
Family Factors that contribute to school dropout in Rushinga District in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: *The study was aimed at finding out the family factors that contribute to secondary school dropouts in Rushinga District. A case study design was used. Purposive and simple random sampling were used to select 55 participants. These included 30 learners who responded to a survey questionnaire, 12 school dropouts who responded to a structured face-to-face interview questionnaire, three senior teachers and three heads of department from guidance and counselling responded to a survey questionnaire, three Councillors, three school heads and one District Learner Social Welfare Officer responded to hand-posted structured qualitative questionnaire. The research results showed that there were many aspects from the family level that contributed towards Secondary School dropouts. The major ones being the financial constraints, low level of education of parents, separation or divorce of parents and death of parents/ guardians. The researcher recommended that the parents/guardians should at all cost participate in school activities so that they acquaint, be enlightened, see the value of education and appreciate all efforts that improve learning and prevents school dropouts.*

Keywords – Factors, family, secondary school dropouts, Rushinga

Research Area: Social Science

Paper Type: Research Paper

1. INTRODUCTION

The family is the most influential agent among the different social factors that significantly influences the growth and development of any child. According to Basson (2008), the family is a powerful socializing agent and research has confirmed that the quality of the attachment and bonding processes between parent and infant is very important. The family environment, economic status, socio-educational status of parents influences the different milestones of child development. Both statistical and empirical research suggest that children from better households are more likely to remain in school, whilst those who are poorer are more likely never to have attended, or to dropout once they have enrolled (Hunt, 2008).

Family background and domestic problems create an environment which negatively affects the value of education. Literacy level is very low in Mashonaland Central Province thus according to ZimVac (2015) report. When literacy level is very low there is a tendency of vicious circle of illiteracy. An uneducated parent tends to have a family which is uneducated that leads to intergenerational illiteracy. Educational status of the parents is a very crucial factor that affects child's schooling and successful completion. Thus, for instance, parents' educational level, and the educational aspirations for their children, is mentioned by many scholars, among whom Duchesne et al. (2005), Ishitani and Snider (2006), and Koball (2007). Parental employment is

also believed to be an adequate estimator of the students' likelihood of leaving education before graduating. Those parents who are educated enough or having awareness regarding the importance and needs of education is more successful in making environment for getting quality education to their children. Lloyd, Mete and Grant (2009) found that particular a mother's education level often influences length of access for girl's education; girls whose mothers have some sort of formal schooling are less likely to dropout from school. Samarrai and Peasgood (1998) cited in Chugh (2011) indicate that the father's education has a greater influence on boy's primary schooling; and the mother's on girls. Their study also shows that improvement of father's education raises the schooling of both sons and daughters but mother's education has significant impact only on daughter's schooling. Motivation and emotional support from family members especially from parents is important factor that creates interest on child to continue his/her study. The interest of child on school and studies are influenced by different factors like school environment, behaviour of teachers, distance to school etc. Aston and Melanahan (1991); Rumberger et al. (1990); Rumberger (1995); Liu (2004); Ainsworth et al. (2005) reported that the parents monitor and regulate their activities, provide emotional support, encourage independent decision-making and are generally involved in their schooling are less likely to drop out of school.

The type of family structure that a person lives in does affect the likelihood of that person's chances of dropping out of school. Family structures include two-parent, single-parent, and also stepparent families (Pong & Ju, 2000). Single-parent families can be further broken down into female-headed households as well as male-headed households. Divorce, separation, and death of a spouse are all variables that define change in family structure from a two-parent family to a single-parent family or stepparent family. "Virtually all previous studies have concluded that children from single-parent or female-headed households are more likely to drop out than are children who reside in two-parent families" (Pong & Ju, 2000:149). Children living with stepparents are also more likely to drop out of school than children in a two parent family (Pong & Ju, 2000).

The separation of a parent's marriage is a change in family structure that is detrimental to a child and can increase the child's chances of dropping out of school (Pong & Ju, 2000). As a result of the separation of a parent's marriage, the income of a child's parents changes. This change in income greatly affects the child. When a couple divorces, the incomes of both parents once again become separate and this will in turn affect the child due to the loss of a parent's income (Pong & Ju, 2000). Single-mother headed families generally suffer economically because generally, women do not earn as much money as men (Pong & Ju, 2000). Women have been portrayed as more nurturing and motherly. They usually do not earn as much money as their male companion because they are busy taking care of children as well as the household.

A child's relationship with his or her parents can affect their chances of dropping out of high school. Factors that are associated with a child's relationship that negatively affect their chances of educational attainment are "the physical absence of adults in the household due to divorce, the limited amount of time parents and children spend together due to the rise in two-earner families, and the corresponding parental inattention to children's activities such as monitoring school performance or instilling educational values" (Lichter et al., 1993:55). Those living in poverty are 2.9 times more likely to be dropouts than are those living above 150 percent of the poverty threshold.

High parental income makes it convenient to provide more resources to support children's education, including access to better quality schools, private institutions and more support for learning within home. Poverty still remains as one of the significant causes of children dropping out of school, (Bruneforth, 2006; Cardoso & Verner, 2007 cited in Srivastava, 2012). The type of family structure that a person lives in does affect the likelihood of that person's chances of dropping out school. Family structures include two-parent, single parent or step parent families, (Pong & Ju, 2000). Children from single parenting are more likely to drop out of school even those who live with step parents than those in a two-parent family, (Pong & Ju, 2000). Motivational and emotional support from family members especially parents is important that creates interest on child to continue his/ her study.

