Contribution of Socio-economic Practices on School Dropout among Students in Public Secondary School in Monduli District, Tanzania

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Abstract: This study assessed the contribution of socio-economic practices on school dropout among students in public secondary schools. The study was grounded in the Social Reproduction Theory. The research objectives included to: investigate how socio-economic practices contribute to dropout among students and to explored strategies for mitigating the impact of socio-economic practices on students' dropout in public secondary schools. The study employed convergent design under the mixed approach and it targeted, 16 heads of schools, 16 school board chairpersons, 15 ward education officers and 395 teachers. The study sample were 133 participants, including 5 heads of schools, 5 school board chairpersons, 5 ward education officers, and teachers. The study employed both probability and non-probability sampling procedures to sample the targeted population. The instruments were validated using research experts and reliability was determined through split half method whereby the reliability coeffient was 0.88. Data was collected through questionnaires, interviews and document analysis guide. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages and means were used to analyze quantitative data. The study revealed that domestic work reduces students' time for academic engagement and disrupts concentration in class. Strategies such as enhancing parental involvement, strengthening policy frameworks, and increasing community sensitization are essential. In conclusion, socio-economic practices such as child labour, early marriages, pastoralist lifestyles, and poverty significantly contribute to high dropout rates. In recommendation, leaders should prioritize community sensitization campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of education, and the government should formulate and enforce policies that address the root causes of school dropout.

Keywords: Socio-Economic, Practices, School, Dropout, Tanzania

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1. Introduction

Socio-economic activities have been identified as a factor contributing to students' dropout in schools. Students from low-income families faced financial challenges that make it difficult for them to remain in school, leading to a significant relationship between socio-economic status and dropout rates (Abenawe, 2022). Many parents rely on their children for domestic work, which forces them to miss classes and eventually lose interest in school (Ems and Mnjokava, 2022). Some students were engaged in child labour, which limits their ability to concentrate on education and increases the likelihood of dropping out (Alego, 2022). These responsibilities take up time that should be dedicated to learning, making it harder for

students to meet academic expectations. Girls are often assigned more domestic chores than boys, which further widens the gender gap in education.

Socio-economic activities affect male and female students differently, contributing to school dropout. Many boys engaged in child labour to support their families which expose them to negative influences such as drug use and eventually lead to leaving school (Thelma, 2023). Economic hardship forces some families to prioritized income-generating activities over education, making it difficult for boys to balance work and studies (Insfrán-Coronel et al., 2024). For girls, financial struggles often increased the risk of teenage pregnancy, which remains a significant reason for their dropout (Njeru et al., 2024). In many cases, girls from low-income families face pressure to enter early marriages as a way of reducing financial burdens at home. Household responsibilities also fell more heavily on girls, limiting their time for school activities and contributing to academic struggles. Some parents viewed education as less important for girls, reinforcing early exits from school.

School dropout experienced in different countries is due to various socio-economic challenges. In some cases, parental involvement played a crucial role, as students whose parents are rarely engaged in their education are more likely to leave school (Ntigurirwa et al., 2024). In India, economic hardship forces elder siblings to drop out so they can take care of their younger ones, limiting their chances of continuing with education (Mitra and Sengupta, 2023). In Spain, cases of both male and female students leaving school early due to financial difficulties that prevent them from completing their studies have been reported (Martín-González et al., 2024). These cases highlighted how economic struggles and family responsibilities contribute to school dropout in different regions. Some students were forced into informal employment to support their household, which interferes with their education.

In Tanzania, dropout remains an issue, with an average of 4.2 percent of registered students leaving school each year before completion (Mnyawami et al., 2022). The problem arises from multiple factors at the family, school, individual, and community levels, as observed in Zanzibar (Doe et al., 2022). In Monduli district, dropout is also prevalent, but most efforts were focused on addressing the challenges faced by girls, while little attention has been given to boys who also leave school prematurely (Madodi, 2024). The number of students registered for secondary education in Monduli district kept decreasing as these students moved from one class to another. Table 1 shows the number of dropout students from five schools within the district from the year 2021 to 2024.

