchers' experiential perceptions about social-economic barriers hindering girl students' access to full lower secondary education in Itilima, compared to boys' enrollment, retention, completion and graduation in Itilima district council studied. It is argued that one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) envisages the achievement of: inclusive, equitable access to basic quality education, in promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030 (UNESCO, 2019). However, there is a mismatch between the envisaged ideals and their practical achievement on the ground in the area studied in Tanzania.

The construct 'drop out' behaviour in this study, refers to a number of some pupils or students enrolled in schools, but at sometimes they begin truanting and finally drop out before completing their lawful cycles hence failing to graduate. That personal definition differs from some experts in the field, who clarify the drop out behaviour as learner's failure to enrol for definite number of successive semesters (Xavier & Meneses, 2020). The dropout behavior is as well clarified as an act, whereby the enrolled learner is not attending school as required during legal compulsory education age, which varies from country to country as per (Estevao & Alvares, 2014). Other authors have characterized that behavior as an opposite of a generic term of 'access to education,' whose attributes include: retention, completion, and graduation once learners enrol. The meanings of those attributes are well elaborated by other authors viewing access to education to mean opportunities available to a given target population in participating to acquire the formal education: cognitive, skills as well as attitude at basic levels of education (Galabawa, 1990; URT, 1995). Furthermore, Morris et al. (2019) clarifies the dropout behavior as learners, who fail to earn either a lower school certificate, high school diploma, or even higher degree awards. Humans' practices cannot be understood devoid theories underlying their occurrences (Longo & Soto, 2020).

Conversely, in order to understand why girls opt to miss the educational opportunities, the academic mediation and deviant affiliation theories were borrowed to explain females' dropout trends in this study. On one hand, the deviant affiliation theory highlights negative influences and interactions, such as family rejection or abuse, as potential causes of student attrition (Balkis, 2018). In contrast, the academic mediation theory was used as a supplement to the previous theory, which suggests that associations with other deviant students could trigger such behaviour as well (Humphrey & Palmer, 2013, pp. 1, 5).

Global researchers have reported the practicality of those borrowed theories exemplifying different accounts of secondary school girls' drop out scenarios in developed and developing nations. An Asian study of Khadka (2022) examines the Bardibas municipality of Mahottari and the causes of girls' frequent public school dropouts. The study found school, home, and child-specific influences. These factors influence female student attrition in Nepalese secondary schools (Khadka, 2022). In Pakistan's Vehari district, Awan and Rashid (2019) did another insightful investigation. Destitution is a primary cause of pre-graduation dropout for female secondary school pupils, according to that study. In South India's Karnataka district, Ramanaik, Collumbien, Prakash, Howard-Merrill, Thalinja, Javalkar, & Bhattacharjee (2018) found that domestic responsibilities, caring duties, and agricultural labor worsen girls' dropout behavior. In the amplifier category of patriarchal beliefs and local customs, Awan and Rashid (2019) provide additional evidence from the Vehari district of Pakistan that unsafe environments and local customs regarding girl child marriage hasten secondary school attrition. Ramanaik et al. (2018) also found that spiritual rites increased female dropout rates in India. Regarding divorce and polygamy propagation, An American study in Georgia by Rahimi and Liston (2018) found that single-parent children have

trouble focusing in school.

Regional West Africa has a lot of informative studies to this study, Abubakar, Muhammad; Shagari (2022) studied the causes of female student dropout in a subset of secondary schools in Sokoto, Nigeria. Early marriages, poverty, and parental disengagement kept girls out of standard secondary schools, found those factors perpetuating female secondary school dropouts. The study suggested that the state mandate education for all female children and raise awareness of its importance. The research also recommends that secondary school teachers for girls plan more extracurricular events to motivate students (Abubakar *et al.*, 2022). A study conducted by Senyamator, Agyei, Minadzi and Andzie (2021) inform about on socio-cultural amplifiers influencing female pupils' school dropout in the Asante Akim in South Municipality of Ghana, revealing further some: teachers' negative attitudes, persistent teacher and peer sexual harassment of female students, teenage pregnancy and cultural practices as among push out forces for females' dropout from schools studied. That report too, recommends regular workshops to be organized by the government on how to professionally handle the girl student in schools to retain them in school in attempt to reduce the dropout behavior (Senyamator *et al.*, 2021). Regarding the lack of transparency and technical reproductive education among adolescents as amplifier category for truancy is reported in the UNESCO (2017) report revealing that early pregnancy and marriage account for 47% of girls' dropout behavior in Sub-Saharan Africa.

