

## **INVESTIGATING THE CAUSES OF SCHOOL DROPOUT IN NINE YEARS BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOLS IN RWANDA AND THEIR POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS: A CASE OF RUTSIRO DISTRICT**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to investigate the causes of school dropout in nine years' basic education schools in Rwanda and their possible solutions. Specifically, the study sought to examine students' characteristics leading to school dropout in Nine Years Basic Education in Rutsiro District, to investigate school-based causes of school dropout in Nine Years Basic Education in Rutsiro District, to find out home-based causes of school dropout in Nine Years Basic Education in Rutsiro District and to find out possible solutions to school dropout in Nine Years Basic Education in Rutsiro District. The study was guided by Social capital theory and it adopted a mixed approach. The study was carried out in 10 selected Nine Years Basic education schools in Rutsiro District. The target population of the study comprised of 762 subjects including 672 dropout students, 10 headmasters, 10 DOSs and 10 Discipline Managers. The study used a sample of 60 participants including 30 dropout students, 10 headmasters, 10 DOSs and 10 Discipline Managers. The 10 schools were selected using systematic sampling; the sample size for students was selected using purposive sampling, the sample size for headmasters, DOSs and Discipline Managers was selected using census sampling technique. The data was collected using a structured questionnaire, interview and documentary review. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages, frequencies, means and standard deviation) and thematic analysis. The results were presented in tables, figures and texts. The findings revealed that the main causes of school dropout in Rwandan nine years basic education schools are from the student themselves (Negative attitudes towards schooling, Child labor, Unwanted pregnancies, juvenile delinquency, being an orphan, peer influence, poor performance), from the school factors (School manager's indifference towards the problem of dropout, Lack of counseling services, harsh punishments) and from their families (Domestic violence, Poverty in the family, Irresponsible parents and Alcoholic parents). it was also concluded that possible solutions to the issue of dropout are: Sensitize parents to care for their children's education, Develop prevention and intervention services at school, Set up and developing counseling and guidance services in schools, Provide rewards to students with good class attendance and Involve each school staff in fighting against school dropout. The study recommended that the Government of Rwanda should find out strong strategies to increase young people's motivation to learning, continuously track all the people who are responsible for child labor and unwanted pregnancies among young children in Rwanda, punish seriously the school managers who remain indifferent towards the problem of school dropout, always be proactive in fighting against school dropout and ensure a joint effort or collaboration in fighting against school dropout. The study recommended that school managers should always involve all the school staff in fighting against*

*school dropout. It was finally recommended that the Government of Rwanda and school managers should manage to put into consideration all the strategies to fight against school dropout emanated from the findings of this study.*

**Keywords:** *School dropout and Nine years basic education*

According to MINEDUC and UNICEF Rwanda (2019) report on Dropout, 13.4% of 12 years old boys had already dropped out of schools at least once during their education, compared to 5.2% of 12 years' girls. Boys continue to drop out slightly more than girls between the ages of 13 to 15 (lower secondary school age), but this difference reverses above 16 age. Between the age of 16 and 18 girls are more likely to dropout compared to boys (id.). The latter was so as a result of low primary to secondary transition rates. Though boys' dropout rate decreases, girls' dropout increases as they advance in secondary. According to the world bank report, the government of Rwanda has made a tremendous effort to address the financial constraints especially by alleviating parents of tuition fees in 2003 for universal primary school; in 2009 the alleviation was applied for nine years which was ultimately extended to twelve years' basic education in 2011 (UNICEF,2013). In spite of the progress that Rwanda has made after 26 years in education sector, there are still problems remaining such low enrolment, overcrowded classrooms and school dropout. Therefore, it is in this perspective that the researcher sought to investigate the causes of and possible solutions to schools dropout in Nine Years basic education schools in Rwanda using the case of Rutsiro district.