Table 1: Trends of Dropout among Male and Female Students in Monduli District

Description	Boys	Girls
Enrolled in 2021	729	750
Form two in 2022	670	705
Form three in 2023	617	635
Completed form four in 2024	527	611
Dropped out	202	139
Percentage of dropout	27.71%	18.53%

Source: DESO Monduli (2021; 2022; 2023; 2024)

The trend of dropout among male and female students in Monduli District secondary schools reveals a problem. Data from 2021 to 2024 showed that out of 729 boys enrolled in 2021, only 527 completed form four in 2024, indicating that 202 boys dropped out, which represents a dropout rate of 27.71 percent. Similarly, out of the 750 girls enrolled in the same period, only 611 completed form four, with 139 dropping out, reflecting a dropout rate of 18.53 percent. This trend demonstrates that dropout is common among both boys and girls but being higher among boys. Due to this problem, the current study was conducted to assess the contribution of social-economic practices on school dropout among students in Monduli district.

1.1 Research Questions

The study was conducted to answer the following research questions;

1. How do socio-economic practices contribute to school dropout among students in public secondary schools in Monduli District?

2. What strategies can be adopted to mitigate the impact of socio-economic practices on students' drop out in public secondary schools in Monduli District?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

The study was grounded in the Social Reproduction Theory developed by Pierre Bourdieu in 1977.

2.2 Social Reproduction Theory

The theory states that social and economic inequalities are passed down from one generation to the next through cultural, social, and economic capital. It assumed that education systems often reinforce these inequalities instead of reducing them (Lindeman, 2021). In relation to the current study, the theory suggested that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to drop out of school because they lack the necessary resources and support to succeed in education. Unequal access to learning materials, cultural attitudes towards schooling, and the economic demands on children to contribute to family income all contributed to dropout rates, making education a tool for maintaining existing social inequalities.

2.2.1 Strengths of Social Reproduction Theory

A key strength of Social Reproduction Theory is its ability to explain the structural barriers that prevent marginalized students from completing their education. This strength was relevant to the current study because it highlighted how socio-economic practices, such as child labour and gender expectations, created long-term disadvantages that pushed students out of school. The theory helped to analyze how social structures influenced educational opportunities and why some students faced greater challenges in completing their studies. By applying this perspective, the study recommended policy changes that promote equal access to education and address systemic inequalities that contribute to dropout.

2.2.2 Application of Social Reproduction Theory

Social Reproduction Theory is useful for the current study because it provided a critical perspective on how socio-economic disparities influenced school dropout. The theory was used to analyze how financial constraints, cultural norms, and unequal access to education resources contributed to dropout among male and female students in Monduli District. By applying this theory, the study highlighted the need for policies that promote equity in education and suggest interventions, such as financial aid and community engagement, to reduce dropout rates.

2.2 Empirical Review

This section focuses on empirical studies that examine how socio-economic practices influence dropout among students, emphasizing the link between these practices and students' educational participation.

2.2.1 How Do Social-Economic Practices Influenced Dropout among Students

Shaikh et al. (2022) investigated factors contributing to dropout among Muslim female students using a logistic regression model. The study revealed that economic hardships, traditional gender norms, and parental attitudes played a significant role in dropout decisions. Economic constraints forced some girls into domestic roles, while traditional expectations limited their educational opportunities. Parental education and financial support were also critical in determining whether a girl continued with her studies. Insfrán-Coronel et al. (2024) explored school dropout in Paraguay, particularly in the transition from ninth grade to secondary school. Using clustering techniques on data from the Paraguayan Ministry of Education and Science, the study found that poverty and child labour were key socio-economic factors influencing dropout. The study recommended targeted interventions to reduce dropout rates.

Senyametor et al. (2021) conducted a study on socio-cultural factors influencing female school dropout in the Asante Akim South Municipality of Ghana. The study employed a descriptive design and used questionnaires and structured interviews to collect data from 40 teachers and 56 female dropouts. The study found out that factors such as negative teacher attitudes, peer and teacher sexual harassment, teenage pregnancy, and certain cultural practices contributed to female student dropout. Mitra and Sengupta (2023) analyzed school dropout trends in India, noting that gender and birth order significantly influenced dropout rates. The study found that first-born girls were more likely to drop out due to family expectations, while younger siblings had a higher chance of remaining in school. The findings suggested that intra-household dynamics and gender roles shaped dropout patterns.

