

Impact of School Remoteness on Students’ Academic Performance in Community Secondary Schools: The Case Study of Morogoro District-Tanzania

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Abstract— This study was set to find out the impacts of school remoteness on students’ academic performance in community secondary schools in Morogoro District Council. The study employed descriptive research design. The mixed methods approach was involved in the study. The sample size of the study was 60 people, which consists of 1 DEO, 4 head of schools, 12 teachers, 32 students and 11 parents. The study used simple random sampling technique to get teachers and students while purposive sampling technique was used in select heads of schools, DEO, and parents. Questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions and document review tools of data collection were employed in this study. The study found that, students’ dropout from school, truancy, early pregnancies, early marriages, and class repetition were the effects of school be located far from students’ homes. Lastly, the study recommends that, introduction of food programs at school, construction of hostels, provision of transport facilities, the government should build more secondary schools near people settlements, and parents should support various ongoing educational projects in their surrounding areas.

Keywords— School remoteness, students’ academic performance, community secondary schools.

I. INTRODUCTION

Learning is a dynamic process, and its outcome is more evident when it begins early in life and continues through adulthood (Heckman, 2000). The learning environment should be good with enough and safe physical space. Long distance has been a great hindrance to academic performance which has been associated with the location of schools in various places. (Tumwebaze, 2016) in the study on study about education on international basis in Germany observed that, long voyages to school have a negative influence on students’ well-being and on their education achievement as well. Coady and Parker (2002) argued that distance from school, long distance is a reason for lateness and has some impact on students’ academic performance in Mexico. Hijazi and Raza, (2006) insists that, education authorities of various localities to decide where a particular type of school should be located, the size of a school in each location. In cases a new school should be built the distance from people’s settlements must be taken into consideration Chukwuemeka (2013). In the context of Tanzania, the construction of secondary schools paid minimal attention to home-school distance experienced by potential learners to the extent that, the overlooked factor includes other related concerns like transport challenges, study time and safety issues the learners are likely to face (Oneye & Onyango, 2021).

In order to provide education for all, the government Tanzania established ward secondary schools as one of the solutions to access and acquire quality education for young generation (Melack, 2014). In the current study various effects of school remoteness towards students’ performance have been examined and discussed.

Objective of the Study

The study aimed at investigating the impact of school remoteness on students’ academic performance in Morogoro District Council-Tanzania. It is forecasted that if various effects of school remoteness towards academic performance of students in community secondary school are being tackled, the academic performance of many students might be handled. When community members and the government collaborate in setting and building schools, the location and distance of school from citizens’ settlements must be put into consideration. This would minimize the problem of a school be far from students’ homes, this will stabilize the impacts on academic well-being among students.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study employed questionnaire and interview as the main tools of data collection. Questionnaires were used to collect information from teachers, students and parents whereas interview was hired to gather data from District Education officer and head of schools. The sample size of the study was 60 people. Simple random sampling technique was used in the study to select teachers and students while purposive sampling technique was used in selecting heads of schools, DEO and parents.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Impact of school remoteness on students’ academic performance in community secondary school in Morogoro District Council (n=55)

ITEM	A f(%)	N f(%)	D f(%)	T f(%)
	45			55
Early marriages	(82)	7 (13)	3 (5)	(100)
	38	13		55
Early pregnancies	(69)	(24)	4 (7)	(100)
	30		16	55
Truancy	(55)	9 (16)	(29)	(100)
Lack of inters-school competitions	13	28	14	55
	(24)	(51)	(25)	(100)

Lack of punctuality among the students	20 (36)	16 (29)	19 (35)	55 (100)
Students' dropouts from schools	41 (75)	5 (9) (17)	9 (16) (11)	(100) (55)
Peer groups	(49)	(31)	(20)	(100)
Class repetitions	(59)	(36)	3 (5)	(100)

Key: A = Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, T=Total, (%) =Percentage, f=frequency, n= Sample size

From the table above, early marriages 45(82%) and students' dropouts from school 41(75) were the leading effects of school remoteness on the academic performance of students in Morogoro district council. The sub item of early marriage signifies that, in the community under this study, girls who study in remote schools are sometimes forced to marry at their young ages due to either temptation they experience on their ways to and from schools or due to total negligence of enrollment in such remote secondary schools. These findings are in line with study by Hunt (2008) who claims that, in Africa to educate a girl is often seen as a poor investment since she is expected to be married and leave home and her education will then benefit the husband's family. The study found that, parents take advantage of a school being built far from their homes as factor to force girl student leave school for marriage. Holmes (2003) who argues that the opportunity cost of sending girls to school in rural areas where schools are far from their homes are quite large as most of them get married early.

