

# THE RISING SCHOOLING COSTS AND THE RATE OF DROPOUT AMONG WARD SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MOROGORO URBAN DISTRICT

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**Abstract:** The study examines the effects of the rising schooling costs on dropout rates of ward secondary school students in Morogoro Urban District, Tanzania. The study employed documentary reviews to gather data from 9 ward secondary schools on the increase in the cost of schooling in the last five years (2011-2015) and the proportion of pupils dropping out due to cost of schooling. Findings reveals the increase in extra costs of schooling in last five years in various items including transport, school uniform, stationery, and security charges. In parallel to that, the rising schooling costs contributes high rate of dropout among ward secondary students, preceded by truancy, which is also quite conservable contributed by parents' inability to incur schooling costs. Regardless of the fact that the government has established and implementing a free education policy in primary and secondary educational levels from 2016, some of schooling expenses including transport, school uniforms and meals are to be incurred by parents. The study recommends government and educational stakeholders to identify and provide assistance to students from poor socio-economic backgrounds who do not afford additional schooling expenses which government do not incur.

**Keywords:** Rising Schooling Cost, Absenteeism, Dropout, Secondary School.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Educational service is not only expensive but also involves financial as well as non-financial commitment from providers and users. In other words, both supply and demand factors for education contribute to its costs, whether directly or indirectly. In most countries, school education is primarily funded by governments. Parents' contribution to education also plays a big role (Bray, 2002). The 1980s and 1990s brought a global change of focus in the matter of cost sharing in education. This change of focus has affected many regions including Africa. The World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal declared that there should be partnership with stakeholders in cost-sharing and for the whole education process (UNESCO, 2000). Cost sharing involves government, private sectors, different educational stakeholders and mostly parents to commit on financing direct and indirect schooling charges (URT, 1995). Direct educational costs to parents include financial inputs incurred directly for education of their children, including school fees, transport fees, expenditure on books and meals. Indirect/opportunity costs on the other hand involves costs that parents sacrifices in form of earning forgone, like the time and energy which parents sacrifices for their children to produce at home. In reality, schooling costs are rising day by day on equivalent to the rising of living costs.

The rising schooling cost involves the increase of school expenses. The school expenses can be escalated by changing of fees structure and upturn of school indirect charges. Regardless of Tanzania's decision to remove school fees in primary and secondary schools commencing from the year 2016 (Taylor, 2016), several charges are still incurred by parents including transportation, school uniforms and meals charges These costs are burdensome to many students' families with

poor socio-economic backgrounds especially extended, poor and single parent families. In parallel to that, among many other factors contributing to the students' absenteeism and dropout from school such as pregnancy and socio-cultural factors (Hyera, 2007), there are some evidences (Dachi and Garrett, 2003., Croft, 2002., and Chugh, 2011) that the rising schooling costs are becoming the major factor influencing secondary school students' dropout rates. For example in 2011, 76,002 students dropped out of secondary schools in Tanzania, whereby, 72.7 percent dropped due to truancy and 13.9 percent dropped out due to failure to meet basic needs or costs of schooling (URT, 2011). Truancy and inability to incur the schooling costs are recently the major two reasons contributing to students' dropout rate at secondary level of education. Brock and Cammish (1997) and Colclough *et al* (2000) argued that low income households cannot afford to pay for transport, school uniforms, and other school related expenses, which leads their children to get corporal punishment, becoming school absentees and finally dropping out from school.

As a result of higher rates of non-completion of school, many children discontinue schooling without acquiring necessary knowledge and skills. The rise of dropout rates in secondary schools in Tanzania increases the number of illiteracy and unskilled children and youth who are not groomed for production and service provision in the society. School dropouts also contributes to numbers of dependants while some of them engage in different offenses as they seek for their earnings as supported in Nakpodia (2010). It is from the consideration of the situation explored above that the interest for this study was triggered. This study intends to explore the effect of the rising schooling costs on the rate of dropout among ward secondary school students in Morogoro Urban District, Tanzania, with the aim of unearthing better solutions and recommend appropriate strategies against the problem.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed survey research design whereby quantitative approach was applied in data collection and analysis. Quantitative approach was used to trace the increase in costs of school in the last five years and assessment of the proportion of pupils dropping out due to costs of schooling.

### 2.1 Sample

By 2015, Morogoro urban had a total of 21 ward secondary schools. For the purpose of this study, data was collected from nine (9) purposeful chosen ward secondary schools on which, three (3) schools were selected from Morogoro urban, three (3) schools from semi-urban and three (3) schools from rural areas found within Morogoro Urban District. The study was designed to involve all dropouts (125) in the last five years, from 2011 to 2015 from sampled schools on which their list was prepared from admission registers that were available at head of schools' offices. However, due to the nature of dropouts' accessibility, their information were purposively provided by nine (9) heads of schools in assistance of 18 class teachers and three (3) ward educational officers. 90 ward secondary school students (10 from each sampled school) were also involved in the study and made the total of 120 respondents.