Martín-González et al. (2024) investigated early school leaving (ESL) in Spain, using panel data from 2002 to 2020. The study found that socio-economic factors such as adolescent fertility, immigration, unemployment, and regional economic structures contributed to dropout rates, with significant gender disparities. Male students were more likely to leave school early due to employment opportunities in industrial and construction sectors, whereas female dropout rates were less affected by youth unemployment. Although the study provided valuable insights into socio-economic influences on dropout, it

focused on macro-level economic trends. The current study adopted a more localized approach, examining specific socio-economic practices influencing dropout among male and female students in Monduli District. Gitari et al. (2024) conducted a study on the influence of household income, parental education, and family structure on girls' dropout rates in Mariani Ward, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey design using cluster sampling to collect data from 385 respondents including dropouts, head teachers, household heads, and local leaders. The study found out that low household income, low parental education levels, and family structure were significantly associated with increased dropout rates among girls. The study focused only on girls and did not consider how socio-economic practices may also affect male students.

2.2.2 Strategies to Mitigate the Influence of Socio-Economic Practices on Secondary school Students Dropout

Lainjo (2023) explored the role of predictive analytics algorithms (PAAs) in reducing students' dropout rates, with a particular focus on North America. The study demonstrated how machine learning techniques, including k-Nearest Neighbor, Neural Networks, Decision Trees, and Naive Bayes classifiers, were used to predict and mitigate dropout cases. The approach allowed institutions to categorize students at risk and implement timely interventions to improve retention. Lowder (2022) examined the impact of the High School Success programme on ninth-grade students with academic difficulties. The study found that students exposed to structured literacy and learning interventions had significantly higher graduation rates than those without intervention. The findings highlight the importance of targeted support in the transition to secondary school.

Banaag et al. (2024) conducted a systematic review of strategies aimed at reducing students' dropout. The study identified several key interventions, including remedial programmes, enhanced guidance and counseling, financial support for disadvantaged students, transportation assistance, and school dropout policy enforcement. These interventions addressed both academic and non-academic factors contributing to dropout. Wortsman et al. (2024) examined dropout risks among students in rural Côte d'Ivoire and found that child labour, poor literacy skills, and weak school infrastructure were major contributors. The study also showed that better school environments and teacher support reduced dropout rates, highlighting the role of school-based interventions. Hilal et al. (2024) highlighted the role of improving school environments, eliminating violence, and strengthening students' support systems in mitigating dropout. The study emphasized the importance of teacher training, emotional support, and parental involvement in keeping students engaged. While the findings provide a holistic approach to dropout prevention, they focus on general school improvement measures rather than specific interventions targeting at-risk students.

3. Methodology

The study employed a convergent design under the mixed methods approach. This design involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, analyzing the data separately and then merging the results for interpretation (Creswell and Creswell, 2023). The design allows for a comprehensive understanding of the problem by combining numerical data with detailed narratives.

The target population includes 16 heads of schools, 16 school board chairpersons, 15 ward education officers, and 395 teachers in Monduli District (MoEST, 2025). The inclusions of heads of schools were justified because they oversee school operations and have firsthand knowledge of dropout cases. School board chairpersons were included as they were responsible for decision-making on school matters and hence they are expected to provide relevant information related to the number of dropouts and the causes. Ward education officers were involved because they supervise schools at the ward level and monitor education trends and thus they were aware on how different socio-economic activities in their respective wards contribute to students' dropout. Teachers were included because they interact with students daily and understand the challenges that lead to dropout.

The sample size were 133 respondents, including 5 heads of schools, 5 school board chairpersons, 5 ward education officers, and 118 teachers. The sample was determined by selecting 30% of the target population, following Okendo et al. (2020) who suggested that a sample of 10 to 30 percent of the population was adequate for social studies. Both probability and non-probability sampling procedures were used to obtain the study sample. Simple random sampling was used to select the schools. Criterion purposive sampling was used to select the heads of the sampled schools and ward education officers. This sampling technique involves selecting participants based on predefined criteria (Cohen et al., 2018). Extreme case sampling was used to select school board chairpersons. Simple random sampling was used to select 24 teachers from three schools each and 23 teachers from two schools each. Lists of teachers in each school were obtained from the school register. The names were randomly selected to ensure equal representation. Thus researcher had 118 teachers from the five schools. The use of sampling ensured that each teacher was given an equal chance of

being selected and thus to minimize biases which could happen by using other means of sampling.

The study used questionnaires, interview guides, and document analysis guides. Questionnaires were used for teachers, while interview guides were used for heads of schools, ward education officers, and school board chairpersons. Document analysis guides was used to review records related to students' dropout.

