



# School Dropout among Girls: Reasons and Measures in Community Secondary Schools in Temeke Municipality, Tanzania

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## Authors' contributions

*This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## ABSTRACT

Dropout has been identified as one of the major issues in schools, affecting the youth's future. Despite all initiatives to ensure education for all, dropout remains persistent and a challenge towards achieving education for all in Tanzania. This study investigated measures of reducing dropout among girls in community secondary schools in Temeke municipality. Specifically, the study focused on the reasons for girls' dropout and measures to be employed to manage it. The study adopted a mixed method design targeting community secondary schools in Temeke municipality. A sample size of 169 respondents, including heads of schools, teachers, students, parents, education officers, and ward education officers, was drawn using both purposive and probability sampling techniques. Questionnaire, interview, observation and focus group discussion methods were used to collect primary data, while documentary review was used to collect secondary data. The study discovered that distance from school, family low income, inadequate

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sanitary pad punishment, economic factors, and poverty and family problems such as family conflicts are the main causes of secondary school dropout for girls in the named municipality. The strategies that have been used to minimize girls' dropout are education for self-awareness, making connections with at-risk students, alternative schooling, family teacher engagement and strengthening laws. The study recommends some ways of reducing secondary school dropout to include policy innovation to allow stakeholders flexibility in addressing challenges related to dropout. The government should ensure the presence of enough teachers and adequate teaching and learning materials to improve infrastructure, especially toilets for girls.

*Keywords:* School dropout; girls dropout; strategies; reasons; community secondary schools; Tanzania.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Discussions on school dropouts are common all over the world, including in developed and developing countries. Over 97 million African children are out of school, with 52 million of them being girls, and this figure is expected to rise as the demand for education grows. Africa is struggling to grow economically [1]. A World Bank report tries to analyse the impact of out-of-school youth in sub-Saharan Africa on education, including the impact of disasters, migration, armed conflicts, extreme poverty, child labour, teenage pregnancies, and early and forced marriages as hindering Africa's growth. In addition, the National Education Act (1978, amended in 1995 and 2002) stipulates in Article 8 that parents, legal guardians, and those having custody of children have the duty to provide the child with the right to education and guidance [2]. This article was designed to help or force parents to help students as individuals become familiar with a wide range of information about themselves, their interests, their abilities in various areas of living, and their plans for the future. Again, UNESCO states that education is a basic human right that works to lift men and women out of poverty and ensure sustainable development to address their own demand inequalities. The role of the school is not only to get students to school but also to ensure that they stay in school until they graduate.

Dropout has been a problem that has run counter to educational policymakers' and some parents' expectations [3]. Schooling was not interesting, as many students at the ordinary level dropped out of school, lost interest in many subjects, and always failed in the final national examinations [4]. Providing women with education improves nutritional values, proper hygiene, and household management [5]. Female education therefore leads to improved health and education, reduced infant mortality, increased earnings, a reduced

fertility rate, and improved quality of life for nations. Girls' retention is critical to their progress toward achieving their educational goals. Parents contribute to truancy for students, such as parents from the Maasai community, for example, who dislike educating girls instead of engaging in early marriage because many cows are paid as dowry [6]. Again, the length of the journey to and from school affects the attendance of both sexes and is particularly devastating for girls [7].

The historical perspective of the colonial African period on African countries can be used to understand why girls drop out of secondary educational institutions [8]. In contrast, some students attended schools run by the German government that prepared Africans to serve as interpreters, clerks, teachers, and other administrative roles within the colonial government. For young women, these opportunities were essentially nonexistent. Numerous studies have examined the reasons why females leave secondary schools in Tanzania, but none have specifically examined the reasons why girls leave secondary schools in the Bagamoyo district. In Tanzania, female participation in public life, including government and political positions, as well as dropout rates among girls, are both rising. However, there are not enough women in Bagamoyo District who are qualified for these positions because the majority of them lack education and many of them left school early.

Tanzanian researchers have focused more of their attention on primary school dropout rates than secondary school dropout rates. A study on the evaluation of absenteeism and dropout rates among primary school students in the Tarime district found that there are numerous factors that could affect absenteeism and subsequent school abandonment in the Tarime area. School-related factors included the absence of supplies for the

school, the imposition of discipline by teachers on students, the absence of some teachers from the classroom, the scarcity of desks and other necessary teaching and learning tools, the distance between homes and schools, and the absence of a school meal programme. Other reasons for truancy and dropout were parental or guardian poverty, a lack of attention on education, youngsters being involved in small business, customs and traditions, and a distance from the homes of the students [9]. Another study on the patterns and reasons behind school dropouts in the secondary schools of Arusha and Arumeru reported that it is very expensive to send a child to secondary school in Tanzania because tuition is neither free nor inexpensive. Many students' homes experienced social and economic issues, which contributed to their dropping out of school [10,11].