Along with a number of factors familial factor are most influential in child schooling and quality of education. The other factors can be overcome if there is a positive atmosphere exists in the family. Existing literatures and empirical evidences shows that school dropout have significant negative correlation with the family environment. Akhter (1996) and Brown and Park, (2002) have found that the type of the family, monthly income, parental education, education of mother large family size, caste affiliations, place of residence and educational infrastructure as determinants of enrolment and primary school dropouts. Jayachandran (2006) indicate that the major factor of dropout are children and parents who are not interested in studies, unable to cope, work for wages, salary, participation in other economic activities, attend to domestic duties and financial constraints. Rupon Basumatary (2012) points that family's social and demographic circumstances are an important determinant of school dropout; the members who make up a family of the child, health of the family members, education attained by parents, the activities family members are engaged in, whether the family is single-parent or otherwise etc, influence dropout decision of children. Number of children in the family is important determinant of school dropout.

Among family-related factors, "social class" or "socioeconomic status" (*SES*) is the most contested one. Often it is measured by parents' (or guardians') occupational status, education and income, all of which are sometimes considered influential (e.g., Dalton et al., 2009). More frequently, only some of these factors are deemed predictive of early school leaving. In the current situation, where a number of policies and programs on existence, families need not to spend financial resources for the schooling of children's and lack of this resources never leads to school dropouts. Sometimes children's are compelled to support for the household's works, engaging in any other earnings or taking care of the younger siblings. This happens just because the family's economic status is not good. Birdsoll et al. (2005), Boyle et al. (2002) Brown and Park (2002), Bruneforth (2006), Cardoso and Verner (2007), Dachi and Garrett (2003), Hunter and May (2003) showed that the high parental income makes it convenient to provide more resources to support children's education, including access to better quality schools, private tuitions and more support for learning within home are the significance causes of children dropping out of school. Several scholars stress the importance of parental income, either without clear specifications (e.g. Dorn, 1996; Blue & Cook, 2004; Ishitani & Snider, 2006; Ou & Reynolds, 2006; Cataldi et al., 2009); or only in case parents' income is below the poverty line (Orthner et al., 2002); or when low family income is combined with structural aspects such as family disruption (Suet-Ling, 2000). Others have stated that its influence holds good only among whites (Rumberger, 1983), while others again have contended that aspects like "human capital" and parents' acquaintance and comfort with the school system are of more importance.

Chugh (2011) Found that risk factor being to add up even before students enroll in school that is poverty, low educational level of parents the weak family structure, pattern of schooling of sibling and preschool experiences, family background and domestic problems create an environment which negatively affects the value of education and responsible for children dropping out. Children's from unhealthy family environment are very prone to school dropout, alcoholism of parents and family schism are some of the negative factors that affect learners. Learners who drop out of school are at an economic disadvantage and will be affected throughout their lives.

2. AIM OF THE STUDY

To find out the family related factors that promote dropouts at Secondary School level in Rushinga District?

3. METHODOLOGY

The research involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques to reduce limitations of each other. Rogers and Nicolas (1998: 1), suggest that "the complementarity of mixing qualitative and quantitative methods have pointed to the need to consider both epistemology and the technical aspects in carrying out and resolving tensions in combined work." Quantitative data was necessary to identify trends of the wider population of in school dropouts, whilst qualitative data was used for discovering individuals' views and experiences in school dropouts and as well as other issues that were interrelated with these problems. The two methods were used to address the same questions and so the findings strengthened the aspects of validity and reliability.

The researchers anchored their study on qualitative paradigm in order to understand the sentiments and reasons behind school dropout in Rushinga District. Qualitative research paradigm according to Baxter and Jack (2008) is based on a constructivist philosophical view which says that reality is subjective thus the world exists but different people construct it in very different ways. A qualitative research paradigm is used when a researcher aims to accurately explore and describe the perceptions of a certain population (Creswell, 2009). The researcher opted to use a qualitative research paradigm, which aims to comprehend the known and unknown by means of empirical study and substantiation. Instead of making assumptions, this study developed a comprehensive understanding of psychosocial factors that lead to drop out among learners at secondary school level as proposed by Lindlof and Taylor (2011). A qualitative research paradigm was followed, as it is known to be useful when seeking a better understanding of participants' perceptions. This research design is also known to have an application potential (Thorne et al., 2004), which makes it further applicable to this specific research study, the aim of which is not merely to describe or understand the perceptions of school drop outs but to consider how descriptions can be applied (Thorne et al., 2004). This applied research therefore has a practical goal. Qualitative research provides rich data and is usually considered to be more valid than quantitative research. Qualitative was used for discovering individuals' views and experiences in school dropouts as well as other issues that are interrelated with these problems. A qualitative research design as a research process attempts to come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency of naturally occurring phenomena in the social world. Qualitative research places emphasis on understanding through closely examining people's words, actions and records rather than assigning mathematical symbols to these words, actions and records, (Robert et al., 2008).

Quantitative research methodology is generally regarded as objective, structured and reliable but over-systematic and lacking in validity. The quantitative research design was chosen because the sampled elements and the variables that were being studied were simply being observed because there was no any attempt to control or manipulate them. Cohen and Manion (2007) also emphasised the quantitative/survey method as gathering data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of the existing conditions and identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared. Though the quantitative research design has the aforesaid benefits, however it comes with its own shortfalls. Robson (1993) contended that, the data gathered through a survey are affected by the characteristics of the respondents like memory, knowledge, experience, motivation and personality.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

Cohen and Manion (2007) define a research design as a plan or strategy employed to conduct a research project. Research design is about how to select the people or things that give us valid and reliable information or data. It is also about how to ask in such a manner that the data will be representative. Burns and Grove (2001) state that designing a study helps to researchers to plan and implement the study in a way that will help them obtain the intended results, thus increasing the chances of obtaining information that could be associated with the real situation. In this research study a case study was used. According to Thomas (2011) a case study is an analysis of persons, events, decisions, policies or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods. A case study is therefore, an extensive examination of a single instance of a situation of interest. In a case study research design, the researcher selected a sample of respondents and administered a questionnaire and conducted interviews to collect information on variables of interest (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The case, which was the subject of enquiry, was an instance of a class of phenomena that provides an analytic frame, an object within which the case illuminates and explicates. A case study may be descriptive or explanatory. The case was limited to one group, often with a similar characteristic or of a small size. This was eluded by Best and Khan (2003) who posit that case studies pertain to limited number of units of analysis, often only one, such as an individual, a group or an institution, and that case studies give the researchers a rich understanding of the context of the research and the processes being enacted.