Validity was ensured by subjecting the research instruments to review by three research experts from higher learning institutions. Reliability of the scaled items in the questionnaire was determined using split-half method whereby the items in each research question were divided into two halves and the reliability coefficient was computed using Spearman-Brown formula. The results of reliability testing showed 0.88 as the reliability coefficient obtained. This value is above the recommended value of 0.7 as suggested by (Okendo et al., 2020). Therefore, the obtained value suggests that the instruments were reliable.

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages and means were used to analyze quantitative data. For qualitative data, thematic analysis was employed to interpret the responses from interviews and document analysis. The responses were carefully transcribed to ensure accuracy, and then systematically coded to identify key patterns and recurring ideas.

Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring that responses remain anonymous. Participants would have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without consequences. The researcher ensured that no respondent was harmed either physically, emotionally or spiritually and confidentiality was highly upheld. Lastly, to avoid plagiarism, all the sources of information used in the study were listed in the reference list following the recommended APA 7th edition format.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings are discussed in accordance with the themes generated from the research questions that the study sought to answer.

4.1 Contribution of Social-Economic Practices on Dropout among Male and Female Students in Monduli District

The first objective of this study aimed at investigating how socio-economic practices contribute to school dropout among male and female students in pubic secondary schools in Monduli district. Teachers responded to a Likert scale in their respective questionnaire while the other respondents were interviewed. The responses from teachers were quantified to generate frequencies and percentages as presented in table 2.

Table 2: Teachers' Responses on How Socio-Economic Practices Contribute to School Dropout (n=109)

	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Engaging in domestic work reduces students' study time.	43	39.4	48	44.0	10	9.2	8	7.3	0	0.0
Students working to support their families find it difficult to balance school and work.	38	34.9	53	48.6	8	7.3	10	9.2	0	0.0
Parents withdrawing students from school for work leads to dropout.	37	33.9	48	44.0	21	19.3	3	2.8	0	0.0
Early marriage affects female students' ability to complete school.	79	72.5	26	23.9	4	3.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
Cultural beliefs discourage some students from continuing with education.	56	51.4	44	40.4	6	5.5	3	2.8	0	0.0
Financial struggles force students to miss school frequently.	33	30.3	54	49.5	18	16.5	4	3.7	0	0.0
Poor school attendance results in low performance and eventual dropout.	58	53.2	40	36.7	7	6.4	4	3.7	0	0.0
Lack of basic needs such as food and uniforms discourages students from attending school.	41	37.6	45	41.3	15	13.8	8	7.3	0	0.0
Students influenced by their peers to engage in economic activities drop out.	40	36.7	56	51.4	6	5.5	7	6.4	0	0.0
Nomadic movements cause irregular attendance leading to dropout.	31	28.4	59	54.1	10	9.2	9	8.3	0	0.0

Engaging in domestic work reduces students' study time was one of the socio-economic factors that teachers were asked to respond too. A total of 39.4% of teachers strongly agreed while 44.0% agreed. Meanwhile, 9.2% were neutral and 7.3% disagreed. The majority of the respondents agreed that domestic chores interfere with the academic routines of learners. When students are required to engage in housework such as fetching water, taking care of siblings or cooking, their study time is reduced. This can lead to poor academic performance and eventually discouragement from attending school. As academic gaps widen due to lack of revision and homework completion, some students may opt to leave school altogether. These findings are in agreement with Ali et al. (2022) who noted that boys and girls from rural areas are burdened with domestic tasks, which limits their learning opportunities. Thus, the requirement for students to assist with domestic chores in Monduli district is considered a socio-economic activity that reduces school engagement and contributes to dropout.

During the interviews, responses from the teachers were further supported by key informants who indicated that domestic work greatly affects learners' ability to concentrate and attend school consistently. This was made evident as one of the heads of school said the following:

> Most of our pupils come from households where they are required to perform many duties before and after school. Some fetch water, cook for their younger siblings, or go to the market. By the time they arrive at school, they are already tired and cannot concentrate. This has affected both attendance and academic performance (Personal interview, 27.05.2025).

This was further supported by a ward education officer who said:

> In many homes in this district, children, especially girls, are expected to help with chores very early in the morning and late in the evening. Such responsibilities reduce their time for homework or revision. Eventually, they fall behind in class, lose interest, and sometimes drop out (Personal interview, 21.05.2025).

These responses from key informants imply that domestic work creates a significant barrier to academic success for many pupils. The quotations align with survey responses from teachers, confirming that household chores reduce study time. This implies that school dropout is partly linked to domestic responsibilities that overwhelm pupils in Monduli district.

