

Analysis of Secondary and Primary School Students Dropout in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma in Tanzania: A Case of Household Neighbourhood

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Abstract

Tanzania has managed to initiate fee free policy, yet there is high rate of school dropout. This study analyses the prevalence of secondary and primary school children dropout in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma, specifically by household, spatial and neighbourhood drivers. The study employed cross-sectional survey to collect quantitative data. A purposive and stratified sampling through cluster sampling techniques were applied to obtain five neighbourhoods categorized by income ranging from low to high. A total of 1609 respondents were administered through household survey questionnaire. Quantitative data were analysed using STATA software in which descriptive and inferential statistics using binary logistic regression were computed. The findings show that various factors have an association of (P Value ≤ 0.05) with school children dropout. The type of household living, the number of domestic workers, the quality of school in the neighbourhood, the number of the rooms in the household and household members migration are factors significantly associated with school students drop out. The results indicate that households with sufficient money to spend for the last twelve months and those that dwelt in mixed low and medium neighbourhoods, as well as high neighbourhood has a close relationship with school children drop out (P < 0.01). It is concluded that school children dropout is caused by household living, the number of domestic workers, the quality of school in the neighbourhood, the number of the rooms in the household and household members migration. It is recommended that proper urban planning geographical location and other determinants for school dropout should be included for sustainable development.

Keywords: Education ;School Dropout; Spatial Neighbourhood.

1.0 Introduction

Globally, it is widely accepted that education is the main factor that contributes to poverty alleviation and has an impact on all aspects of human life (Bettach & Ouahidi, 2021). Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), through Universalization of Primary Education and Promoting Gender Equality in Education (SGD Goal number 5), has been one of the prominent advocates for education for all. On enhancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), Tanzania has managed to initiate fee free policy, however, there is still a high rate of school dropout. The National Centre for Education Statistics defines school dropout as leaving school without completing a program of studies (Latif et al., 2015).

Ensuring formal education to all children has been an area that ignited a global debate for about a decade with many different viewpoints (Mukherjee, 2010). Globally, it is widely accepted that education, to a great extent, contributes to poverty alleviation and impacting all aspects of human life (Latif, Choudhary, & Hammayun, 2015). Millennium Development Goals (MDG) through Universalization of Primary Education and Promoting Gender Equality in Education SDG number 5) has been one of the prominent advocates for education to all. Despite several endeavours, universal access to basic education remains an undeniable issue in many regions of the world, notwithstanding various international declarations. The World Declaration on Education for All, the Framework for Action to Address Basic Learning Needs, the E9 Declaration for Education for All, and the four-decade-old Universal Declaration of Human Rights were designed to emphasize the importance of

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basic education (UNESCO, 2019). The Declaration emphasized equity in granting access to all children, youth, and adults, as well as quality in education to achieve satisfactory learning outcomes. The Declaration also advocated for enhanced collaborations in education delivery with non-governmental organizations, the commercial sector, and local communities.

According to UNESCO 2000, little effort is made by developing countries toward improving the quality of education (Bettach & Ouahidi, 2021). Consequently, about 130 million children in these countries drop out of school at different degrees of intensity, reasons, and effects (Shukia, 2020). For example, the rate of dropout in rural schools in China is higher at about 40 per cent because students are not comfortable with their studies while 42 per cent drop out of school in Africa. Similarly, in the European Union, students drop out due to weak financial position (Shukia, 2020). In India, school dropouts were higher due to financial problems and school expenses, and parents' lack of interest in education for their children (Faliyandra et al., 2024). Moreover, there are similar problems of higher students dropout in Pakistan (Adam et al., 2016). About 58 million children lack access to good education due to dropping out of school in developing countries where more than half of school dropout are in Africa (Bhat, 2013). However, Muganda and Omondi (2010) indicated that in Kenya, students particularly girls drop out of school more frequently in rural areas than is the case in urban areas because of undesirable cultural forces prevailing in their families and communities.

A large body of research cited as uninteresting classes especially due to the lack of engagement with school life and classes, less motivation relatively to the claims that in schools teachers are too demanding without inspirational as the main reasons of students dropout. Other reasons include personal responsibilities such as finding a job to support families, earlier marriages and academic challenges, lack of preparations for school, repeating a grade, or graduation requirements. In some cases, social reasons such as bullying, harassment, or an inability to fit into the school community contribute to school dropout (De Witte & Rogge, 2013).