That report adds further evidence that such an amplifier leads many girl students to get early pregnancies and marriages ignorantly. A similar study about early marriages and pregnancies in studied secondary schools is that of Ghana that informs the public that early pregnancies, stigmatisation, marginalization deter girls students to participate fully in achieving lower secondary school education as is the case of Ghana (Bariham, Saviour, & Edmond, 2017). The three studies conclude that lack of reproductive health education triggers early pregnancies and marriage-amplifying dropout behavior in secondary schools. In regional East Africa, the perspective study on girls drop out behavior in Kenya by Mackatiani, Mackatiani and Owino (2022), found combined perpetrators for student girl dropout to be multi-faceted including: parental economic status, early marriages, and school environment significantly predicted girls' drop-out rates in secondary schools by 46.6 percent secondary schools. The other study too from Kenya reveals further that the role of schools as learning institutions and second homes has a significant impact on kids' academic success. The head teacher and instructors' roles can positively or negatively impact not only on learners' academic achievement but also liking the school. The head teacher and teachers should create a supportive learning atmosphere, allowing students to seek help when needed, providing proper facilities, and encouraging hard work. Peer issues also impact students' academic success in Vihiga County (Korir & Kipkemboi, 2014).

The German colonial rule in Tanzania, formerly Tanganyika, replaced African indigenous education with formal education in 1886 and lasted until 1918. Tuition fees limited the number of African children who could afford formal education at all levels. That led to education inequality, which lasted after the Germans lost Tanganyika to the British. From 1919 to 1960, the British maintained formal education in Tanganyika, but school fees perpetuated inequalities (Anangisye & Fussy, 2014, pp. 274–275). From 1961 until 1985, the Tanzania Union Republic administration, led by its founder president Julius Kambarage Nyerere, abolished school fees and other forms of discrimination. The Educational Policy Act overhaul expanded elementary and secondary education, enrolling more African children at all levels (Jegame, 2017). From 2000 to 2005, Tanzania's Secondary Education Master Plan governed secondary education. Educational equity to address gender, geographical, and socioeconomic inequities was a key focus of this approach (Mbelle & Katabaro, 2003). However, substantial female attrition hampered SEMP adoption. In response, Tanzania launched the Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP) in 2004 to improve secondary education (URT, 2004). The SEDP sought to boost junior secondary enrollment from 21% in 2003 to 40% in 2009 to improve secondary education possibilities for boys and girls. A SEDP strategy aimed to reduce failure and attrition rates to below 2% by 2009 (URT, 2004). After the secondary education development plans in Tanzania, the 2016–17–2020–21 strategic plans addressed school distance (Kinyagu, 2020).

One of several documented empirical studies in Tanzania examines how girls in particular, are enticed to engage in non-academic activities after puberty, preventing them from attending Dar es Salaam lower secondary school compulsory education (Karabo & Ayiga, 2013). Vuai (2020) reports further that home duties, including caring for siblings and helping home chores, hinder girls from attending school in Tanzania Zanzibar isles. Thus, their academic performance suffers, and finally they drop out. In Tanzania within Kisarawe district council, Mavura (2015) found that council members still believe women are unfit to access formal for education except boys. Much more, regarding to the parents' perpetuator category, Shaweji (2017) in Dar es Salaam reports that apart from other identified findings revealed that parents' deaths has made some children orphans, hence this trend triggers the dropout behavior among studied secondary schools in that region. Another informative study is that of Lianyu and Msafiri (2022) about analysis of socio-cultural factors for schools dropout among girls in the Mara region, Tanzania: a case study of junior secondary school. That study found that early marriage, female genital mutilation, household activities, social attitude against educating girls, and low levels of education among parents lead to some girl students to drop out. Shija (2022) reports further that peer pressure groups as well triggers girl students' drop out behavior among Ilemela studied secondary schools. That study too found the studied girls' secondary schools in Ilemela district council being surrounded by socio-cultural economic-merchandise context with: motorcycles, taxi, micro-business, fishery, and agricultural activities. Consequently, such economic and social context provides students daily transport and necessary requirements, but it exposes girl students to engage in risky and unsafe relationships (Shija, 2022).