A case study involved gathering detailed information about the unit of analysis often over a long period of time with a view of obtaining in-depth knowledge. A case study was used because it organizes a wide range of information and then analyse the contents by seeking patterns and themes in the data and by further analysis through cross comparison with other cases.

5. PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING

The population of the study was drawn from four secondary schools in Rushinga district, four school heads, fifteen secondary school learners and Officer in charge of learner social welfare, school dropouts, school counsellors, senior teachers and Councillors.

Table 1

Summary of respondents: n=55

Category of respondents	Female	Male	Total
Secondary school learners	15	15	30
School heads	0	3	3
School drop outs	8	4	12
School counsellors	1	2	3
Senior teacher	1	2	3
Councillors	0	3	3
Learner social welfare Officer	0	1	1
Total	25	30	55

6. INSTRUMENTS

Interviews and questionnaires were used. Interviews were used to those who dropped out of school. Semi- structured questionnaire were used to collect data from the following respondents: school heads, councillors, and officer in charge of adult education.

6.1 Interviews

The researcher was guided by a semi- structured questionnaire to conduct interviews to the already aforesaid respondents. Interviews were effective in enlisting cooperation. Rapport and confidence building was made possible through use of interviews. There was certainty about who answered the question and any misunderstandings were rectified easily. Borg and Gall (1994), cited in Shumbayaonda (2011), noted that interviews as a research data gathering instrument in survey method involves the collection of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals. The interviewer was able to give detailed explanations of what is required. Cherry (2009), views an interview as a direct way of obtaining information in face to face situations. This gave the interviewer a room of flexibility in such a way that she repeated or rephrased questions to enhance understanding. Personal interviews were more expensive than mail, telephone and internet surveys. Factors influencing the cost of the interview include the respondents' geographic proximity, the length and complexity of the questionnaire, and the number of non-respondents

It should be noted that like any other research tool, interviews have their own weaknesses. If respondents are not anonymous in a personal (face-to-face) interview and may be reluctant to

disclose certain information to the interviewer. Hence, considerable expertise must be expended by the interviewer when dealing with sensitive questions to avoid bias effects on the respondent. When a person selected for interview cannot be reached the first time, a call back has to be scheduled which result in extra cost and time spent, (Haris 2009). Interviews were time consuming and expensive.

6.2 Questionnaires

Best and Khan (2003) propounds that a questionnaire is a document containing questions designed to solicit information appropriate for analysis. A questionnaire has a set of questions that are used to acquire factual information. It is a document that is distributed to be completed by the respondent his or her own time. Questionnaires were used in this study because they were a quick and effective way of providing information. They were ideal tools for gathering information from learners and teachers because of their anonymity. In this way maximum confidentiality was ensured given the fact that respondents were not required to state their names, hence they felt at ease and gave required information, even the most sensitive without being recognised.

A questionnaire is a cheap way of gathering data and it saves time in that it can be given to many respondents simultaneously (Emmel, 2013). Questionnaires enable the researcher to overcome the locational barrier. Every respondent was asked the same question in the same way. The researcher can be sure that everyone in the sample answers the same questions, which makes it a reliable method for research study (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Another advantage of a questionnaire is that it can be completed in the absence of the researcher, which will enable respondents to complete them without any pressure from the researcher. Thus, it will result in respondents providing reliable data.

However, questionnaires have their own limitations. The researcher may fail to get responses in time. In some cases not all distributed scripts will be responded to. Thus, to overcome this problem the researcher made a follow up after three days to minimise loss and misplacement of questionnaires and to get responses in time. The researcher encouraged respondents to give honest answers which will only be used for purposes of research. In favour of this Tuckman (2012) notes that, questionnaire do not probe the respondents if they either give an inadequate answer or an interesting one, which needs expansion.

7. DATA COLLECTION

The researcher requested for permission to carry out the study in Rushinga District and was explained the purpose of the study to all the participants and they were willing to participate in the research. The semi-structured questionnaire was hand posted to the School heads, senior teacher or head of department guidance and counselling due to their high level of literacy. The semi-structured questionnaire was also used in face-to-face interviews with purposively selected school dropouts, and Councillors.

8. DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected from the questionnaire were analysed using SPSS. The SPSS assisted the researcher to manage frequencies, bar graphs and pie charts.

9. RESULTS

9.1 Financial constraints and Poverty

Figure 1 below shows that 70% (21) of the respondents strongly agreed that financial constraints and poverty contribute to school dropouts while 17% (5) agreed that it contributes, 10% (3) strongly disagreed while 3% (1) were not sure whether it contributes or not. Accumulatively the majority 87% (26) (70% (21) strongly agreed and 17% (5) agreed) agreed while 10% (3) disagreed.