### 2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The study employed documentary review technique to trace the increase in costs of school in the last five years and assessing the proportion of pupils dropping out due to costs of schooling in comparison to other factors including truancy, pregnancy, illness, parental illness, death and indiscipline. Data, after being collected from the field were analysed through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for window software package version 16.0. Frequencies were run to determine the percentage of responses for various items.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 Dropouts' Characteristics

The study gathered dropouts' information in the aspect of sex and dropping out class levels. Out of 125 dropouts, more than half (56%) were females and the remaining percent (44%) were males. Regarding the dropping out class levels, 20 percent dropped out in Form One, 36.8 and 28 percents dropped out in Form Two and Form Three respectively, while 15.2 percent dropped out in Form Four. Table 1 simplifies the results in frequencies and percentages.

**Table 1: Dropouts By Sex And Dropping Out Class Levels**

Sex	F	%
Males	55	44.0
Females	70	56.0
<b>Dropping Out Class Level</b>		
Form I	25	20.0
Form II	46	36.8
Form III	35	28.0
Form IV	19	15.2
Total	125	100.0

### 3.2 The Increase in Costs of Schooling in the Last Five Years

The study traced the schooling costs by items in the last five years (2011-2015) which were common in all sampled schools as shown in Table 2. Tuition fees remained constant at 20,000 Tanzania shillings from 2011 to 2015. However, there were high increase in extra schooling costs including transport fees which rose for 100 percent as given by buses or “daladala”, school uniform expenses increased for 43.8 percent, while meal cost rose to about 61.9 percent. Stationery and mock examination costs on the other hand increased for 71.4 and 50 percents respectively. Security costs and identity card fees rose to about 66.7 percent for each one and desks fees rose and made an increase of 20 percent while caution fees increased to 40 percent. The annual direct cost of schooling per student is approximately more than 559,000 Tanzanian Shillings.

**Table 2: The Increase In Costs Of Schooling From 2011 To 2015**

Cost Item	YEARS		Amount Increase Tsh	Percent Increase
	2011 Tsh	2015 Tsh		
Transport Costs	300	600	300	100
School Uniforms	16,000	23,000	7,000	43.8
Meal	2100	3400	1300	61.9
Stationery Cost	7,000	12,000	5,000	71.4
Tuition Fees	20,000	20,000	0	0
Security Costs	3,000	5,000	2,000	66.7
Desks Fees	50,000	60,000	10,000	20
Caution Fees	5,000	7,000	2,000	40
Identity Card	3,000	5,000	2,000	66.7
Mock Exam Fees	10,000	15,000	5,000	50

### 3.3 Proportion of Pupils Dropping Out Due to Costs of Schooling

There are diverse reasons for students’ decision to drop out of school, including an inability to incur schooling costs, truancy, pregnancy, death, illness, parental illness, as well as misbehaviors (URT, 2012). As given in Table 3, data show that the two major reasons contributing to students’ dropout rates were truancy (48.8%) followed by schooling costs (24%). On the other hand, pregnancy contributed to 11.2 percent of dropouts, death amounted to 0.8 percent, 4 percent of students dropped out due to illness while 0.8 percent of students dropped out due to parental illness. Misbehavior also contributed to 10.4 percent of dropouts.

**Table 3: Pupils’ Dropping Out By Reasons**

Dropping Out Reason	F	%
Rising Schooling Costs	30	24.0
Pregnancy	14	11.2
Truancy	61	48.8
Death	1	.8
Illness	5	4.0

Parental Illness	1	.8
Misbehavior	13	10.4
Total	125	100.0

#### 4. DISCUSSION

##### 4.1 Dropouts Characteristics

As shown in the study results, more than half of the dropouts were females. Female students' dropout rates affect investment initiatives on female which has more socio-economic benefits than that of males' counterpart. As a result, the increasing trends of female students drop out rates continue to bring about a huge loss in both public and family economies and unnecessary inequality in accessing to, and benefiting of, education. Unfortunately enough, most of the programs which the government of Tanzania established in favor of schooling for female children, were not established to subsidize the education of female students in wards secondary schools whose most of parents could not afford the cost of schooling. These initiatives could to large extent address economic problems pertaining girls in secondary schools neglecting ward/community secondary schools which enrolls big number of children with poor economic backgrounds. URT (1995) mentions, among others, economic reason to be responsible for school dropout rates especially for female children.

Regarding the dropping out class levels, nearly two-thirds of students dropped out in form two and form three levels of secondary education. That is to say, majority of dropouts quit schooling without acquiring necessary knowledge, experience and skills enough to facilitate them compete in labor market and self employment. High rate of illiteracy among people is also associated with many detrimental impacts including poor health status, higher mortality rates, poor production and income, increased social and economic dependency, environmental degradation, increasing rates of crimes and poverty at individual and national level in general. Dropping out of school is also associated with some inability to cope with technological change (Nicaise, 2000).