### **Research Questions**

What are students' characteristics leading to school dropout in Nine Years Basic Education in Rutsiro District? What are school-based causes of school dropout in Nine Years Basic Education in Rutsiro District? What are home-based causes of school dropout in Nine Years Basic Education in Rutsiro District? What are possible solutions to school dropout in Nine Years Basic Education in Rutsiro District

### **Methodology**

The research design which was used in this study is descriptive survey. It is more than just a collection of data. It involves measurement, classification, analysis, comparison and interpretation of data (Kombo et al. 2006). Descriptive survey is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals (Orodho, 2004). It can be used when collecting information about people's attitudes and opinions. With this study it was considered appropriate because it offers an opportunity to obtain information from secondary schools' students, head teachers, DOSs and Discipline Masters about causes of drop out and possible solutions in RUTSIRO District. The researcher used both primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained using questionnaires and interview guide while

secondary data was obtained from reports on school dropout regarding Rutsiro District, on line materials (journal articles, newspaper articles and text books).

**Target Population**

Rutsiro District counts 30 Nine Years Basic Education Schools. These schools have a combined population of 30 head teachers, 30 Director of studies (DOS), 30 Discipline managers and 672 learners who had dropped out in 9YBE schools (2019-2020). That means, the target population of this study was 762 subjects. Head teachers, DOS and discipline managers were involved in this study because they are more involved in dealing with school dropout issues in their respective schools. Therefore, they have much information about the causes and possible solutions to this issue.

**Table 1: Population of the study**

S/n	School name	Number of dropout students in 9YBE	Number of head teachers	Number of DOSs	Number of discipline managers
1	GS BUHINDURE	30	1	1	1
2	GS BUHORO	0	1	1	1
3	GS BUKONGORA	13	1	1	1
4	GS BUSHAKA	5	1	1	1
5	GS BUSUKU	0	1	1	1
6	GS BWIZA	36	1	1	1
7	GS CYIVUGIZA	7	1	1	1
8	GS GAHONDO	95	1	1	1
9	GS GAKERI	24	1	1	1
10	GS GIHARA	13	1	1	1
11	GS GIHINGA II	29	1	1	1
12	GS KABITOVU	39	1	1	1
13	GS KARAMBI	8	1	1	1
14	GS KARAMBIRA	16	1	1	1
15	GS KARUGARIKA	51	1	1	1
16	GS KIBARA	29	1	1	1
17	GS KINIHIRA	24	1	1	1
18	GS KINUNU	48	1	1	1
19	GS MAZIBA	3	1	1	1
20	GS MUKO	27	1	1	1
21	GS MWENDO	0	1	1	1
22	GS NGABO	14	1	1	1
23	GS NKULI	10	1	1	1
24	GS RAMBURA	34	1	1	1
25	GS RUGAMBA	10	1	1	1
26	GS RUGOTE	30	1	1	1
27	GS RUNDOYI	24	1	1	1
28	GS RUSORORO	27	1	1	1
29	GS RWINYONI	11	1	1	1
30	GS SURE	15	1	1	1
	TOTAL	672	30	30	30
GRAND TOTAL=762					

Source: Rutsiro District Education Office (2020)

## Sampling Techniques

For Kothari (2004) the term sample refers to a small part used to stand for the total population in a study. This study was carried out in 10 Nine Years basic education schools from Rutsiro district (available in table 1). These schools were selected using systematic sampling whereby all the 30 schools were listed alphabetically then an interval of three numbers were used to select those that are needed for the sample. The choice of 10 schools as a sample was made as per the assumption that at least 30 percent of the entire population is appropriate for the sample (Borg and Gall, 2003). The chosen 10 schools count in total 10 Head masters, 10 DOSs, 10 Discipline managers and 284 students who dropped out. However, the researcher involved the students who had dropped out and came back to school. This is because it was easy to access them. Thus, this study used as sample of 60 participants (10 Head masters, 10 DOSs, 10 Discipline managers and 30 students).

In selecting the head teachers, DOSs and Discipline managers, the researcher used census technique (universal sampling). This consists of taking the whole population as a sample because it is too small (Creswell, 2012). In selecting the students, purposive sampling was used. The purposive sampling involves purposive or deliberate selection of particular units of the universe for constituting a sample which represents the universe (Kothari, 2004). In perspective, the study involved the students who had dropped out and came back to school. The following table shows clearly the sample distribution.