Education plays a major role in the development of human skills and the growth of any country highly depends on the education of her people (Alwi, Rauf, & Saleem, 2019). Surprisingly, the number of dropouts has for years been contrary to the perceived role of education worldwide. For instance, about 137 million children began primary school in 2011, about 34 million dropped out of school before reaching the highest grade of primary education (Sanfo, 2019). By 2012, roughly 3.5 million children of elementary and secondary school age in Tanzania were out of school (Nazir & Hameed, 2019). By 2015, NBS anticipated that a total of 3.9 million youngsters aged 7 to 17 years would be out of school. Worldwide, it is predicted that 86 Million Children will drop out of School by 2030 (Greenough & Nelson, 2015 Faridah, 2019; Lehtonen, 2021).

Data from the Demographic Health Survey and Malaria Indicator Survey (2015/16 TDHS-MIS) reveal that roughly 21.6 per cent of children in primary school and 7.1 percent of children in secondary school had never been enrolled in school. Moreover, the 2016 EMIS data reveal that 1.33 million (14.4%) children of primary school age (7-13 years) are not enrolled in educational institutions (Masoi, et.al., 2022). More than that, EMIS data reveal that 2.3 million (57%) of children of secondary school age (14-17 years) are not enrolled in educational institutions (Masoi, et.al., 2022). These findings provide suggestive numbers and percentage of out-of-school children in Tanzania, based on the anticipated population growth rate of 2.7 per cent (NBS, 2012). However, to emphasize the significance of education, the United Nations (UN) observed that universal primary education is a basic right to every individual and that countries have to design strategies of enrolling all school-going aged children in school commensurate with fee-free education, expansion of education services, and accountability of all those who harden children's education (Adam, Adom & Bediako, 2016, Laliberté, 2021).

Between 2012 and 2016, multiple initiatives were implemented to tackle the issue of out-of-school children in the country, including the Literacy and Numeracy Education Support (LANES) under the GPE program, the establishment of Fee Free Basic Education Policy, and various non-formal training programs such as Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania (COBET) and Secondary Education through Open and Distance Learning (ODL). These programs have substantially aided in mitigating the issue of out-of-school children, although it remains prevalent. Empirical

research from Sabates, Westbrook, Akyeampong and Hunt (2010) indicated that ill-health, hunger, and poverty are contributing factors to student dropouts. For example, the survey conducted in Pakistan revealed that over 50 per cent of both girls and boys dropped out of school in primary and secondary schools (Faliyandra et al., 2024). Moreover, a study in Philippines revealed various reasons that prompt school children dropping out including loss of interest in schooling, high levels of theism which comes with obtaining education, and looking for employment (Orbeta, 2010).

Similarly, Msoko (2012) indicated that between 2007 and 2012, the number of school dropouts, notably among girls, in Sub-Saharan African countries rose from 12 to 15 million. Insufficient educational infrastructure, poverty, inequality, societal norms, labour market deficiencies, high fertility rates, and unstable employment landscape, are leading for early school dropouts among children (Mukherjee, 2010). The magnitude of the problem is compounded by schools being too far from children's homes and frequently housed in dilapidated structures, limited number of teachers and a scarcity of potable water and sanitation, rendering the educational experience hard for the children. In Tanzania, the 2007 data indicated that over 448,448 pupils enrolled in secondary school, only 90,186 successfully completed ordinary secondary education by 2011 (Valente, 2015). The situation has been ascribed to several factors, including insufficient awareness regarding educational issues, elevated familial poverty, cultural elements such as early marriages, divorce, polygamy, inadequate family planning, negative perceptions towards education particularly for girls and parental mortality (Samwel, 2018).

The empirical evidence (i.e., Rwechungura, 2014; Bunto, 2022; Ibou & Raoui, 2025), revealed that students discontinue studies for numerous reasons, including insufficient financial resources, parents' ill-health or loss, inadequate academic achievement, pregnancies, early marriages, and sexual assaults. Currently, there is no investigation about the spatial analysis, household and neighbourhood for analysing students drop out in secondary and primary schools in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma. This study had three specific objectives: Examining the association of socio-economic characteristics and regions, examining the prevalence of dropout among school children in household and examining factors influencing students dropout, specifically focusing on the impact of spatial or geographical location, household circumstances, and neighbourhood characteristics.