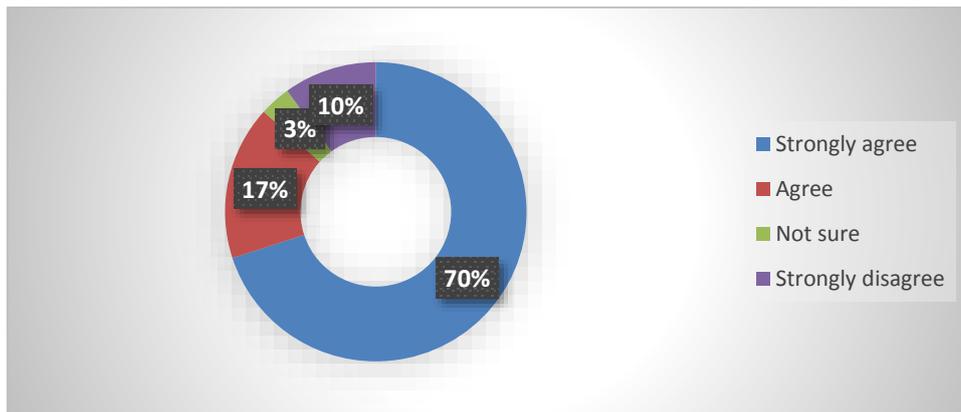


Figure 1: Pie chart showing the distribution of financial constraints and Poverty

9.2 Low levels of education of parents

As shown in figure 2 below 47% (14) of the respondents agreed that low level of education of parents contributes to school dropouts and 13% (4) strongly agreed that it contributes. 7% (2) were not sure whether it contribute or not. 20% (6) disagreed that low level of education contributes and 13% (4) strongly disagreed that it contributes. Accumulatively the majority 60% (9) (47% agreed and 13% strongly agreed), while 33% (10) (20% disagreed and 13% strongly disagreed) disagreed.

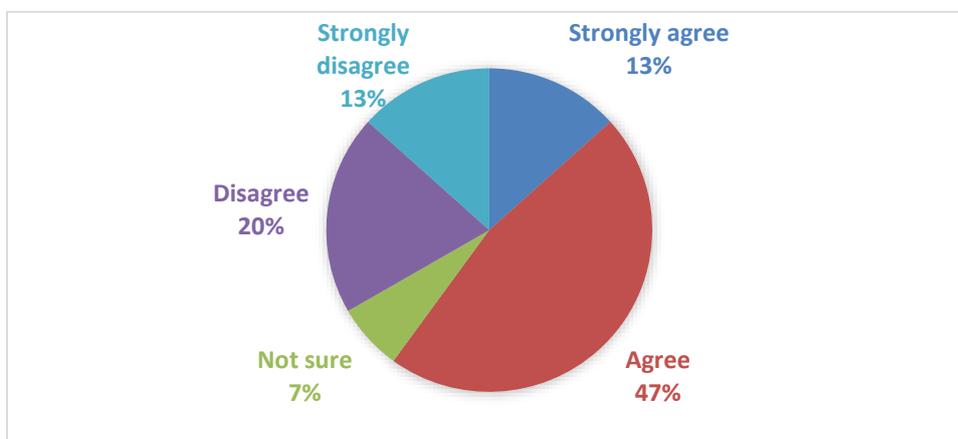


Figure 2: Pie chart showing the distribution of low levels of education of parents

9.3 Disputes within family

Figure 3 below indicates that 50% (15) of the respondents agreed that disputes within a family contributes to school dropouts and 7% (2) strongly agreed that it contributes. 27% (8) were not sure whether it contributes or not. 13% (4) disagreed that it contributes and 3% (1) strongly disagreed that it contributes. Accumulatively the majority 57% (17) agreed that disputes within a family contributes to school dropouts while 16% (5) disagreed

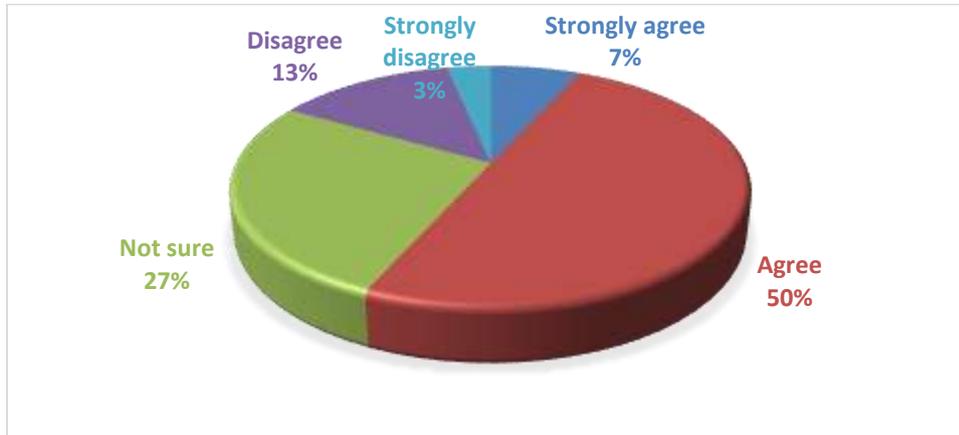


Figure 3: Pie chart showing the distribution of disputes within family

9.4 Separation or divorce of parents

The results shown in figure below indicates that 30% (9) strongly agreed that separation or divorce of parents contribute to school dropouts and also 43% (13) agreed that it indeed contributes. 17% (5) were not sure whether it contributes or not. 10% (3) strongly disagreed that it contributes. Accumulatively the majority 73% (21) agreed that separation and divorce contributes to school dropouts while 10% (3) disagreed.