Despite several initiatives by the government and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), dropout has remained a significant concern for Tanzanians. According to statistics from the foundation of education, truancy accounts for 76.1% of dropouts, followed by a lack of necessities. Twelve percent of students drop out for other reasons, including illness, misbehaviour, parental or guardian illness, pregnancy, and death [12]. The greater female dropout rate in this area must be due to unidentified variables that were specific to community secondary schools in Temeke Municipality. This study assessed measures of reducing dropout among girls in community secondary schools in Temeke municipality. Specifically, it was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To describe the reasons for girls' dropout and to describe strategies to be employed to manage girls' dropout,
- ii. To describe strategies to be employed to manage girls' dropout.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Many researchers define the phenomenon of dropout differently. It is a term used for children who discontinue schooling and leave their education uncompleted [13]. This definition includes all students who discontinue their studies without completing them for any reason. Additionally, the definition includes students at all levels of study. Even students who discontinue studies due to illness may be included in the above definition of dropout.

Pupil dropout is caused by several factors, including family background variables such as socioeconomic status. To improve the participation and quality of secondary education in Tanzania, it is necessary to improve the status of the family as the foundation of education development among nations [14].

Household workload mostly affects the number of hours that students have to attend school. Some guardians do not care much about schooling for other children they used to care for; instead, they value education for their own children. If it happens that a child has lost her parents, the brothers take them in to raise them. These children may have different behaviors; they may not listen to warnings and instructions, and sometimes they have excuses that they are being tortured, so they decide not to attend classes, which can lead to dropout [15]. When a relative's child does not attend school, a less serious follow-up is conducted on him or her. Due to low family income, students are unable to pay school contributions while also attending school. Needs such as pens, books, and uniforms [16]. Young girls face the burden of domestic duties such as caring for children and cleaning the environment. This pressure constrains girls' access to education; lack of parental guidance in studies, domestic duties, corporal punishment, poor economic conditions in the family, and a large family size are some of the factors that cause school dropout [16].

The distance to school has great effects on the attendance and academic progress of pupils. The paths they take to get to school are also dangerous for the girl. If she goes out very early, therapists or people who hunt them when they go to school ambush them, knowing that they have already left home and have not arrived at school [17]. Pupils were required to walk more than five kilometers to school, which then resulted in a high rate of absenteeism and school dropouts. With the rapid expansion of secondary education, the distance to school has become one of the serious problems facing schools in Tanzania. These factors may cause poor school attendance and drop out. Students who walked long distances, particularly in rural areas, had a negative impact on school attendance.

Early marriage of girls is associated with dropouts in certain contexts. In India, education might give girls better preparation for marriage. Parents are sometimes reluctant to educate girls for higher education because it raises the cost of

marriage for girls, according to the PROBE team (1999). Some studies argue that there are some specific characteristics of girls' dropouts, such as poor school performance, low economic status, migratory family lifestyles, and the vulnerability of girls [18]. Some studies argue that unexpected circumstances, such as a lack of social and economic opportunities and gender inequality in the education system, result in motherhood and, as a result, school dropout [19]. They continue that the dropout rate of girls is higher than the dropout rate of boys, and the cause for girls is pregnancy.

in Geita, some parents still believed that girls had nothing to bring to the family once they were educated because they would get married. Some students had no choice but to stay at school as they became pregnant, while others were forced by their parents to drop out to get married [20]. Pregnancy is a problem in Tanzania [21], where pregnant girls are expelled from school because school policies do not clearly protect them. He discovered that pregnant girls always suffer from physical violence and psychological torture and thus end up dropping out of school either by their own decision or due to fear and psychological torture by fellow students or the school's authority.

Poor parents' or guardians' supervision of education attracts adolescents to quit secondary schools. This contributes greatly to dropout cases in secondary schools. The negative attitudes towards education make the child look for another way, which can have negative consequences for the parent, family, and even society [22]. Parents and children lack awareness of the importance of education, which explains why both parents and children had negative attitudes towards secondary education. With regard to secondary education, the education status of parents is among the reasons for student dropout, as Chakravarty says that the love for school and schooling of children depend much upon the education status of their parents. In many families, the parents are educated; they monitor the children's progress and meet their needs [23].

Parents should make time for their children, especially in regard to encouraging them to do their homework and enjoy learning [24]. According to John, students are more likely to have children at a younger age and to be single parents. This happens when they involve themselves in love affairs at a young age and, in

the end, give birth to different men, and upbringing becomes difficult because one parent can meet the needs of this male parent and others do not [25]. A similar study performed by UNESCO (2012) finds that the low value placed on education by parents is often linked to high levels of adult illiteracy, particularly among women. As a result of society's disregard for girls' education, a large number of women who lack education are unable to economically liberate themselves and thus have people who constantly complain.