2.0 Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma cities. These regions were purposively selected due to various characteristics, including the levels of dropout in primary and secondary schools. Dar es Salaam was identified as the most urbanized area, showcasing a diverse population from various backgrounds (Lianyu & Msafiri, 2022). The data indicate that the dropout rate in the examined elementary schools exhibited considerable diversity in 2015, ranging from 0.5 per cent in Dar Es Salaam, Temeke Municipal, to 16.4 per cent in Dodoma Chemba District.

This study employed a cross-sectional research design involving the collection of quantitative data at a single point in time. The multi-stage sampling method was employed, as the strategy was suitable for populations spanning extensive areas. The study areas were stratified through cluster sampling techniques whereby five neighbourhoods were categorized according to income ranging from low to high neighbourhood's stage, sampling firstly involved the random selection of three streets neighbourhoods based on the income category.

The data include 12,720 respondents from Dar es Salaam and Dodoma Regions. On the status of students drop out in Primary and Secondary Schools, 830 observations were kept for Dar es Salaam and 779 from Dodoma Region out of 12,720 observations. Then only 1890 observations were left after retaining respondents' information on student's dropout only. Finally, a total of 1609 observations were kept, 820 from Dar es Salaam and 779 from Dodoma Region obtained through administering household survey. Secondary data were collected from various sources such as projects as well as published documents. Quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire between June to August 2023 under the Centres for Sustainable Health and Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods Project (SHLC). Quantitative data were analysed using STATA software, where descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were computed to obtain the findings.

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Also, the inferential analysis was done using a logistic regression model to identify factors impacting the dropout rates of school pupils aged 7 to 19 years.

3.0 Findings and Discussion

3.1 Socio – Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The study findings indicate that over three quarters (63.6 %) of the respondents were males, while 34.4 per cent were females and there were slight differences between the number of males and females who participated in the household survey for both cities as shown in Table 1. The results suggest that the majority of the respondents were males and this is common since household income-generating activities that support students in acquiring education are controlled by men.

Table 1. Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Cities		Total	F	P- Value
	Dar	Dom			
Sex of Respondents					
Male	64.7	62.6	63.6		
Female	35.3	37.4	36.4	0.26	0.605
Household with full time employed member					
0	68.5	76.1	72.3		
1+	31.5	23.9	27.7	4.16	0.042
Type of dwelling					
Owned by HH	53.6	67.2	60.4		
Rent privately/Gov	28.8	27.7	28.2		
Others	17.6	5	11.4	7.27	0.001
Number of domestic workers					
1+	23.8	13.2	18.5		
No domestic worker	76.2	86.8	81.5	12.2	0
Neighbourhood characteristics					
Low	8.2	6.9	26.1		
Mixed LM	23.9	17.7	20.2		
Medium	34.2	27.8	31.1		
Mixed MH	28.6	40.1	34.3		
High	5	7.6	6.3	4.47	0.003

Source. SHLC Project Data, 2023

The results further indicate that 68.5 and 76.1 per cent of the households in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma Cities respectively did not have members in full-time employment. About 31.5 and 23.9 per cent of households in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma cities respectively had one or more employed members. Also, the study looked at the type of household house properties in Dodoma and Dar es Salaam cities with the results showing that the majority 53.6 and 67.2 per cent of the respondents in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma cities respectively were living in owned houses while 28.8 and 27.7 per cent of the respondents in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma cities respectively were renting. About 17.6 and 5 per cent of the respondents in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma cities respectively were in other forms of accommodation. The number of domestic workers was also determined in the household and the majority 86.8 per cent in Dodoma and 76.2 per cent in Dar es Salaam had no any domestic worker. Findings on neighbourhood characteristics indicate that the majority of households were in the

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medium (31.1%), mixed medium (34.3%) and high (65.4%) social economic status indicating the presence of highly significant student's dropout ($P \leq 0.05$). These findings imply that households were at the higher risk of having students' school dropout. Also, the findings suggest that when households are economically stable there is a higher risk of children dropping out because they normally think about the wealth of their parents rather than fighting for their own. This finding is in contrast with findings in a study by Luyima et al.(2024) who reported that households with low income have higher chances of students dropping out of school .