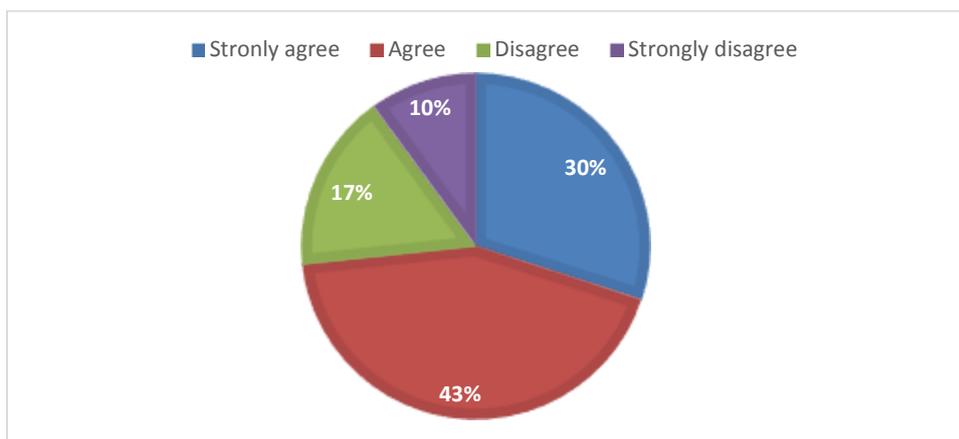


Figure 4: Pie chart showing the distribution of separation or divorce of parents

9.5 Lack of school requirements

Figure 5 below shows that 37% (11) of the respondents strongly agreed that lack of school requirements such as stationery or uniforms contribute to school dropouts 26% (8) agreed that it contributes. 23% (7) were not sure whether it contribute or not. 7% (2) disagreed that it contributes and the other 7% (2) strongly disagreed that it contributes. Accumulatively the majority 63% (19) agreed that lack of School requirements contributes to school dropouts while 14% disagreed.

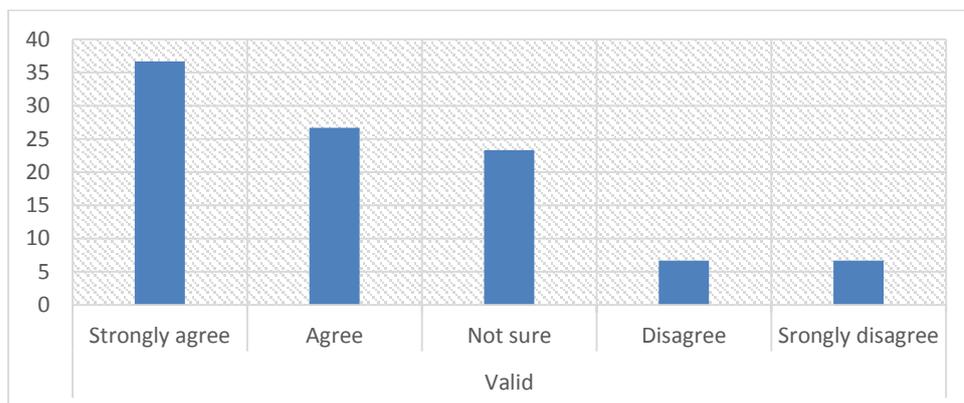


Figure 5: A bar graph showing the distribution of lack of school requirements

9.6 Lack of role models in homes

As shown in figure 6, 37% (11) of the respondents strongly disagreed that lack of role models in the family contributes to school dropouts, 23% (7) agreed that it contributes, 23% (7) were not sure 10% (3) strongly agreed while 7% (2) disagreed. Accumulatively the majority 44% (13) disagreed that lack of role models contributes to school dropouts while 33 % (10) agreed to notion.

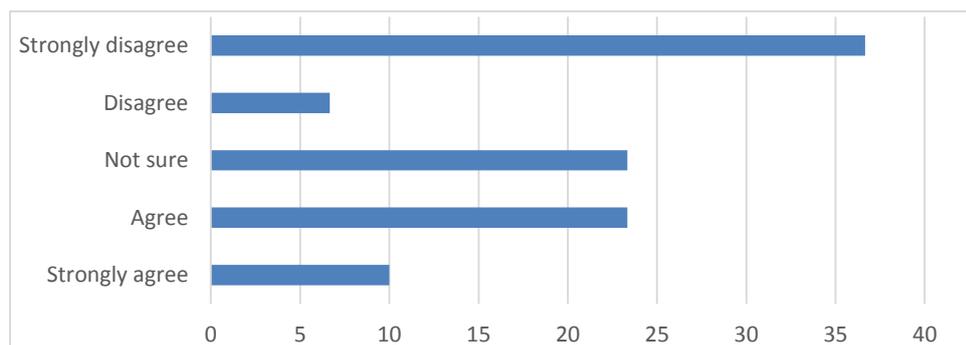


Figure 6: Bar graph showing the distribution of lack of role models in homes

9.7 Lack of school work supervision by parents

Figure 7 below indicates that the majority, 30% (9) strongly disagreed that lack of school work supervision by parents contributes or not to the school dropouts, 23% (7) of the respondents

were not sure whether it contributes or not to school dropouts, 20% (6) agreed that it contributes, 14% (4) strongly agreed it does contribute while 13% (4) disagreed that it contributes. Accumulatively 43% (13) (30% strongly disagreed and 13% disagreed) did not perceive that lack of school work supervision by parents contributed to school dropout while 33% (10) (20% agreed and 14% strongly agreed) indeed felt that lack of school supervision contributes to school dropouts.