In the interview session the respondent pointed out that:

“Most of our students fail to complete form four because they walk very long distance from their homes, on their ways they face several challenges including sexual harassment and temptations from the boys and men finally they end up marrying at their young ages by such men. Because they come from distant areas, we realize lately that they have already married, some are realized even after having two children (R3)

The literature seems to confirm that, existence of early marriages to most girls is geared by studying in remote secondary schools. Holmes (2003) concurs that, despite the fact that girls show efforts towards studying but their way school might not be safe due to long distance from home to school. It can thus be concluded that, remoteness of secondary schools is a great barrier to students particularly girls who walk long distance with risk on their ways including living unfulfilled dreams after marrying at their early ages instead of completing their secondary education.

The sub item on early pregnancies 38(69%) indicate that, in the community most of early pregnancies among girls occur in rural areas where most of their secondary schools are in remote status; their students have to spend many hours to walk to and from their schools. It looks that, daily walks expose the girl students to sexual harassment and temptations which leads them engage in matrimonial behavior which finally sends them in acquiring early pregnancies. These results indicate that, early pregnancies among some female students in community secondary schools are the result of long distance travelled by such students from home to school. This finding agrees with

study by Nyanzi (2001) who put forward that, pregnancy and sickness are major reasons for female students drop in academic dealings. When such students are in the long way to or from community secondary schools such girls are tempted and influenced by men hence, they get early pregnancies. This tends to affect not only their academic performances but also being expelled out from such schools due to disobedience to their school regulations. Having observed the data from the field and from the literature reviews, the researcher finally concluded that remoteness of secondary schools is among the major causes of early pregnancies to most of the female students in rural areas.

The sub item truancy 30(55%), the scores show that, school remoteness provides hindrance and challenges to the students especially those who are living far away from school. School remoteness discourages student's attendance to school, this increases several students' absenteeism, something which decelerates their academic performances since they lack to fit the school schedule from morning to evening. These findings are in agreements with study by Amitava, et al (2010) who postulates that, poor attendance not only hinders academic achievement but also promotes a poorly educated society and thus leads to many negative social issues. A dominant effect results which starts with poor attendance, proceeds to low achievement, increases the dropout rate, and amplifies a host of social problems.

During interview the respondent pinpointed that:

In several cases, truancy was created and supported by parents because it might happen a student might fail to attend classes for a long period of time and parents may fail to ask such student the reason. This makes such student lose the interest of the school (R5)

The findings from the respondent (R5) portrays that, during the cold and rainy seasons, the remote secondary schools experience truancy in large extents compared to other seasons since students have to walk on foot in long distance to reach their schools while feeling cold and arriving in schools with wet school uniforms and shoes. These findings are in line with the study by Komba (2014) who found that, peer group influence was among the key factors for students' school truancy to engage in informal and immoral business. Ajaja (2012) points out that, the students' peer groups, if not guided well result in shocking results like engaging in drug abuse, early sex, and then get to dangerous diseases like AIDS and early pregnancies. It can hence be revealed that, truancy rate is higher in remote secondary schools than in well located secondary schools where students live either in hostels or near their secondary schools.

In the sub item on students' dropouts from school 41(75%), this indicate that, distance from school to home in most cases accelerates students' drop out with much attention to female students. It came out from the study that; school dropout happens when some students become discouraged by nature of geographical configuration. Nekatibeb (2002) noted that, if school distance is considered too far from home, young girls tend to drop out more due to the vulnerability to sexual harassment. One of the reasons is parents are afraid for the

safety of their children when they must travel longer distances to school.

In the interview duration the respondent spoke that:

Distance makes students feel as if that we are wasting our time. Walking to and from school sometime students are doing to satisfy our parents and teachers. Example from home to school is about 6 kilometers, so walking to and from school to home are 12 kilometers. This causes some of students to dropout of schools (R 4)

The idea presented by (R4) seems to indicate that, when female students, dropout from schools, parents do not become astonished because they recognize problems their children encounter daily on their way to and from schools. Parents do not worry more for their children who live in hostels than who are off the hostels walking long distance daily to and from schools since the hostels are safer and secured (Chiguvi & Ndonga, 2018). It can therefore be concluded that remoteness of secondary schools, is among the major causes of dropouts among the secondary school students. Since the schools are found in far distance, the distance makes even the difficulty in making the follow ups to ensure that all enrolled students complete the secondary education cycle.