3.2 Association of Socio-economic Characteristics and Region

The study intended to understand the socio – economic status of the household, the results showed that majority were from middle, fourth and highest income by 72.2%. Also, the results indicate that the majority 71.4 and 65.8 per cent of the households in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma cities respectively had enough income for the last twelve months as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2. Association of Wealth quantiles of respondents with region

Variable	Cities		Total	F	P-Value
	Dar	Dom			
Wealth quantiles					
Highest	21.7	30.4	26.1		
Fourth	22.8	24.7	23.7		
Middle	20.5	24.3	22.4		
Second	19.7	16.6	18.1		
Lowest	15.4	3.9	9.7	5.72	0
Having sufficient money in the last 12 month					
Excess/Enough	71.4	65.8	68.6		
Insufficient	28.6	34.2	31.4	2.18	0.14
Household Size					
1-2	2.5	3.9	3.2		
3-4	27.1	27.1	27.1		
5-6	40.1	39.9	40		
7+	30.3	29	29.7	0.36	0.779
Household head education level					
Primary or less	53	64.7	58.9		
Secondary	20.1	18.1	19.1		
Voc./Col/Univ	26.9	17.2	22	5.01	0.007
Migration					
Never moved	15.1	18.7	16.9		
<5 External migrants	3.8	6.6	5.2		
>5 External migrants	6.9	9.9	8.4		
Internal migrants	74.3	64.9	69.6	2.38	0.068
Quality of schools in the neighbourhood					
Good	29.1	37.9	33.5		
Poor	70.9	62.1	66.5	5.33	0.021

Source: SHLC Project Data, 2023

The results indicate that, there were no strong differences in household size between Dodoma and Dar es Salaam; the majority of households, that is 40.1 and 39.9 per cent of the households in Dar es

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Salaam and Dodoma cities respectively had household size of five and above members. It was further found that 53 and 64.7 per cent of household heads in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma cities respectively had completed primary education. The findings also indicate that the majority of the households that is, 74.3 and 64.9 per cent of household heads in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma cities respectively migrated from other regions.

3.3 Prevalence of Out of School Children in the Household

The findings indicate that 96.5% of the households with four and above children in school had higher chances of students dropping out at significant $P - \leq 0.5$ as indicated in Table 3. This implies that a large household size is associated with higher rates of students' school dropout because larger families may find it difficult to raise fund for education related costs especially fees, uniforms and food. Also the results imply that students from large size households are more likely to dropout in search of work to contribute to the family income. These findings support findings in a study by Luyima *et al.*, (2024)

Table 3. Prevalence for out of school children in the Household

Variables	Household Composition		Chi 2	P-Value
	HH has no out-school kids	HH has out - school kids		
Total number of children with school age attending school				
1-3	57.2	42.8		
4-11	3.5	96.5	29.73	0
Household with relatives				
0	67.4	32.6		
1	50.4	49.6	17.42	0
Household composition status				
Other forms	52.8	47.2		
Nuclear	67	33	11	0.001
Household composition				
No kids	43.2	56.8		
No relative	67.4	32.6		
More kids than Relatives	51.3	48.7		
More relative than kids	53.3	46.7	6.36	0
Household with domestic worker				
1+	48.7	51.3		
Having money in the last 12 month				
Excess/Enough	58.8	41.2		
Insufficient	52.1	47.9	2.35	0.125
Household size				
1-2	46.7	53.3		
3-4	61	39		
5-6	57.7	42.3		
7+	52.6	47.4	1.12	0.336
Household head education				
Primary or less	56.3	43.7		

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Variables	Household Composition		Chi 2	P-Value
	HH has no out-school kids	HH has out - school kids		
Secondary	62	38		
Voc./Col/Univ	53.8	46.2		
No domestic worker	58.6	41.4	3.96	0.047

Source: SHLC Project Data, 2023

The findings indicate that households with relatives (67.4%) have no students dropping out of school. This implies that households with relatives have higher chances of getting support from their relatives. The household status indicates that nuclear families (67%) had no students dropping out of school while the other households (33%) had students dropping out of school .

Findings indicate further that households with sufficient money (58.8%) had no students dropping out of school, while households with insufficient income (47.9%) had students dropping out of school . This implies that households with higher income can afford school fees, uniform and food. This finding is similar to previous findings as reported by Trinidad, (2022); Cha, (2024); Ibouk *et al.* (2025 and Nesterova and Osbome, (2025)

Households composed of 3-4 members (61%) were found not to have children dropping out of school while 42.3per cent of households with 5-6 members reported to have children dropping out of school. This implies that large size families have higher chances of higher school children dropout. These findings support the previous findings as reported by Cha, (2024), Luyima *et al.* (2024) and Gitari, (2024). Likewise, the findings indicate that household heads with education (68% had no students drop outs, while those with no education (38%) had students drop out. This finding implies that educated parents are more involved in children education. Similar findings are reported by Gitari,(2024); Luyima *et al.*(2024).