Despite the aspiration goal of providing equitable access to quality education for all genders, female secondary school dropouts remain a major issue worldwide, Tanzania inclusive (UNESCO, 2017; UNESCO, 2019). Tanzania was reported to have 36% secondary school dropout rate. Out of that percent 30% of female students in the nation drop out before Form Four, when compared to only 6% of male pupils (UNESCO, 2017). In 2015, the government waived all public school fees and donations to increase secondary schools. Human Rights Watch (2017) stated that this system guaranteed free lower secondary education for all children who passed the elementary school exam. Attrition rates inhibit gender equality in enrollment, retention, completion, and graduation within the four-year cycle of normal secondary education within a cohort. This is despite the Tanzania government's efforts to ensure no child is left behind to achieve quality education at lower secondary education come year 2030, still yet students' dropout problem generally has increased from 58,906 students in 2015 to 96,621 students in 2019 in the ordinary level public secondary school (BEST, 2020). This report is cemented by another specific Simiyu Regional Report (2021-2023), unveiling that despite several efforts made by the government towards decreasing the very problem, still yet students' dropout in secondary schools especially within Itilima district council is continuing to be a serious problem as shown in Table 1 as follows.

Table 1

Two-year general dropout report studied schools in Itilima district council

School	Enrolled 2017/2018		Dropout 2020/2021		Percent	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
A	276	238	175	153	63.4	64.23
B	78	103	34	51	43.59	49.51
C	115	128	45	66	39.13	51.56
Total	469	469	254	270	54.16	57.57

Source: Field data (2023).

The thorough global experience evaluation and primary data seen in Table 1 provided researchers with a philosophical dilemma. That dilemma led researchers to raise a key research question underlying this entire study inquiring, what rarely acknowledged socio-economic issues, have been contributing to girl students' limited educational chances in the Simiyu region within Itilima district council following their rising dropout rate?

Prior to this study, little was known about this grand research question raised concerning with the concealed perpetrators of girl students' dropout behavior in the area under inquiry. As such, there existed the knowledge

gap in need to be filled by fresh empirical study in the studied area of Tanzania within Simiyu. Although the following reviewed studies examined similar occurrences, but they did not answer that fundamental question raised, that sparked our inquiry. The reviewed related study works informing this study included: (Shija, 2022; Vuai, 2020; Awan & Rashid, 2019; Ramanaik et al., 2018; Bariham et al., 2017). However, those studies are silent about that puzzle. Besides those others are: (Bariham et al., 2017; Rahimi & Liston, 2018; UNESCO, 2017; Shaweji, 2017; Balilonda, 2015; Mavura, 2015; Shahidul & Karim, 2015; Karabo & Ayiga, 2013; Uche, 2013; Hekela, 2014). Even these reviewed studies on the researched subject proved futile in filling this identified gap in Itilima district council. So, an empirical study was needed to fill that identified knowledge gap. This was why this study was about, Exploring Concealed Socio-economic Perpetuators Contributing to Tanzanian girl Students to Drop out from lower Public Secondary School in Simiyu District Council Public schools.

The theoretical relevance of this study basically, its findings add research knowledge created about experiences of implementing the SDGs goals towards 2030. Its practical relevance is that it might shed light to other researchers, practitioners and scholars, about the concealed perpetrators accelerating girl students' drop outs behavior interfering completing the expected four-year cycle of lower secondary schools.

2. Methods/Material

2.1 Research grand objectives tasks and sub research questions

The grand general research question underlying this study in absence of hypotheses inquires, what socio-economic perpetrators have been rarely reported but are contributing to lower girl students' to access compulsory lower secondary school education level in terms of rising drop out behaviour in Simiyu region within Itilima district council? Its *main objective* was to explore the research participants' experiential perceptions about dominant socio-economic perpetrators contributing to lower girls' access to education in terms of rising dropout, as well come up with their way forward proposals how to control them in Itilima district council. The *specific objective* with triple tasks aimed:

To assess rare social perpetrators reported tempting girl students not to complete their compulsory four-year cycle in lower secondary schools in Itilima district council. Also,

To determine rarely reported cultural perpetrators on the same. Finally,

To determine research participants' way forward proposals to lower the dropout behavior rise.