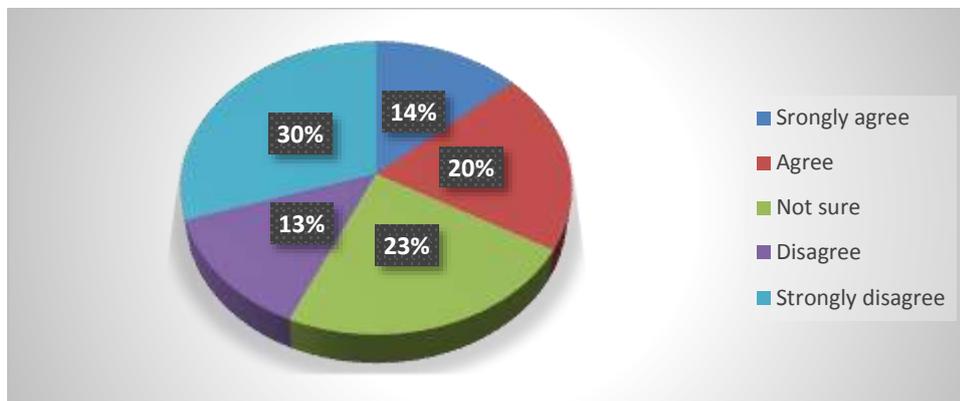


Figure 7: Pie chart showing distribution of lack of school work supervision by parents

9.8 Lack of motivational words from parents

The results shown in figure 8 shows that 43% (13) of the respondents agreed that lack of motivational words from parents or guardians contribute to school dropouts and 17% (5) strongly agreed that it contributes. 7% (2) were not sure whether it contributes or not. 26% (8) disagreed that it contributes and 7% (2) strongly disagreed that it contributes. Accumulatively 60% (18) (43% agreed and 17% strongly agreed) felt that lack of school work supervision by parents contributed to school dropout while 33% (10) (26 % disagreed and 7% strongly agreed) indeed did not perceive that lack of school supervision contributes to school dropouts.

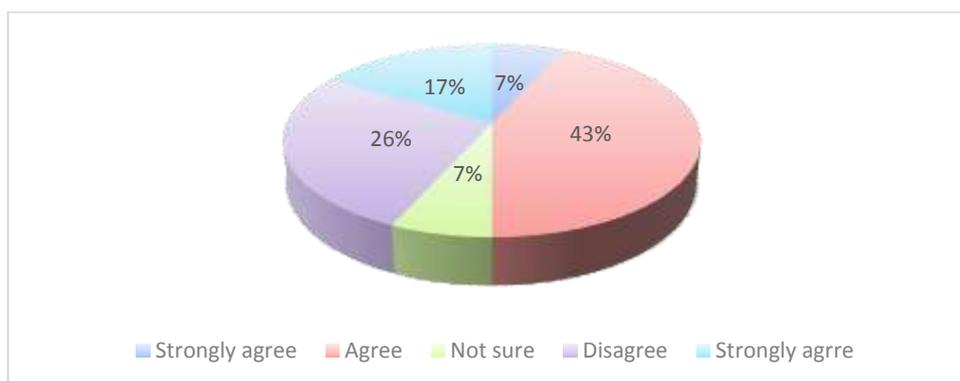


Figure 8: A pie chart showing distribution of lack of motivational words from parents

9.9 Alcohol and substance abuse by parents/ guardians

The results in the figure 9 below indicates that 30% (9) of the respondents strongly agreed that alcohol and substance abuse by parents contribute to school dropouts, 27% (8) strongly disagreed, 20% (6) also disagreed that it contributes, 13% (4) agreed while 10% (3) were not sure whether it contributes or not. Accumulatively 47% (17) (27% strongly disagreed and 20%

disagreed) did not perceive that alcohol and substance abuse by parents/ guardians contributed to school dropout while 43% (13) (30% strongly agreed and 13% agreed) indeed felt that alcohol and substance abuse by parents/ guardians contributes to school dropouts.

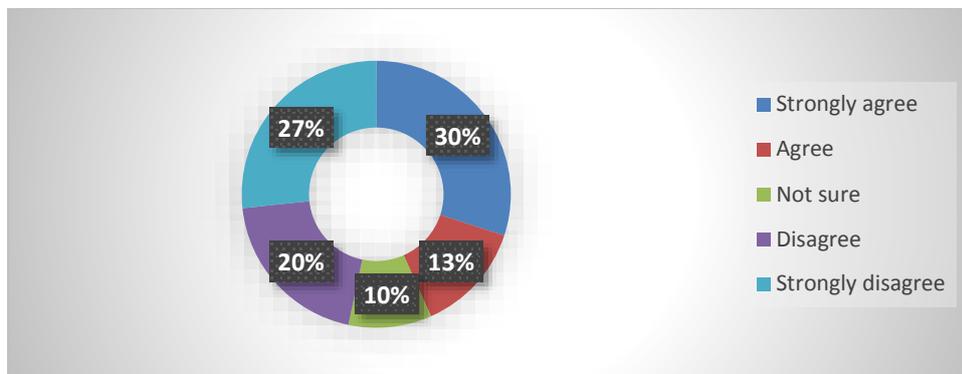


Figure 9: Pie chart showing distribution of alcohol and substance abuse by parents/guardians

9.10 Lack of reading material at home

The results in figure below indicates that 23% (7) strongly disagreed that lack of reading material at home contribute to school dropouts, 20% (6) disagreed, 20% (6) strongly agreed that lack of reading material contributes, 34% (10) also agreed that it contributes while 3% (1) were not sure whether it contributes or not. Accumulatively the majority 54% (16) agreed while 43% (13) disagreed that lack of reading material at home contributes to school dropouts.