A number of studies in Africa report that school distance can discourage girls from being educated because of the time and energy needed to cover the distance and parental anxiety about the safety of their daughters. Long distance demoralizes parents and students, especially when it takes a long time to reach school, not only because of the distance but also because of problems that may arise, such as being raped or being influenced by bad people who may lead to dropping out of school [26].

Another factor is low self-esteem. Due to low self-esteem and frustration at being disempowered, parents whose children drop out of school have difficulty assisting them in running their daily lives [27]. In rural areas, girls begin working at an earlier age than boys and tend to do more work in the household than boys. If mothers work and obtain a wage outside of the home, female children take on the responsibilities of the household, which causes them to drop out. Girls take on more household chores than boys, which has greatly affected school dropout parents by leaving them with no time to study. Parents show little interest in education, which makes children drop out due to a lack of parental support and guidance [28].

Inadequate sanitation facilities in schools affect girls' dropout rates because this inadequacy indicates that schools are not safe for girls [29]. Sanitation in schools has a strong negative impact on a girl's parents' expectations for safe sanitation for their daughter in school, especially for girls entering adulthood. They need to have separate and adequate facilities for their menstruation period in school. When they lack adequate facilities, it discourages them from attending school, and as a result, they drop out. Girls' privacy in schools is an important factor that forces girls to drop out. Secondary school girls are still young; they are also ashamed of their male peers, and especially if it is known that

they are in the menstruation period, they prefer to separate themselves; if they cannot find a private place, they believe it is better to stay at home [30].

UNICEF suggested that separate toilets be made available for boys and girls when designing the facilities of a school. The lack of basic sanitation is the cause of dropouts in secondary schools, and girls spend more time in school when sanitation facilities are adequate [31]. According to UNESCO, if toilets are shared by boys and girls or located near schools, they will encourage harassment, and a lack of privacy leads to school dropout [32]. In sub-Saharan Africa, studies indicate that both female and male teachers believed that boys were academically better than girls [33]. It was found that most teachers tend to pay more attention to boys in the classroom than girls. According to Fawe, teachers regarded girls as less intelligent than boys [34]. Dropout rates in Sub-Saharan Africa have been linked to teachers' attitudes toward female students in the classroom. Teachers favor boys over girls in terms of academic performance and achievement, which leads to dropout.

According to Levacic, guidance and counselling are processes through which students are advised on how to deal with emotional conflicts and cooperate in daily life. This is a bridge that connects students and their teachers. At its greatest potential for producing negative effects, corporal punishment, if very frequent, may become an ongoing hardship for the student. Students get a chance to express their problems [35]. This process promotes positive relationships and distinguishes negative behaviors. To promote student dropouts in schools, an effective counselling facility should be in place, especially for girls, to help them stay in school until completion. School administrators should provide services that make students feel more at ease in the classroom and better equipped to deal with the challenges that they face in their daily lives.

Dropout is a functional issue of how students are motivated at school [36]. Teachers' poor teaching styles may encourage some students to drop out. The teaching style contributed to students becoming bored, which led to dropout. A lack of enjoyment and support from teachers is more likely to lead to students leaving school early [37]. Instructional materials are very important in the teaching and learning process, as they are very important in reducing students' dropout

rates. Truancy and teacher aggression are socially common signs of learning difficulties [38]. Students may skip a single class lesson or several class lessons or attend part of a school day in the academic year, so they miss the connection of the ideas that, in the end, lead to poor academic achievement [39]. Lack of subject interest, unavailable opportunities for students' mental capacity does not match the level of entertainment provided by sports and games course opted for, too much disapproval from family, poor teaching skills, and a lack of confidence could also result in students dropping out.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This research adopted a mixed approach. The quantitative approach emphasizes objective measurement and statistics, while the qualitative method is chosen because participants will explain their views. De Franzo argued that qualitative research is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations by providing insight into the problem or helping to develop ideas and hypotheses. A descriptive survey design was used [40]. According to Creswell, a "descriptive survey" is a research design, a plan that describes how, when, and where data are to be collected and analysed [41]. As Mugenda and Mugenda noted, the aim of a survey is to obtain information that describes existing phenomena by asking individuals about their perceptions, attitudes, behavior, and values [42].