Its *sub research questions* asked; what often times reported categories of social perpetrators emerging and what are rarely reported categories of cultural perpetrators are contributing to destruct girls' attention to access secondary school education in terms of equal enrolment, retention, completion and graduation in Itilima district council? Above all, what are research participants' proposals for a way forward to lower the rise of dropout behavior among girl students in same district council studied?

The researchers were aware with the primacy of *paradigms of choice* in social sciences, particularly education research. The interpretivists' paradigm of choice along with pragmatism philosophy, falling under the major category of post positivists' paradigm were chosen, with rationale that the two would inform rational choices of methodology components across the chapter as advised by experts in the field (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). This study followed the *qualitative research approach* because the title constructs catchy words of this study on perpetrators and dropout are latent not easily observable behaviors and not easy to quantify inferentially but descriptively (Hiller, 2023; Tanujaya, Prahmana & Mumu, 2022, pp. 89-91; Enon, 1998, pp.48, 55). The *exploratory design* was used because little was known about concealed social economic and cultural perpetrators in the administrative newly established region context studied, as well it suited to address study questions raised.

For this study referred all lower secondary schools in Tanzania, where researchers gave chance to them all to be selected. However, this was inaccessible population. The researchers narrowed to get accessible target population identified. Its *units of analysis* involved: continuing students, academic master/mistresses of secondary schools, class teachers, Ward Executive Officers (WEOs) and District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO) in Itilima district. The rationale of choosing these units was because they possessed rich information required.

The very study involved the *sample size* which saturated at 40 research participants. Despite this amount being small, but it was deemed adequate for yielding relevant information because its aim was not to generalize findings from sample to population, rather from sample to similar contexts. Patton (1990); Creswell (2012) assure the researchers that any amount between 30 and 40 participants, could yield adequate as well as relevant perceptual and experiential information from in depth studies. The composition of the research participants is shown in Table 2 hereunder.

Table 2*Sample size distribution*

	Category of Participants	Number of Research Participants	Percent
1	Continuing students	24	60.00
2	Head of schools	3	7.50
3	Academic master/mistress	3	7.50
5	Secondary school class teachers	6	15.00
6	WEOs	3	7.50
7	DSEO	1	2.50
	Total	40	100

Source: Field data (2023).

The researchers' employed a methodological triangulation technique to collect data from a diverse participant pool (Patton, 1990; 2003). The study involved a varied participant pool. The researchers opted for this triangulation strategy due to three main reasons. The goal was to capture a broad spectrum of viewpoints from the participants. This triangulation strategy combined purposive sampling with random sampling to enhance the study's credibility and robustness. With criterion sampling procedure category of purposive, researchers deliberately recruited participants with specific characteristics or knowledge relevant to the research question such as educational officials. This targeted approach ensured in-depth insights into the topic to complement purposive sampling and potentially mitigate its limitations (Patton, 2001). Researchers incorporated a random sampling method. This random sampling procedure selected participants from a larger group, similar to drawing names from a lottery. Again, the randomization technique aimed to leverage the strengths of the purposive sampling focused insights, while mitigating potential biases through random sampling.

2.2 Triangulation of data collection, analysis and instrument not mixed methods

This study used triangulation of multiple *research methods within qualitative and between qualitative research*, by combining methods, techniques and instruments acceptable within qualitative approach not mixed methods as elaborated well in (Flick, 2018); and as used in (Denzin, 1970, p. 70). The researchers are aware with confusion among quantitative oriented researchers wanting to force triangulation to be mixed methods study. The word mixed in this study is not applicable except triangulation of methods, techniques and instruments. The documentary, interviews type of semi structured methods collected data. The non-parametric Likert scale instrument, researchers themselves as main instrument, interviews and documentary schedules collected data too. In this study the non-parametric Likert scale protocol was used to collect perceptions.