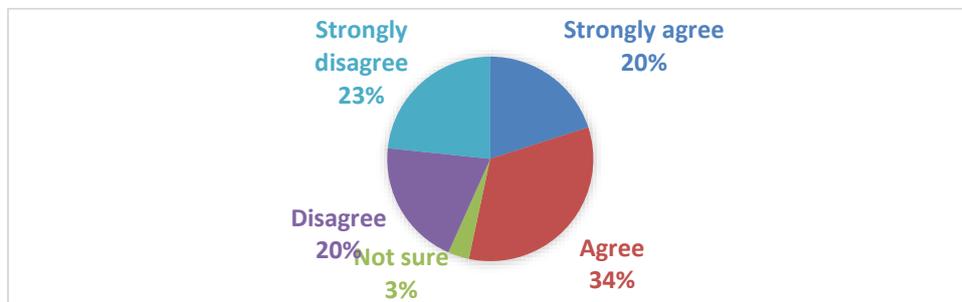


Figure 10: Pie chart showing distribution of lack of reading material at home

9.11 Lack of reading time at home

Figure 11 below shows that 37% (11) of the respondents strongly disagreed that lack of reading time at home contributes to school dropouts and 30% (9) were not sure whether it contributed or not, 17% (5) disagreed, 10% (3) agreed that lack of reading time contributes while 6% (2) strongly agreed that it contributes to school dropouts. Accumulatively the majority 54% (16) disagreed while 16% (5) agreed that lack of reading time at home contributes to school dropouts.

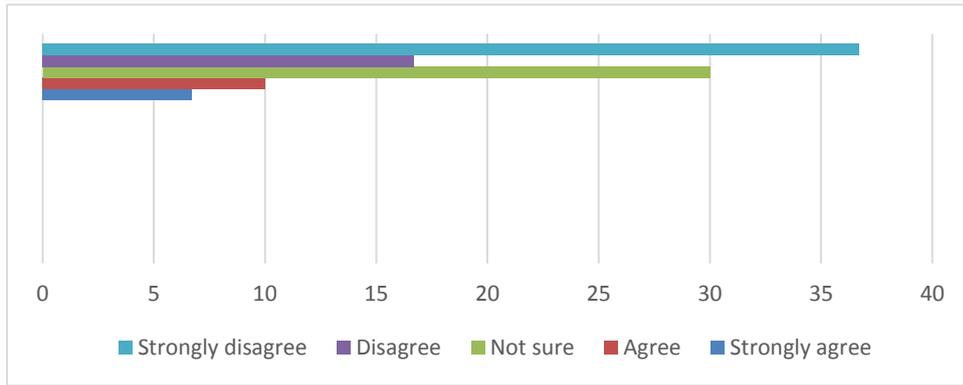


Figure 11: A histogram showing distribution of lack of reading time at home

9.12 Sickness in the family

The results in figure 12 below shows that 40% (12) of the respondents agreed, 23% (7) not sure, 17% (5) strongly disagree, 13% (4) strongly agree, while 7% (2) disagree with the statement that sickness in the family contribute to school dropouts. Accumulatively the majority 53% (16) agreed while 24% (7) agreed that sickness in the family contributes to school dropouts.

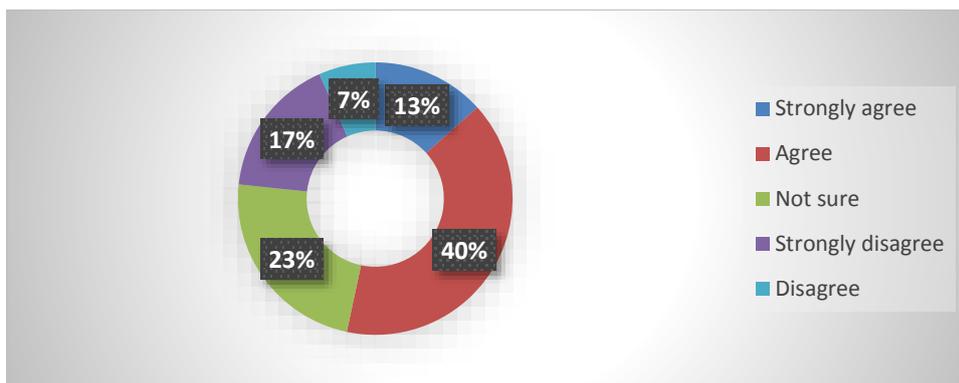


Figure 12: Pie chart showing distribution of sickness in the family

9.13 Death of parents/guardians

The results in figure 13 below shows that 33% (10) disagreed that death of parents contribute to school dropouts, 20% (6) strongly agreed, 17% (5) agreed, also 17% (5) were not, while 13% (4) strongly disagreed that it contributes. Accumulatively the majority 46% (14) disagreed while 37% (11) agreed that death of parents/guardians in the family contributes to school dropouts.

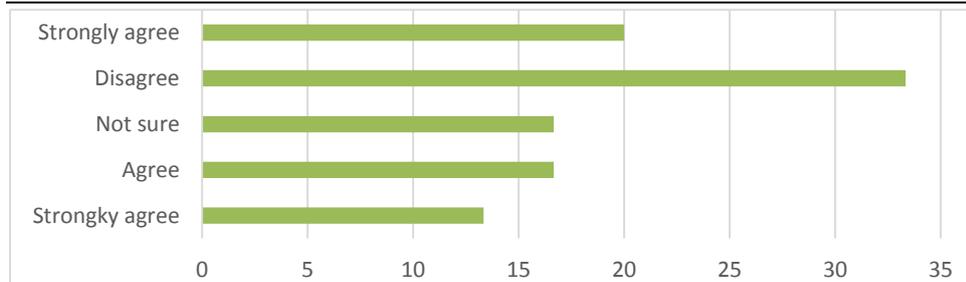


Figure 13: A histogram showing the distribution of death of parents/guardians

9.14Lack of participation in school activities such as consultations by parents

The results in figure 14 indicates that 40% (12) agreed that lack of participation by parents in school activities contributes to school dropouts, 23% (7) were not sure, 17% (5) disagreed, 13% (4) of the respondents strongly agreed while 7% (2) strongly disagreed that it contributes. Accumulatively the majority 53% (16) agreed while 24% (7) disagreed with the notion that lack of participation by parents contributes to school dropouts.