## Findings

The findings of the study and highlights the results of the findings as set out in the research methodology are presented as follow:

### **Research question number one: To examine students' characteristics leading to school dropout in Nine Years Basic Education in Rutsiro District**

The results show that most the respondents agreed that the following students' characteristics lead to school dropout. These are: Negative attitudes towards schooling ( $\mu = 4.5556$  and  $STD = 0.62361$ ); Child labor ( $\mu = 4.1333$  and  $STD = 0.34378$ ); Unwanted pregnancies ( $\mu = 4.2667$  and  $STD = 0.93905$ ) and Juvenile delinquency ( $\mu = 4.1778$  and  $STD = 0.64979$ ).

Overall, the results indicate that Students' characteristics leading to school dropout are: Negative attitudes towards schooling which was confirmed by 25 (83%) respondents out of 30, Child labor confirmed by 27 (90%) respondents out of 30; unwanted pregnancies confirmed by 27 (90%) respondents out of 30 and Juvenile delinquency confirmed by 29 (97%) respondents out of 30. These results are different from those of some of previous studies. For example, the study of Alliance for Excellent Education (2009) found that over a million students who enter the ninth grade dropout in the middle of the way because of peer influence. Similarly, the study by Shavisa et al. (2016) on the role of student characteristics in drop out cases among secondary school students in Vihiga County revealed that most students dropped out as a result

of peer pressure (49. 1%). However, this study did not found that peer influence is among the causes of school dropout. The Government of Rwanda has taken serious measures against juvenile delinquency. Every person who is caught acting in this way, a child, adolescent an adult, is sent to Iwawa training center (locate amidst Kivu lake) to undergo some trainings. This is done as a way of correction but the culprits benefit from it. For that reason, this has reduced the number of delinquents in Rwanda and must be the reason why peers' influence was not among the causes of school dropout. Nevertheless, the Iwawa training center does not prevent some young people in Rwanda from becoming delinquents; many children still dropout school and become street children. The study of Shavisa et al. ( 2016) on the role of student characteristics in drop out cases among secondary school students in Vihiga County emerged with divergent results. Its findings revealed that most students dropped out as a result of failure to raise school fees (41. 3%), pregnancy (39. 4%) and lack of support from home (34.1%).

**Research question number Two: To examine school based causes of school dropout in Nine Years Basic Education in Rutsiro District**

The results show that most the respondents agreed that the following factors are school based causes of school dropout. These are: School manager's indifference towards the problem of dropout ( $\mu= 4.3333$  and  $STD= 1.75810$ ) and Lack of counseling services ( $\mu= 4.1556$ and  $STD= 0.52030$ ). In addition, most of respondents disagreed that the following factors are school based causes of school dropout. These are: Long distance to school ( $\mu= 2.9556$  and  $STD= 1.49173$ ), Hatred towards the school staff ( $\mu= 2.7111$ and  $STD= 1.07919$ ), Poor performance ( $\mu= 2.9333$  and  $STD= 1.25045$ ), Poor feeding at school ( $\mu= 2.7778$  and  $STD= 1.06363$ ) and Bad location of the school ( $\mu= 2.6444$  and  $STD= 1.02593$ ).

The findings confirmed that school based causes of school dropout are: School manager's indifference towards the problem of dropout (93%) and Lack of counseling services (91.2%). These findings contradict some of previous studies on the same topic. For example, the study of Elika and Egbochuku (2009) points out that school administration plays a very crucial role of determining whether the students will complete the education cycle or dropout before completion. They further found that ineffective school administration is among the main causes of dropout. The study of Hirakawa (2012) also reached different results. His study found that students dropout because of their poor performance. In Rwanda, secondary and primary and pre- primary schools are not provided with school counselors to help students with some psychological, emotional and familial problems. Counselors are found at universities only and yet the young children also encounter some problems which can hinder their learning and sometimes lead to dropout. Thus, lack of school counselor is among the causes of dropout.