##### 4.2 The Increase in Costs of Schooling in the Last Five Years

The results revealed that, tuition fees remained constant from 2011 to 2015; however there was high increase of additional schooling expenses such as transport, school uniforms and meals which were not comprised in a newly established policy of free primary and secondary education started in 2016. In regarding transport aspect, many ward secondary schools in Morogoro Urban District were not located in their respective wards or where big population of people was. Good examples are Tushikamane and Mjimpya secondary schools which were built in periphery of the district (Lukobe ward) instead of being in Sabasaba and Mjimpya wards respectively. Hence, majority of students are obliged to pay bus fees to go to schools every day. Students from poor family background do not afford to pay bus fees on daily basis hence; they attend schools irregularly and finally reaching the decision to quit schooling. The results were also supported by Nicaise *et al* (2000) who revealed the huge burden of transport expenses to students from poor families.

Expenses in school uniforms are increasing over time depending on fluctuation of cost of life. In some sampled schools, school uniforms were prepared under school administration whereby students were required to collect money for such service. In other sampled ward secondary schools however, students bought school uniform themselves. While purchasing school uniform instead of wearing informal outfit may seem like an economical solution to parents, it may sometimes in reality be even more costly, especially to parents with poor economy. While students who are free to wear casual clothes at school usually use the same outfit for the whole day, students who are enrolled in a school that obliges a uniform tend to wear two outfits: a uniform during school hours and a casual one after school, forcing parents to spend even more money on clothes. In reality, school uniform is expensive than it may possibly thought, especially in single-parent families and polygamy families where children at school age are many in single household, orphan children and all students from disadvantageous groups. Their parents perceive school uniform costs as a huge task to accomplish and it may possibly contribute to absenteeism and dropout rates.

As in line with Boyle *et al* (2002), some parents, due to poverty, are capable to buy school uniforms once, especially when a student is registering to first school level, as the result, in further levels or grades students' school uniforms actually became old and bad-looking that makes students look inelegant, poor, and having low status. The situation made them segregated in school environment and at societies as well. The circumstance may possibly lead to consequences

such as severe punishment by teachers due to their untidiness; poor school attendance; psychological problems and finally student may decide to drop out of school.

For a learning process to take place successfully, a student needs assurance of meal. Students at ward secondary schools spend an average of eight hour, necessitating them to take at least two meals. As the impact of rising cost of meal over years as shown in the study, students from poor families are highly affected academically and in school attendance. Some of students particularly girls are tempted to engaged in sexual relations with men in exchange of food or money, leaving them with pregnancies and finally dropping out of school. Between the periods of five years of study (2011-2015) parents were also responsible to incur direct costs in schools including stationery expenses, desks and students identity cards. The study found that, in each school year, students were required to collect reams papers to academic offices in which, its expense rose by half comparing to last five years. However, ream papers collected in some schools, as revealed by the study, were highly misused including utilizing papers as plates to carry “maandazi” and “chapati” during breakfast at staffrooms. This is strongly unfair especially to poor parents who sacrifice their money to purchase reams papers for their children schooling. It was also found that, desks collected by parents, were poorly maintained to the extent, every year, new enrolled students were obligated to buy new desks, a thing which increased burden to parents with poor economic background.

#### **4.3 Proportion of Pupils’ Dropping Out Due to the Costs of Schooling**

The study revealed two major reasons for students’ dropout rates; one is truancy, followed by the costs of schooling. These results are quite similar to those given in URT (2012) that, inability to incur schooling costs in secondary schools accounted for the second major factor contributing to student dropout rate preceded by truancy. It is also quite possible that in the category of truants, there are some students who could not meet the costs of schooling. As revealed by the study, majority of parents who sent their children at ward secondary schools had poor economy and were inconsistently paying school contributions, as the result, their children quitted schooling. The study is supported by Colclough *et al* (2000) who found that, an inability to pay school costs was one of the ‘most important causes’ for dropping out. On the other hand, since pregnancy contributed to students’ dropout rate in the study area, it is possible to find a link between students’ unwanted pregnancies and poverty which lead to students’ inability to incur schooling costs. Many girl students from poor families are at increased risk of being impregnated for the desire to get financial support in meals, transport, clothes and pocket money from men. United Nations Tanzania (2010) argued that, poverty relates closely to girls’ dropout from school. In order to meet their basic needs, upscale their living conditions, and/or get money, clothes or school fees, young girls engage in sexual relationships with older men. These relationships often lead to unwanted and unplanned pregnancies, forcing girls often into unsafe abortions and finally dropping out of school.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

There was an increase in the costs of schooling in the last five years (2011-2015) especially in the extra schooling costs such as transport, school uniforms, meals, stationery, desks, caution and security. Due to this variations in schooling expenses over years, students from poor socioeconomic backgrounds are greatly affected in such a way that they fail to meet school requirements and increases possibility to drop out of school. The rising schooling costs contribute largely to students’ dropout rates. It counts for the second major factor contributing students to quit schooling before completion of their last grade. Regardless of the fact that the government has established a free education policy for primary and secondary education levels in 2016, some of schooling expenses including transport, school uniforms and meals are to be incurred by parent. It is recommended to the government and educational stakeholders to identify and provide assistance to students from poor socio-economic background who do not afford additional expenses which government do not incur.

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