The target population included all public secondary schools in Temeke Municipality, the head of schools, teachers, students, parents, an education officer, and ward education officers from Temeke Municipality. This study used a sample size of 169 participants, including heads of schools, teachers, students, parents, education officers, and ward education officers from Temeke Municipality. Slovin's (1960) formula to calculate an appropriate sample size from the population was employed. The sampling units were chosen using both nonprobability and probability sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was employed to select Dar es Salaam and then used to select Temeke Municipality. Simple random sampling was used to select schools. Furthermore, the key informants were identified using a purposeful sampling method, such as the parents, an education officer, ward education officers, and heads of schools, who helped provide key technical information for the

study. Simple random sampling was employed to select teachers and students in each school. This study collected data using a questionnaire, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, observation and systematic document reviews. The instruments were validated through pilot testing and by requesting expert opinion. Quantitative data were analysed through descriptive statistics, while thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Reasons for Girls' Dropout in Community Secondary Schools

Teachers in selected secondary schools were asked to explain the reasons for female students' dropouts in their schools. According to the findings, approximately 25.8% of girls identified punishment as the reason for their school dropout (Fig. 1). This indicates that punishment makes students fearful, particularly during the teaching and learning processes. Instead of learning for their own development, children learn merely to please their teachers. The desire of a learner to learn is distorted by physical punishment motivated by fear.

Approximately 9.3% of respondents identified inadequate sanitary pads as the reason for girls' dropouts in their schools. The result further shows that 25.3% of respondents indicated that distance from the school is the reason for girls' dropouts in their schools. This is evident because students' fatigue and tiredness are caused by distance, which lowers their time for learning. Additionally, great distances may compel children to leave school early to avoid arriving late at home, which may later lead to dropout. According to Dohho, the length of the journey to and from school affects both sexes' attendance and is especially devastating for girls; approximately 22% identified low parental income as a reason for girl students' dropouts in their schools, while 17.4% reported family conflict [7]. This implies that when there is conflict in the family, the student can be agitated and may also feel anxious and self-conscious. They might experience anxiety, depression, or rage. These emotions may have an impact on school.

Barongo argued that there were both social and school-related factors influencing truancy and dropout. Such factors include parents' or guardians' lack of involvement in ensuring that their children attend school on a regular basis. There are also deceptive cultural practices that

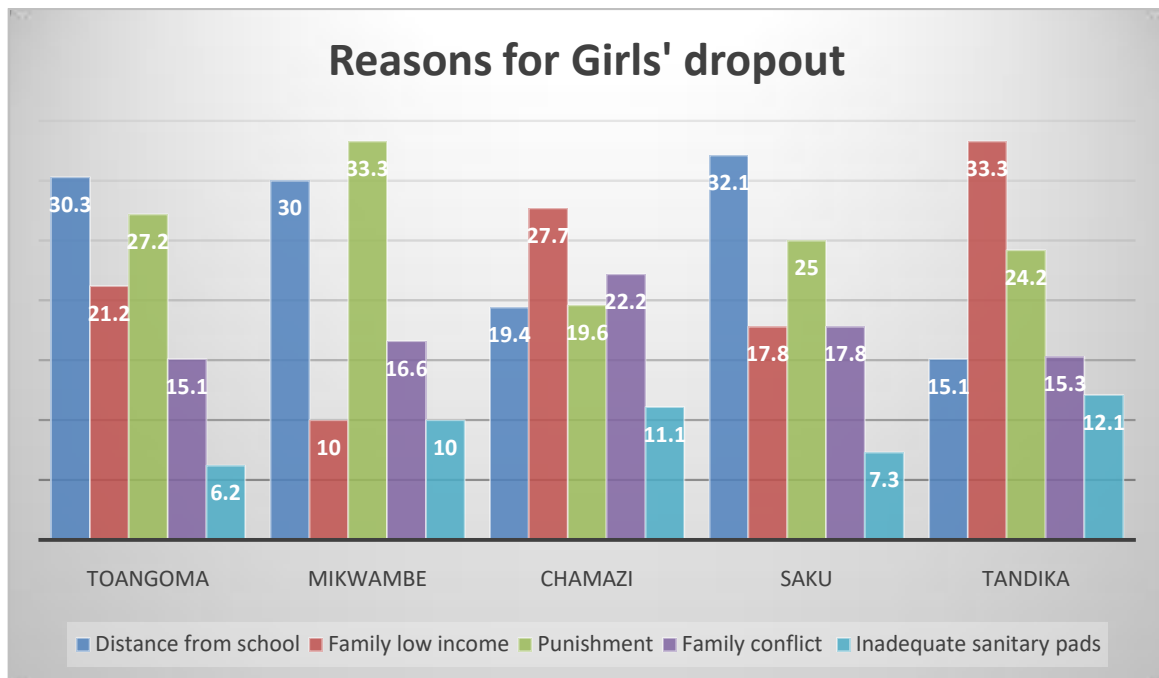
encourage truancy and school dropout among some girls. Students' participation in petty business activities and poor physical infrastructure at school, such as few desks and not having enough classrooms, are some of the reasons for truancy, which leads to dropout [43].