The qualitative data were analyzed using multiple qualitative techniques and methods including: sorting, memoing, organizing, coding, and theme building. The descriptive analysis technique analyzed non-parametric nominal and ordinal categories to yield percents and frequencies which fall under the qualitative approach as well because they have no true meaning of quantities as recommended in (Hiller, 2023; Yin, 2003; Enon, 1998;

Patton, 1990).

2.3 Research rigor trustworthiness components and ethical issues

The researchers triangulated multiple techniques, sources of information, and experts, including internal and external quality assurance examiners; faculty of education panel critiques for improving a proposal and later on the dissertation defense presentation. These multiple experts as well as sources ensured the study's credibility. The dependability of this study was ensured through ensuring data collected cohere with study specific objectives. Longer stay with research participants in the area studied improved relations with the locals for reputation sake. For complementarity sake, the researchers used triangulated sources of information to study the same phenomenon, so as to balanced flaws of using one method. Implementing the triangulation reduced the risk of misinterpreting research findings. Ethics issues were ensured by obtaining the required authorities' authorization. The responsible university issued a clearance letter introducing researchers to local government authorities. The researchers kept participants' identities private and gained their consent.

3. Results and Discussion

This sub section is organized in four main tasks: data presentation, analysis, discussion and interpretation in tune with the study objectives and sub research questions. One specific objective with triple tasks was first, to determine rare reported social perpetrator categories, second to determine rare reported cultural perpetrator categories, and third to determine research participants' proposals' for a way forward to curb the lower secondary school girl students' dropout behavior hindering them to complete their lawful four-year cycle. Its sub research question asked, what specific categories of social cultural perpetrators are contributing to destruct girls' attention to access secondary school education in terms of equal enrolment, retention, completion and graduation in Itilima district council? Upon returning from the field the researchers: presented, analyzed, discussed, and interpreted the data so as to make sense out of chunky data.

3.1 Results

Prior to this study the researchers assumed that the studied context has rarely studied concealed factors perpetuating the girls' dropout behavior which researchers had not reported empirically. The non-parametric Likert scale protocol of determining levels of agreement with open ended items was given to all 40 research participants asking whether they agree with the perpetrators category provided to them. In (Table 3) one reads a series of data presentation beginning early pregnancy perpetrator.

In Table 3 one reads data presented about the first category of social-cultural amplifier of early pregnancies. The return of the non-parametric scale instruments was higher about 75 percent. The observation from the data presented revealed that the greatest agreeing majority of the studied respondents out 30 returned responses implied that surely, pregnancy is a social accelerator of dropout behaviour in the area when compared to minority who were not sure and disagreeing Table 3 hereunder.

Table 3

Early pregnancy

School	SA	A	NS	SD	D	Percent
A	5	5	0	0	0	10
B	8	1	1	0	0	10
C	7	2	0	0	1	10
Frequency	20	8	1	0	1	30
Total %	66.66	26.66	3.33	0	3.33	99.98

Source: Field data (2023).

In Table 3 one reads data presented about the first category of social-cultural perpetrators of early pregnancies. The return of questionnaire was high of about 75 percent. The observation from the data presented

revealed that the greatest agreeing majority of the studied respondents out 30 returned questionnaire implied that surely, pregnancy is a social accelerator of dropout behaviour in the area when compared to minority who were not sure and disagreeing (Table 3). The emerged perpetrator of early marriage follows from the area studied as seen in the following Table 4.

Table 4*Early marriages*

School	SA	A	NS	SD	D	Percent
A	5	4	1	0	0	10
B	6	3	0	1	0	10
C	8	2	0	0	0	10
Frequency	19	9	1	1	0	30
Total %	63.33	30	3.33	3.33	0	99.99

Source: Field data (2023).