The sub item on class repetition 32(59%) indicates that, since the consequences of school remoteness like poor attendance, truancy and lack of punctuality among students, some students tend to repeat classes after failing examinations especially Form Two National Examinations. In this context, such students feel a shame to repeat classes due to a negative attitude. Examples of such attitudes are, failing again and being laughed by their fellow students and thus tend to lose confidence when they see other students advance to Form Three and feel inferior which results in poor academic performance and hence causes drop-out.

These findings were supported by the respondent that:

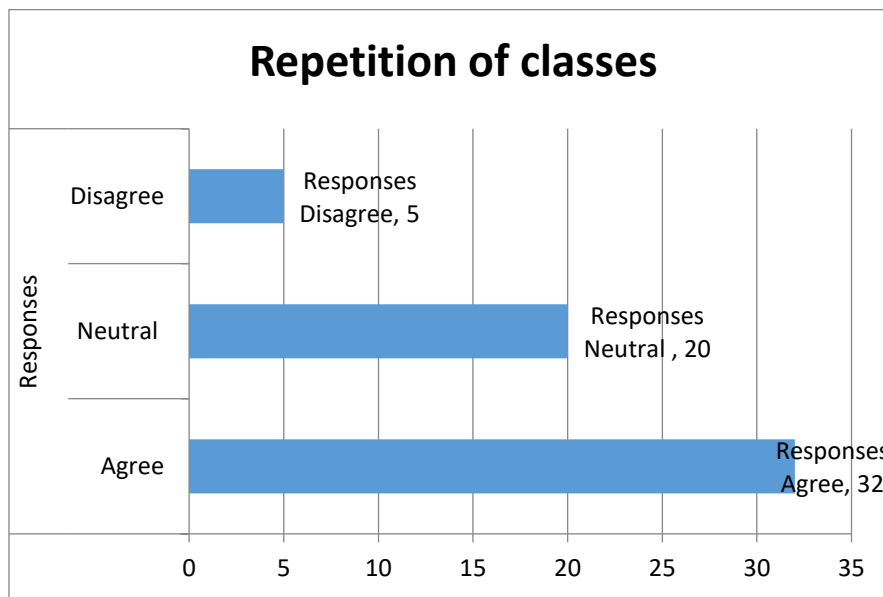
After repeating class due to the failure in National Examination, most of students' dropout in community secondary school because they lose interest and confidence in continuing with their studies (R2)

Another respondent added that:

"A student, who repeats class after failing in exams, feeling shame due to poor performance, thinks that the last results will happen again and so decide to dropout (R 3)

The study revealed that, remoteness among the secondary schools makes the students repeat the same class for many years due to the fact that they perform poorly academically because they arrive in classes lately and very tired, they arrive home very tired, they have no time for private studies, group discussions and the time for doing homework and for examination preparations. They end up poorly performing their final examinations and repeating the same classes for many years. It also emerged from the study that, some students are not able to attend the first period that start at 08:00 as well as the second period. There are many reasons for students to be late including consequences of school remoteness including transportation problems and the nature of students themselves Komba (2014) who found that, school remoteness influences some students get low marks or fail to frequently attend school as a result they lack criteria to continue with school hence class repetition comes into being. The late students cannot participate in school surroundings cleanliness that leads a few students who come on time to do extra work concerning school cleanliness. Thus, lateness affects both cleanliness of school environment and academic achievement thus they can even repeat classes.

The findings about class repetition can be presented using bar graph as follows:



IV. CONCLUSION

The research study carried out in Morogoro district council cannot be taken an end point in dealing with the effects of school remoteness on students' academic performance in Tanzania. However, the study can be taken as an alarm to next researchers who could wish to conduct their studies on the impact of long distance from home to school regarding academic performance of students. The study revealed that, early marriage, early pregnancy, school truancy, students' school dropouts and class repetition are the impact of school remoteness towards academic performance of secondary school students in the area under this study. The research study rather proposes that, introduction of food programs at school, construction of hostels, provision of transport facilities, the government should build more secondary schools near people settlements, clear policy on the location of school and parents should support various ongoing educational projects in their surrounding areas.

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