It is widely understood that education is crucial to the success of any society. According to Ishumi, any nation or individual aspiring to growth requires education to achieve their objectives. Education promotes people's goals, boosts social, economic, and cultural performance, raises environmental awareness levels, and gives them the knowledge and perspectives they need to deal with the issues they fight [44]. This indicates that every member of society should receive an education since people require knowledge and skills to better their lives and influence their surroundings.

UNICEF emphasized the value of education for women in light of their obligations and their contribution to the advancement of humanity. They suggest that girls experience the negative effects of not attending school more severely than boys do, and these effects are carried over to both genders' future generations. Girls are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, sexual exploitation, and child trafficking than boys, regardless of whether they have a high school diploma [45]. Kalinga found that HIV/AIDS, deaths, unemployment, and a lack of family planning are among the causes of secondary school dropout [46].

These hazards double without the information and life skills that education may impart; hence, school provides girls and their families with many safeguards, while its absence results in various exposures. This implies that it is more crucial to educate women because the consequences of doing so are more severe for girls than for boys. Education for girls has positive multiplier effects on the growth and welfare of the next generation in all spheres of human existence, including politics, economics, and social welfare.

During interviews with key informants, several reasons for girls' dropouts were identified. For example, the head teacher from one school said, "*Reasons for dropout are varied among students, but the most prevalent are to find employment, poor grades, avoid bullying, lack of freedom, and an unexpected pregnancy.*"



**Fig. 1. Reasons for girls' dropouts in public secondary schools 2022 survey data source**

During focus group discussion, it was revealed that some parents tended to disregard supplying female pupils with essential educational necessities, which discouraged their enrolment in school. Some neglected schoolgirls were forced to adopt alternative measures to meet their requirements to succeed in school. One student said the following:

"Frequently, I am unable to complete my academic requirements." My parents do not care for it, but they insist that I study it. I am a female with essential needs, including sanitary products and lotion for personal hygiene. How do I acquire them? "Because of this, I hate schooling."

This indicates that girl students are facing challenges, especially inadequate sanitary pads, that affect their school attendance and hence dropout. One teacher said, *"The majority of them are uncomfortable during menstruation since the restroom facilities at school are not conducive to managing their menstrual flow."*

Therefore, menstrual inequality is an obvious contributor to school absence, but it is not the only factor. Stigma (which encourages classmates' taunting), inadequate toilet (WASH) facilities, and humiliation have a detrimental influence on menstruating students' school

involvement and lead to poorer educational performance overall.

Again, distance from the school has been said to affect girl students' attendance, hence resulting in dropout. This is because the majority of community schools lack dormitories, and female students are more likely than male students to be exposed to hazardous practices. This implies that public secondary school students who live close to their schools are fortunate to live with their parents because there are no safe on-campus housing options for them. According to this perspective, female students are at risk since many do not exercise self-control while enjoying their freedom away from parental supervision and end up having unsuitable interactions with men, which frequently results in unintended pregnancies. Because of such pregnancies, students drop out before completing their education cycle.

Overcoming these predicaments has not been easy because one of the head teachers said,

"When we considered the problems our female students endure, particularly on their trip to and from school, we decided to convert some of our classrooms into dorms where the ladies could be supervised." However, we realized that providing female

students with refuge was insufficient. They still required assistance in other areas from their parents or guardians. "Consequently, several of them engaged in illicit relationships and dropped out of school."

In general, Temeke female dropouts exhibit little to no interest in education. This indicates that parents and girls lack an appreciation for the significance of investing in female children. Investing in female education is still hindered by school facilities and socioeconomic factors, such as parental occupation, economic ability, and educational value. Statistics showed that dropout is caused by different factors that are unique to particular students; such factors include low family economic status, a long distance from home to school, poverty, and peer groups. However, these factors have a greater impact on female students than on male students [47].

Through focus group discussion, students were asked to explain the reasons why some students left school. Some claimed it was due to a family's low income, which prevented them from purchasing the necessary school supplies. Among some particular factors that increase the dropout rate, particularly for girls, are the financial constraints on those who are from low-income families. Some are peer groups and the influence of their friends; others complained about the punishment given by teachers when they fail tests or exams [36,47].

Despite the fee-free secondary education, it was discovered that students in secondary schools are still paying some contributions for tests, which are done weekly. This contribution is paid by parents because some tests and quizzes are done during the lessons. When parents and guardians cannot afford to pay for their children's education, students may skip a few days of school and then disappear. A student from one school explaining to a researcher, says:

"Teachers prefer to beat students, even for little mistakes, and some mistakes are not caused by the students themselves, such as failing to contribute money for tests. Some students decide not to attend school because they are harassed for not contributing money for tests" (Interview, August 2022).