The second category emerged social-cultural perpetrators contributing to girls' dropout behaviour is early marriage. The observation from the data presented in Table 4 as well revealed that the agreeing greatest majority of studied respondents out 30 returned questionnaire, compared to not sure and strongly disagreeing implied that truly marriage is another social accelerator of dropout behaviour in the area studied (Table 4). Alone, the descriptive non parametric numeral categories could not suffice to give details of the phenomenon, this resonated the use of in-depth interviews method. When the school head coded (SS3) from secondary school labelled C was interviewed about perpetrators contributing to school girls' dropout in studied school, the leader had the following words to say;

To me, I can say that girl students' dropout is multi facets on one hand it triggered by early marriage, which is linked by some poor parents' economic status, for the purpose of getting bride price. In my area many parents, believe that sending a girl child to school is wastage of money, time and family resources. But on the other hand it is amplified by teenage in which girls lack transparent guide by their parents as it used to be during African indigenous education (SS3 18.10.2022).

The school head coded (SS3) added saying;

The girls by then had special teachers who gathered them in age set system to inform them about their changes physically and mentally as well of their next expected status of responsible parenthood. That education used to alert teenagers not to misbehave with changes observed in their bodies unlike now. It is my view that there is a missing link, in need to be addressed soonest (SS3 18.10.2022).

The third category of social-cultural perpetrators contributing to distract girls' attention in school was low education level of the parents as illustrated in Table 5 as follows.

Table 5*Low parents' education category*

School	SA	A	NS	SD	D	Percent
A	5	4	0	1	0	10
B	4	4	2	0	0	10
C	7	1	0	2	0	10
Frequency	16	9	2	3	0	30
Total %	53.33	30	6.66	10	0	99.99

Source: Field data (2023).

The observation from data presented in Table 5 the greatest majority frequented agreeing strongly that low education level of the parents accelerates girls' dropout behavior in studied schools, when compared to their minority counterparts not, strongly disagreeing (Table 5).

As previously, the descriptive non parametric numeral categories could not suffice to give details of the phenomenon hence interviews method was employed. When the Ward Executive Officer (WEO2) from secondary school B was interviewed about social cultural perpetrators contributing to distract girls' attention at school, has the following word to say;

In my area I can say that, many parents are not educated, and some time they come to my office complaining that, their daughters are sick, but after a few weeks you will hear that, a girl has been married. In addition, they believe that sending a girl to the school will be a prostitute (WEO2 19.10.2022).

The fourth perpetrator category is peer group as portrayed in Table 6 hereunder.

Table 6

Peer group category

School	SA	A	NS	SD	D	Percent
A	5	4	1	0	0	10
B	5	4	1	0	0	10
C	7	2	1	0	0	10
Frequency	17	10	3	0	0	30
Total %	56.66	33.33	10	0	0	99.99

Source: Field data (2023).

The observation on the data presented in Table 6, is as well supported by the greatest majority who frequented strongly agreeing that the peer group accelerates girls to dropout in secondary schools, when compared to their counterparts who were not sure within Itilima district council (Table 6).

The fifth category of emerged social-cultural perpetrators contributing to distract studied girl's attention in secondary school was family divorce presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Family divorce

School	SA	A	NS	SD	D	Percent
A	1	3	3	2	1	10
B	2	4	2	2	0	10
C	7	3	0	0	0	10
Frequency	10	10	5	4	1	30
Total %	33.33	33.33	16.66	13.33	3.33	99.98

Source: Field data (2023).

The observation of the data presented in Table 7 implied that the greater majority of studied respondents agreed with the family divorce accelerates the dropout behaviour, when compared to not sure and disagreeing respondents (Table 7).

As previously, the descriptive non parametric nominal and ordinal numeral categories could not suffice to give full picture of the phenomenon in the natural settings, this resonated the use of in-depth interviews method for complementary purposes. When the school Head coded (SS1) from school coded A was interviewed had the following words to utter; "...family divorce is one of the social-cultural categories contributing girls to frequent with the dropout behaviour from secondary school, this is due to lack of supervision to education from both parents..." (SS1 18.10.022).

When some research participants were pursued with follow up questions to recommend on solution to end this problem, the responses from the interviewed education officers in particular revealed them they saying; When the school Head coded SS1 from school A was interviewed about the way forward to end the problem of dropout behaviour, the leader proposed saying;

In my neighbourhood I can say that, the government has to invest in building nearby school, like in our ward the government had constructed hostels, though some parents do not afford the cost of hostel for their daughters to stay at school. Instead majority of girls are still walking longer distances amounting to 10kms on foot or by bicycle daily. This tendency contributes the problems of girls' dropout behaviour (SS1 18.10.2022).