### **Research question number Three: To examine family based causes of school dropout in Nine Years Basic Education in Rutsiro District**

In order to achieve this objective, the researcher used data that was corrected by means of a in the form of five point likert scale. The questions counted 15 options upon which the respondents had to agree, disagree or remain neutral. Overall, the results show that the main family related causes of dropout are: Domestic violence, Poverty in the family, Household much work, Irresponsible parents. These findings are similar to those of Shavisa et al. (2016) who found that students drop out as a result of failure to raise school fees (41. 3%), pregnancy (39. 4%), peer pressure (49. 1%) and lack of support from home (34.1%). The National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (2019) indicates that the poverty rate in Rwanda is still high (38.2%) although there has been a continued decline. That means, there still many families in Rwanda which live in poverty. Due to this issue, many students drop out school in order to help their parents in different activities for the family survival. These activities include looking after babies, helping their parents to make money for feeding the family, and doing any other household activities.

### **Research question number Four: To find out possible solutions to school dropout in Nine Years Basic Education in Rutsiro District**

The results show that most the respondents disagreed strongly that the following are possible solutions to school dropout. These are: Punishing all the parents who prevent their children from going to school ( $\mu= 1.2444$  and  $STD=0.43461$ ) and encouraging extracurricular activities ( $\mu= 1.2444$  and  $STD=0.43461$ ). The results in table 8 show that most the respondents were neutral about whether the following are possible solutions to school dropout. These are Reducing punishments to students ( $\mu= 3.6000$  and  $STD=0.57997$ ), Home school partnership in curbing school dropout ( $\mu= 3.2667$  and  $STD=0.61791$ ) and Involvement of security forces (soldiers and police) ( $\mu= 3.2444$  and  $STD=0. 4346$ ).

The interview with the students who have dropped out in Nine years basic education provided the following results. The respondents confirmed that the main reasons why they dropped out are negative attitudes towards learning 17 (56%), child abuse 5(16%), household labor 10 (33%), being an orphan 3(10%), peer influence 7(23%), harsh punishments 9(30), poor performance 4(13%), Domestic violence 8 (26%), Poverty in the family 12 (40%), Household much work 15(50%), and Alcoholic parents 7 (23%) The interviewees also confirmed that the strategies to fight against school dropout are namely: Punishing all the parents whose children have dropped out 14(46%), Harsh punishments to students who dropout 8(26%), Sensitizing parents to care for their children's education 16(53%), Develop prevention and intervention services at school 21(70%), Setting up and developing counseling and guidance services in schools 11(36%)and Involving each school staff in fighting against school dropout 15(50%).

These results are similar to those of previous studies. For example, the study of Rumberg (2004) revealed that the most important solutions to school dropouts is to set up dropout prevention strategies. Nevertheless, this researcher found that solutions include: Improving the environmental context of potential dropouts by providing resources and support strengthen their families, schools and communities. In fact, Rumberg's findings are both similar and somehow different from those of this study.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study (from both the questionnaire and interview), it was concluded that the main causes of school dropout in Rwandan nine years basic education schools are from the student themselves (Negative attitudes towards schooling, Child labor, Unwanted pregnancies, juvenile delinquency, being an orphan, peer influence, poor performance), from the school (School manager's indifference towards the problem of dropout, Lack of counseling services, harsh punishments) and from family (Domestic violence, Poverty in the family, Irresponsible parents and Alcoholic parents). Base on the findings, it was also concluded that the main strategies to mitigate the issue are: Sensitize parents to care for their children's education, develop prevention and intervention services at school, set up and develop counselling and guidance services in schools, provide rewards to students with good class attendance, involve each school staff in fighting against school dropout. The findings of this study imply that the issue of school dropout still exists in Rwanda despite all the effort made by the government in order to fight against it. This also implies that more efforts are to be made for a continuous fight against school dropout in Rwandan schools. In fact, the findings of this study will be a good tool in this battle.

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