According to Liu (2004), the use of abusive language by teachers toward students is a problem that may lead to dropout. An effective

way of teaching or the way teachers attend students cannot be good and cause harm to students, as some students are not smart as secondary school students because they come to school very dirty and cause teachers to act differently. This can cause students to feel bad if the teacher is talking in front of his or her fellow students. From the text, the researcher perceives that heavy punishments such as strokes are among the reasons that drive students out of school in Temeke Municipality.

At school, a student said that. "*Girls fail to come to school continuously because of a lack of water supply when they are on their period, family problems such as lack of money for school supplies or fare, a difficult life situation, and fear of being beaten for not doing some exercise and tests.*"

According to this text, the researcher believes that strokes are one of the reasons that students are absent from school in the Temeke municipality. A student from School B in FGD stated,

"The teacher is flogging you if you don't contribute the money for the test. Will this information truly be worked on? Because if you don't contribute, you don't do the tests, and if you don't do the tests, you will be beaten. Isn't the government saying this is free? Does that mean they don't know this?"

Another girl student said,

"Because of the strict teachers, most students are afraid to come to school. Other girls did not attend school because they had begun to engage in sexual activity. However, because other parents do not need to supervise their children, few of them have their own habits about how to interact with their parents. Other girls do not want to study, but their parents force them to. Few girls need to study, but their parents do not have the money for them to come to school; other people they know live away from school. However, the most common things are boys. Boys like girls and take them as their girlfriends in order to break their future dreams, and girls fall in love with them and start truancy and become pregnant."

Based on that information, the researcher concluded that female students understand the danger of falling in love. This section is provided



by a male student. The study indicated that single-parent families resulted in school dropouts.

#### *The impact of single-parent families on community student dropout*

They stated that the issue of doing more work at home was a contributing factor, as was the lack of basic school contributions mentioned. Again, students from divorced families who live with their mothers are at a higher risk of dropping out due to a lack of school support.

Students explain why some students drop out of secondary school. *"Some students who live with guardians and relatives claim that their relatives are unwilling to sponsor them because they lack funds. Some relatives also treat these students as a source of labor, forcing them to drop out."*

According to the study findings, some families led by single parents are experiencing dropout behaviors. Students say that the problem of doing more work at home is a leading factor in the findings on the influence of single-parent families on student dropout. Another is a lack of school needs and contributions, and children from divorced families stayed with their mothers, which shows that children from divorced families are at a higher risk of dropping out of school because they lack basic needs and school contributions than those whose families are not divorced [48].

This situation convinces the researcher that students drop out of school because of the separation of their parents.

*"Some parents or guardians use coercion to persuade their children not to continue their studies. For example, our schoolmate was living with her mother, and her father sought a transfer for her to study in Kigoma. During the vacation, he told her to go to her mother, whom she did; however, when the vacation ended, the father did not send her fare to return to Kigoma. She is left without knowing what to do."*

From this text, the study posits that it is parents and guardians who cause students to drop out of school because she is afraid that when she returns to school she will be severely beaten while being asked where she was, something that she cannot explain because she will be experiencing pain. Some students leave school

because the quality of education and the form of teaching are boring when they are in the class; others abuse students and provide severe punishments without any reason.

*"Our fellow student left school because she did not see the meaning of what was being taught as it would be useful for her in life; she noticed that she wastes a lot of time on the way to school, and if she is late, she is punished; she also takes a long time when she is out of class and misses some sessions, according to a girl who was at school. Low expectations from what is happening in school, a lack of career aspiration, and poor academic performance can all lead to students dropping out."*

A third-grade girl who was late to school said, *"I am late because I was taking care of my brother, who is sick."* She continued to say, *"Our parents are separated at the beginning, when I was in Form 1, I lived with my uncle, but because of harassment, I now live with my brother, and we are comfortable."*

According to the text above, some girls do not attend school because they are caring for their sick siblings or brothers. This situation is due to family separation between the mother and father, which left the children without anyone to care for them. The parents have run away from their responsibilities.

Another girl said,

*"I know seven students who have dropped out of school because of pregnancy. I know them because they are in Form 3. I don't know about other forms, and among the students, one has been impregnated by a fellow student; all of them were in form three and are still young, not even reaching the age of eighteen; that boy has also left school."*

According to the text above, there are students who drop out of school due to pregnancy. A boy contributing to the focus group discussion said:

*"School infrastructure, such as access to water, is a problem. modern toilet, going there without water is a problem; it makes a person think twice. Another issue is that girls in Dar es Salaam do not have a permanent address; they move around a lot, making it*

difficult to track down where they are coming from if they start doing bad things.”