When the executive leader Ward Executive Officer coded (WEO2) from secondary school B was interviewed about way forward for curbing dropout behaviour in his school the leader had the following words to say;

In my location in order to stop this problem, first the government should collaborate with different stake holders to educate parents on unseen the spill avers of education economically, socially, and even politically to their daughters in later days. The most responsible are religious leaders, politicians, teachers and famous people within the society. To me this will influence parents to send their daughters to school (WW2 18.10.2022).

The researcher also interviewed the research participants including WEO (WW3) and head of school (SS3) from school C. Surprisingly, the two interviewees were in consensus saying: *the government should make conducive environment for learning example provision of food at school, building toilets, presence of clean and safe water likewise place for dumping their pads (WW3 19.10.2022).*

Another way forward proposed by research participants was the need to provide guidance and counselling to girls in schools especially those from families with separated relations. This view as well was supported by head of school SS3 from school C by saying;

To me the free education policy should be improved because there are some challenges like food provision at school, which demand more money besides school fees. Since most of schools here in Itilima district students resides at school, so parents/guardians have to pay for food and security and we have to tell them to do so because we as school, we don't have any source of income" In addition I think bylaws and policies should be created to protect children's rights in secondary education as per international provisions. Parents/guardians who violate this right should be sued to court (SS3 25.10.2022).

3.2 Discussion

In reference to the data presented and analyzed in Table 3, the findings revealed that there are cases of early pregnancies in the area studied, where many girls drop out. The victim girls of early pregnancy experience stigmatization and marginalization, first from some family members, who point fingers endlessly. The second stigmatization is from some community members, who seriously attack them for being loose and lose their noble chance for not being retained, for not completing and graduating their secondary school education four in Itilima district council. These findings in Table 3 reflect other studies findings elsewhere about the **early pregnancies** accelerator perpetuating student girls drop out behavior just as these findings in Itilima secondary schools (Karabo & Ayiga, 2013; Bariham et al., 2017; Shaweji, 2017; UNESCO, 2017).

Regarding the data presented and analyzed in Table 4, the findings unveiled that the greatest majority of respondents frequently agreed strongly that **early marriage** category is one of the social economic amplifiers hiking the girl students' dropout behaviour in the studied area. The interviews method data captured insights revealing that multi facets one being marriage, however, this amplifier is triggered by parents' poverty and their low valuing of girls' education. These findings in Table 4 echo other studies of Shija (2022; Bariham et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2017).

Ethics were ensured by obtaining the required authorities' authorization. The Open University of Tanzania

(OUT) issued a clearance letter introducing researchers to local government authorities as seen in repository of the responsible university. The researchers kept participants' identities private and gained their consent. The findings in Table 5 concerned with **low parents' education** triggers negative attitude and low parents' perception about their girl child's education, perpetuating student girls' drop out behavior in Itilima secondary schools. These findings are in tune with other study findings elsewhere about accelerator of low parents' education for not attaching value of their daughters' education perpetuating student girls' drop out behaviour not only in secondary schools in Itilima secondary schools as per (Hekela, 2014; Balilonda, 2015).

Reference is made to the data presented and analyzed in Table 6, this finding reveals that the **peer group** contributes to distracting girls' attention not to successfully access the secondary school education in terms of effective: enrolment, retention, completion and graduation in Itilima district council. This finding tallies with the study done in Kenya reporting that a learning institution context and peer level factors have impact on learners be girls or boys (Korir & Kipkemboi, 2014). Similarly, this finding reflects the findings in the study in Ghana (Senyamator et al., 2021).

From the data presented and analysed from Table 7 show that the culture of family divorce contributes to distract girls' attention to access secondary school education in terms of: enrolment, retention, completion and graduation in Itilima district council. Consequently, **girl students lack guidance** and **counselling** service from separated parents. Such scenario triggers girls to decide trying other dangerous ways prone to cause discontinuity from secondary school education. This finding echoes study in Nepal (Dahal et al., 2022). The findings from interviews too revealed that the girls lack transparent guidance and counselling from both parent, especially when divorce occurs. As a result, student girls decide to find their alternative means, which finally tiger them to discontinue from secondary school education. Furthermore, girls lack supervision from both parents. These findings in Table 1.6 reflect other study findings elsewhere about accelerator of the **family divorce** category perpetuating student girls drop out behavior which is not only the case of secondary lower schools Itilima but also in higher levels of schools as the case in South Georgia (Rahimi & Liston, 2018).