3.4 Socio-Demographical Factor Influencing Student Drop Out

The results of stepwise logit regression displayed in Table 4 indicate that socio-demographic and neighbourhood characteristics have an influence on students' school dropout. The results indicate that nine variables namely, household with domestic's workers, sufficient money for lasting twelve months, less than five years external migrants and low neighbourhoods had significant association with students dropping out of school. Other variables include mixed and medium neighbourhood, high neighbourhood, social security, education and household size at significant level of 5per cent.

The results indicate that having domestic workers in the household is associated with students' dropout. This implies that domestic workers were playing parents' roles; thus, parents had little concerns with issues related to education needs of their children; hence, leading to children dropping out of school. These findings are in contrast with previous findings in a study by Tsolou and Babali (2020) who reported that households with domestic workers improve school attendance as they perform domestic work that could lead to students drop out of school due to heavy domestic workload.

The results further indicate that households with sufficient money to last for the past twelve months were more likely to have children dropping out of school. This implies that when the family has enough income most of the children do not bother about considering education as an important aspect. This is attributed by the wealth perceived by children in their family. The finding is in contrast with the previous findings reported by Ibouk and Raoui. (2025). The findings also show that dwellers in mixed-low and medium neighbourhood households are less likely by 52per cent to have children dropping out of school in the study area. This implies that when children in low- and medium neighbourhood families are likely to drop out due to the lack of support on basic school requirements from their neighbourhood . This study finding is supported by findings in studies by Gitari (2024) and Myhr *et al.* (2024) who reported a positive correlation between student's dropout for household

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located in higher neighbourhood versus those located in lower neighbourhood.

Table 4. Factors for Children Dropping out of School

Variables	Odds Ratio	Conf – Interval
Household with or without out School children	-	-
Household with domestic workers	0.429***	0.250 - 0.737
Having sufficient excess money for the last 12 months	1.699***	1.164 - 2.478
Never moved	0.76	0.539 - 1.072
Less than 5 years (external migrants)	0.410**	0.186 - 0.907
Greater than 5 years (external migrants)	0.986	0.474 - 2.053
Internal migration	0.868	0.576 - 1.307
Age of household head	0.980***	0.966 - 0.995
Low neighbourhoods	0.670**	0.468 - 0.959
Mixed low and medium Neighbourhoods	0.529***	0.332 - 0.842
Medium neighbourhoods	0.701	0.457 - 1.074
Mixed medium and high neighbourhoods	0.673*	0.423 - 1.070
High neighbourhoods	0.267***	0.107 - 0.664
Population with social security (spatial weight	1.047**	1.009 - 1.086
Population density	1	1.000 - 1.000
Household with dependence	0.889	0.729 - 1.085
Residents with university education level	0.904**	0.818 - 0.998
Household size with 1-2 members	1.17	0.376 - 3.639
Household size with 3-4 members	1.762	0.582 - 5.335
Household size with 5-6 members	2.478	0.802 - 7.652
Household size with 7+ members	0.718*	0.485 - 1.063
Household head education level	1.056	0.663 - 1.680
Constant	34.56***	7.294 - 163.7
Observations	786	786

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p< 0.1

Source: SHLC Project Data, 2023

Moreover, the result show that household heads with university education are less likely by 90 per cent to enhance school children dropout compared to those with primary education level. The findings imply that education of parents has a great effect on children attitudes towards education. More surprisingly, the findings are contrary with previous findings reported by Gitari (2024) and Luyima *et al.* (2024). The findings further indicate that the households with social security are less likely by 4 per cent to entertain children dropping out of school. This implies that families covered with social security have assurance for their children health coverage thus they can direct their family income to finance their children education. These findings support findings in previous studies reported by Laliberté (2021) and Faliyandra *et al.* (2024) who found that parents who are members of social security funds are more likely to finance their children education hence they are less likely to have

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students dropping out of school.

4.0 Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study concludes that school children dropout has been caused by various factors including geographical location of the household and schools, demographic household owned and neighbourhoods and income levels.

5.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that investment in the resources in the individuals' immediate surroundings, including family and neighbourhood, may address the problem of students' dropping out of school in primary and secondary education. The high intra-familial correlation in school dropout suggests that public health policies and future research should acknowledge family environments in order to reduce primary and secondary school dropout rates among young people in poorly educated families. These recommendations include developing financial support programs for low-income families, enhancing parental education and involvement, and fostering supportive family environments. Such measures are essential for reducing dropout rates and promoting sustained educational participation.

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