The narration shows that students face problems due to a lack of infrastructure in schools. The issue with shifting here and there is that students lose sight of the connection in their studies. What makes girls drop out of school is the environment in which they come from. In many families, such as extended families, they have a low ability to take care of the family, so those who struggle to study are not given much attention. Another is family breakdown, which is also a problem where fathers and mothers divorce and in other families there is sexual harassment. Additionally, in schools, teachers discriminate against girls, and other children are forced to marry early.

Students drop out of school due to the long distance; the solution is for schools to be located near or close to where students live to spend less time getting to school. Additionally, hostels or dormitories should be built for female students. Some students fail to attend school regularly because of a lack of proper uniforms and exercise books or because of hunger. Some of them suffer from hunger, which means they come to school without eating anything, and the school has no feeding programs. Others do not have school uniforms or exercise books and must pay to attend school because it is far from their home. Students stay in class, but they do not concentrate on learning because of hunger.

One student says, "*We come to school without eating anything, and even we lose interest in remaining in the class.*" According to the study, the majority of respondents believed that economic factors, particularly poverty, were to blame for school dropout. Yeboah-Obeng says that parents cannot afford to buy books, exercise books, uniforms, food, shoes, and pay for some contributions needed by school for their children, as well as other things, including food. Most public secondary schools lack libraries where students can go and read for themselves. The books are kept in one room, where they cannot sit and read some materials comfortably; this situation cannot encourage students to read to gain knowledge [49]. With interviews with different respondents, the study revealed that reasons for secondary school dropout are low cooperation among teachers and parents, a lack of food provision, students' embarrassment, ineffective ways of teaching, and corporal punishment.

## 4.2 Strategies Employed to Minimize Girls' Dropouts in Public Secondary Schools

Teachers from selected secondary schools pointed out strategies that could minimize girls' dropouts in public secondary schools (see Table 1). For example, the strategies in order of preference were as follows: make connections with at-risk students; family-teacher engagement; education for self-awareness; strengthened laws; and alternative schooling. What was found to be a generic strategy was "make connections with at-risk students."

From the above, it can be observed that making connections with at-risk students is a good strategy to reduce school dropout when it is applied, although not in all schools because Toangoma secondary school and Mikwambe secondary school are from the same ward, but the level of success differs from one school to another. Again, the leading strategy in Mikwambe secondary school is family teacher engagement, which has played a significant role in reducing school dropout rates. Education for self-awareness needs to be strengthened in every school. According to Lewis (2008), one way to increase the effectiveness of dropout prevention is to increase cooperation among family members, schools, and social organizations.

The study indicates that 28.8% of respondents identified making connections with at-risk students as a strategy to minimize girls' dropouts in school. However, analysing data by secondary schools, 35.7% affirmatively supported the narration. This indicates that low connections with at-risk students also contribute to loneliness, which increases the risk of mood disorders, including depression and anxiety, as well as stress and academic difficulties. Trujillo (2006) added that the key to successful truancy reduction in public schools is to control behaviors such as drug abuse. This study therefore shows that connecting with students, especially those at risk, will improve their learning process, attention, and focus and stimulate them to engage in higher-level critical thinking.

The provision of capitation helps to eradicate parents' charges for registering their children in schools and attracts parents to enrol their children, including those who previously dropped out because of school fees (1 & 4). Approximately 27.8% of teachers identified

**Table 1. Strategies employed to minimize girls' dropouts in**

Strategies to minimize girls' dropout	Secondary Schools (%)					Mean	Rank
	Toangoma (n=33)	Mikwambe (n=30)	Chamazi (n=36)	Saku (n=28)	Tandika (n=33)		
Education for self-awareness	20.7	13	16.6	10.7	15.1	15.1	<b>3</b>
Make connections with at-risk students.	34.3	21.4	28.6	35.7	24.2	28.8	<b>1</b>
Alternative Schooling	10.3	7.1	9.5	10.7	18.1	11.2	<b>5</b>
Family-Teachers Engagement	22.3	39.5	20.7	28.5	27.6	27.8	<b>2</b>
Strengthened laws	9.4	13	16.6	7.3	6	10.5	<b>4</b>
Others	3	6	8	7.1	9	6.6	<b>6</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	

Source: Field Data (2022)

parent-teacher engagement as a strategy to minimize girls' dropout in school. This implies that by incorporating parents into the educational process, parental involvement offers schools a significant chance to expand present school programming. It has been demonstrated that parental involvement increases student achievement, parent and teacher satisfaction, and school climate.