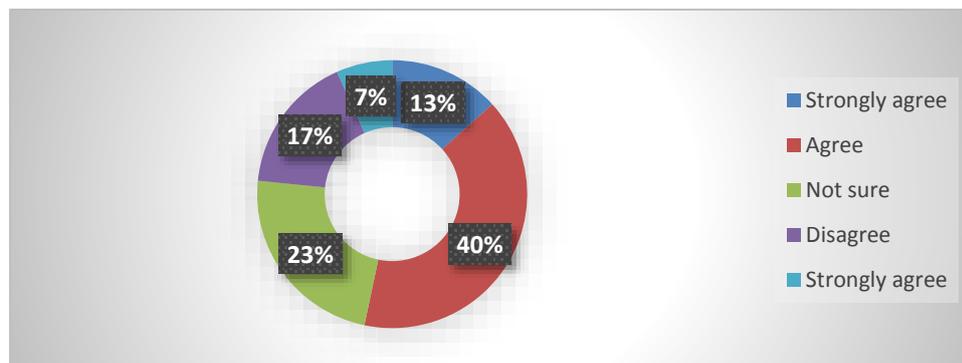


Figure 14: A pie chart showing the distribution of lack of participation in school activities such as consultations by parents

10. DISCUSSION

All the key informants agreed that there was high school dropouts in Rushinga District. The results also indicate an alarming rate of 1.08% of school dropouts per term. All the respondents agreed that poverty/ financial constraints within the families was one of the major causes of school dropouts. These findings concur with (Lichter et al, 1993:55), who alludes that “Those living in poverty are 2.9 times more likely to be dropouts than are those living above 150 percent of the poverty threshold” Poverty still remains as one of the significant causes of children dropping out of school, This affects the girl child at most, and exposes her to early marriages. As already alluded in the research findings passage, the respondents agreed that low level of education of parents promotes school dropping and this is in line with Chug (2011) who found that low educational level of parents, the weak family structure, pattern of schooling of sibling and preschool experiences, family background and domestic problems create an environment which negatively affects the value of education and responsible for children dropping out. Educational status of the parents is very crucial factor that affects child’s schooling and successful completion. Those parents who are educated enough or having

awareness regarding the importance and needs of education is more successful in making environment for getting quality education to their children Children's from unhealthy family environment are very prone to school dropout, alcoholism of parents and family schism are some of the negative factors that affect learners. Learners who drop out of school are at an economic disadvantage and will be affected throughout their lives.

Separation or divorce of parents, and death of parents were found to promote school dropouts in Rushinga District and this concurs with Pong and Ju, 2000:149's findings that divorce, separation, and death of a spouse are all variables that define change in family structure from a two-parent family to a single-parent family or stepparent family. "Virtually all previous studies have concluded that children from single-parent or female-headed households are more likely to drop out than are children who reside in two-parent families". The results were also supported by Hunt, (2008) and Basumatary (2012) who points that family's social and demographic circumstances are an important determinant of school dropout; the members who make up a family of the child, health of the family members, education attained by parents, the activities family members are engaged in, whether the family is single-parent or otherwise, influence dropout decision of children. The family environment, economic status, socio-educational status of parents influences the different milestones of child development. Both statistical and empirical research suggest that children from better households are more likely to remain in school, whilst those who are poorer are more likely never to have attended, or to dropout once they have enrolled (Hunt, 2008). Number of children in the family is important determinant of school dropout.

Mishra (2014), support the results of this study by mentioning the factors such as family changes in structure and income, relationship with parents due to changes in family structure, teacher support, motivation, school performance, substance use and abuse and residential location as leading to school dropouts. The findings indicated that lack of supervision of school work by parents and lack of motivational words by parents contribute to school dropout. The aspect of motivational words was emphasised by Samarrai and Peasgood (1998) cited in Chugh (2011). Motivation and emotional support from family members especially from parents is important factor that creates interest on child to continue his/her study. Aston and Melanahan (1991); Rumberger et al. (1990); Rumberger (1995); Liu (2004); Ainsworth et al. (2005) reported that if the parents monitor and regulate their activities, provide emotional support, encourage independent decision-making and are generally involved in their schooling are less likely to drop out of school.

However lack of school requirements such as stationery or uniforms, lack of participation in school activities (such as consultations), lack of academic role models in families, lack of reading materials at home and lack of reading time at home remain a gap in this research. For example, the Rushinga community fail to support their children in school because the majority do not attend meetings so as to appreciate the updates in schools, know more about their children, and learn about success and challenges. Rushinga community lacks academic role models that can be emulated by learners. This is in-line with Bandura's social learning theory cited in Feldman (2009) which states that behavioural learning is through modelling and reinforcement. Therefore, social learning is when new behaviors are acquired by an individual through interaction in social groups from parents, friends and teachers among significant others.

11. CONCLUSION

The financial constraints, low level of education of parents, disputes within a family, separation or divorce of parents, lack of school requirements such as stationery or uniforms, sickness in family, lack of participation in school activities (such as consultations), lack of academic role models in families, death of parents, lack of supervision of school work and lack of motivational words by parents, alcohol and substance abuse by parents, lack of reading materials at home and lack of reading time were cited by respondents as the general contribution factors in school dropouts at family level. However all respondents (Learners, Teachers, Key Informants and School dropouts) identified financial constraints, low level of education of parents, separation or divorce of parents and lack of school requirements as the most family critical aspects here in Rushinga that cause Secondary School dropouts. Indeed given the background of the District and socioeconomic status of parents one would not wonder why these four aspects came out so vividly and well pronounced by respondents. More studies are called for in order to better understand these problems so as to act accordingly for the benefit of the community.

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