In reference to the literature reviewed from documentary sources the finding about family divorce tallies with the study report of Nepal by (Dahal et al., 2022). Similarly, among the socio-cultural accelerator contributing to distract girls' attention not accessing secondary education in terms of retention, completion and graduation are: family divorce, due to lack of supervision and guidance and counseling from both parents (Dahal et al., 2022).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Overall, this study investigated the social and economic perpetrators contributing to the rise of girl students' dropout rate in lower secondary schools within Itilima district council, in Simiyu region, Tanzania. Emerged key findings were as follows. Emerged commonly perpetrators often reported include: early marriage: poverty and low parental value of girl students' education lead to early marriage, a significant dropout perpetrator. As well, the peer groups draw away girl students' attention from focusing on their education, hence impacting their enrollment, retention, completion, and graduation rates. However, rarely perpetrators reported in the area studied include: low parental education about future tangible spillovers of the education given to girls in their families at large. The absence of that education resonates some parents often times to hold negative attitudes towards their child girls' education, and by so doing knowingly or unknowingly, such parents hamper those girl students' retention and completion rates. The family divorce too emerged as a concealed disrupter of girls' future hope to achieve their noble educational opportunities given by compulsory education at lower secondary school education level. Above all, the other finding, also unveiled that girls lack transparent guidance and supervision on issues related to reproductive health at the age they enter secondary lower secondary schools education level

studied and ultimately perpetuates girl students' dropout rate rise.

4.2 Recommendations

In order to achieve the desired Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on education, which aims to leave no child behind by 2030, research participants recommended eliminating gender disparities in education provision and ensuring equal access to lower secondary school education for all. Again, the government should collaborate with education stakeholders through participatory means. To name a few: Among them are nongovernmental organizations, religious leaders, parents' school boards, artists, and opposition politicians. These must convince parents and the community of girls' education's value. This would eliminate ancestral cultural ideas that discourage girl students from attending school and encourage early marriage and pregnancy. The government should encourage all schools to develop peer mentoring partnership clubs where high school females can mentor lower-community secondary school girls. Local governments should also criminalize all negative conventional assumptions that lead to early marriage and childbearing. Overall, research participants recommended petitioning the government to involve lower secondary school girl students as role models in policy formulation processes that support their educational achievement to prepare them for informed life and educational decisions.

This study has implications for teachers, students, and parents. The study demands a complete grasp of students' lifestyles. Teachers must be aware of pupils' outside school obstacles, such as poverty, family structure, and peer pressure. To help girls overcome barriers, teachers must mentor them with emotional support, career counselling, and life skills training. Teachers must emphasize girls' education and its benefits to parents to engage them in their children's education. Teachers must again urge the Ministry of Education to educate on reproductive health. To enable girls to make educated decisions, they require age-appropriate reproductive health information in the curriculum. Subject instructors must work together with administrators, community leaders, and lawmakers to address the root causes of girls' dropouts and advocate for change.

In terms of the implications of this study for students, it calls for them to have self-awareness: understand the challenges they face and develop strategies to overcome them. Likewise, they must have goal-setting, i.e., clear academic and personal goals, in order to stay focused and motivated. They need to build strong friendships with supportive peers who value education. Furthermore, the study encourages students to confidently discuss their challenges, variously related to reproductive health issues, with their teachers, counselors, and parents in a transparent manner. Finally, this study urges them to develop a lifelong learning habit by recognizing the importance of education for future opportunities and personal growth.

Since, this study about girls' dropout was conducted in Simiyu region, Tanzania within Itilima district council in three public lower secondary schools with smaller sample, it is hereby recommended to conduct a comparative study with a larger sample using regression analysis capable of generalizing its findings from sample to population in rest of districts of same Simiyu region.

5. References

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