It was proposed that students whose parents were in close relationship with teachers performed well and had good discipline compared to their counterparts; for example, during an interview, one head teacher said, "When compared to students whose parents were less supportive and less interested in academic activities, the latter group of students performed better academically and their attendance was pleasing." This highlights how parents and teachers can increase student achievement by empowering children.

The findings indicate that approximately 15.1% of respondents identified education for self-awareness as the strategy to minimize girls' dropouts in school. The study shows that when students are educated and motivated, they can make informed choices. This implies that students can have greater success in most aspects of their lives, including academics, when they are aware of who they are. Students who are self-aware are better able to act autonomously, guide their own learning, be inwardly driven, take deliberate action, and be authentic to who they are.

During the focus group discussion, students were asked to explain the importance of education for self-awareness. Their answer was that education for self-awareness enables them to make better decisions; they communicate with clarity and aim as a result of having more self-confidence. It enables them to view things from a variety of angles. Their presumptions and biases are liberated. It facilitates the development of stronger bonds between people.

With this narration, it is clear that students who are aware of their challenges and limitations can make informed decisions that will help them complete their education as planned. These findings are supported by Ochieng's assertion that having an accurate understanding of which you are helps you determine what you should do to grow. Frequently, self-awareness will indicate a skill gap that requires improvement in

understanding one's strengths and flaws. Self-awareness enables you to capitalize on your talents and overcome your limitations [50,51].

Another strategy that is worth noting is alternative schooling (11.2%). This is used to reduce distances for students who reside far away from the school. Despite this idea being supported, some students travelled approximately 30 km to and from school. Students' ability to learn effectively was hampered by increased risk and fatigue. As a result, students who lived far from school considered transferring to nearby schools to avoid unnecessary inconveniences. According to Pomeroy, students' fatigue, tiredness, and dropout are caused by distance, which lowers their time for learning. Additionally, great distances may compel children to leave school early to avoid arriving late at home [52]. A similar study by Haule posits that if students walk more than one kilometer to school, the outcomes may not be in the best interest of the child or the school, as goals and objectives may not be fully fulfilled [53]. This implies that schools should be as close as possible to each other for students to enjoy their education and thus reduce dropout rates. It is also noted that students were willing to move to the nearest school to avoid unnecessary costs.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The problem of school dropout is complicated, and finding a single answer is difficult because every situation is unique. Despite the fact that a number of interconnected social, economic, educational, and cultural factors influence school dropout rates regardless of the gender of the students, this study shows that a number of specific factors specifically raise the dropout rate for females. For girls generally, these specific characteristics result in inferior educational achievements. More so than parents of higher socioeconomic position, parents of lower socioeconomic status are constrained financially. It might be challenging for parents with lower socioeconomic positions to pay for their daughters' education. Additionally, parents may exploit their children's gender to determine who receives a better education so that they might benefit in the future; in these situations, male children ultimately receive more priority than female children. In addition to these issues, girls also face disadvantages due to unequal labour force participation rates around the globe.

Females typically have fewer job possibilities, are less productive on the job, and earn less than males, which deters parents from ensuring that their daughters finish school. Some school-level factors do not have enough of an impact on the rise in the dropout rate for girls. The majority of these variables are connected to school resources, and an unequal distribution of school resources is strongly correlated with the location of schools. Compared to schools in rural areas, urban areas provide more support for girls. For instance, rural schools have less access to resources and environmental elements such as sanitary facilities, equipment for extracurricular activities, qualified female teachers, and other resources. In this regard, research has shown that the dropout rate for girls is much greater in rural than in urban schools. Due to greater female dropout rates in poorer regions of the world, there are significant disparities in educational resources between developing and industrialized nations. The high frequency of early dropout among girls is also significantly influenced by cultural factors. In regard to how parents view girls' education, that can vary. On the one hand, there are human perceptions that are shaped by a variety of elements, including education, socioeconomic level, religion, and the local environment in which a person lives. These viewpoints limit girls' educational opportunities, particularly in rural areas. Particularly in countries and communities where men predominate, some traditional cultural practices and beliefs of a specific religion or society have a significant negative impact as impediments to girls' education.

### 5.1 Recommendations

In view of the findings and conclusions, the study recommends the following:

Secondary school dropout is linked to economic factors such as low income and poverty in the parents, so the government should place more emphasis on improving school infrastructure such as laboratories, libraries, dormitories, food for students at school, and transportation because most of these schools are located far away.

The government should ensure that the rights of female students at school are protected, particularly by strengthening the system of providing female towels so that they are guaranteed to receive them when they arrive at school, and the cleanliness of toilets, the supply

of water in toilets, and corporal punishment should be prohibited in schools. For schools, it is necessary to develop guidance and counselling programmes and sessions with students to help determine their needs and provide solutions.

### COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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