Another activity addressed was students working to support their families. Here, 34.9% of teachers strongly agreed and 48.6% agreed that such work affects students' academic commitment. In contrast, 7.3% were neutral and 9.2% disagreed. These findings suggest that a large number of teachers believe economic responsibilities assumed by students create challenges in balancing school and work. Students who wake early to work before school or engage in small jobs after classes may struggle to concentrate during lessons. Over time, the burden of work may overshadow the value of schooling, especially when education does not appear to bring immediate returns. Eventually, students may prioritize work over learning. These findings are in agreement with Shah et al. (2023) who pointed out that economic activities among youth significantly affect their school attendance and academic engagement. Therefore, student involvement in income-generating activities in Monduli district is considered a socio-economic practice that diverts attention from academics and increases the risk of dropping out.

During the interviews, teachers' views were reinforced by key informants who raised concerns about pupils balancing economic responsibilities with learning. This was made evident as one ward education officer said the following:

> Many pupils in this area wake up very early to help their parents sell items before school, and after school, they rush to finish tasks. This kind of routine tires them and prevents full concentration in class. Over time, some just stop attending altogether (Personal interview, 09.05.2025).

This was further supported by a head of school who said:

> Some children do casual labour before and after school. While they try to balance work and study, the pressure becomes too much. Eventually, they choose work that provides money over school that gives delayed benefits (Personal interview, 14.05.2025).

These responses suggest that income-generating work among pupils reduces the time and energy available for school. The alignment with teacher responses confirms that students working for family survival often compromise their education. This implies that addressing dropout requires interventions that ease family dependence on child labour.

The statement on parents withdrawing students from school for work was also widely agreed upon by respondents. Specifically, 33.9% of teachers strongly agreed and 44.0% agreed. In contrast, 19.3% were neutral and 2.8% disagreed. These findings indicate that many parents prioritize short-term family income over long-term educational benefits. When students are withdrawn from school to help with farming, livestock herding, or small businesses, their educational journey is cut short. Some children may never return to school once they start earning money or become accustomed to working life. These findings are in agreement with Ems and Mnjokava (2022) who found that child labour is a principal cause of school dropout in Tanzanian communities. In this context, parental decisions to remove children from school in Monduli district in favor of work is seen as a socio-economic driver of school dropout.

During the interviews, respondents from the school community indicated that family decisions often interfere with schooling. This was made evident as one school board chairperson said the following:

> Some parents believe it is better for their children to herd cattle or help in the market than go to school. When they realize that school takes years to bring results, they withdraw their children for activities that offer immediate support at home (Personal interview, 02.05.2025).

This was further supported by a head of school who said:

> We have seen several cases where parents pull out their children, especially boys, to help in farming during planting seasons. Even after the season ends, some never return to school because they are now considered full workers at home (Personal interview, 27.05.2025).

These findings imply that parental priorities often undermine school attendance. The responses from informants match the views of teachers, confirming that dropout may result from short-term economic thinking at the household level. This suggests that community sensitization is essential to shift such mindsets.

The data on early marriage affecting female students' ability to complete school drew significant agreement. About 72.5% of the teachers strongly agreed and 23.9% agreed with the statement, while only 3.7% were neutral and no disagreement was recorded. This high level of agreement shows that early marriage is widely believed to interrupt girls' schooling. Once girls are married, they take on domestic and family responsibilities, which makes it difficult to remain in school. Early marriage often coincides with early pregnancy, which further prevents them from completing their studies. These findings are in agreement with Jamal et al. (2023) who stated that in some cultures, girls' education is undermined by early marriage practices supported by both tradition and economic pressures. Therefore, in Monduli district, early marriage is seen by teachers as a cultural and socio-economic activity that terminates girls' educational progression and increases female dropout rates.

During the interviews, most key informants emphasized that early marriage interrupts girls' education completely. This was made evident as one ward education officer said the following:

> In some villages within Monduli district especially in the Maasai communities, parents arrange marriages once a girl reaches puberty. As soon as she is married, she stops attending school and starts her family responsibilities. This cultural expectation completely interrupts her education (Personal interview, 22.05.2025).

This was further supported by a school board chairperson who said:

> Early marriage here is considered an achievement. Parents believe that once their daughters are married, they are safe and settled. Unfortunately, the girls lose all chances to complete their education. The issue of dowry payments in the Maasai community is sometimes discussed even before the girl child matures (Personal interview, 08.05.2025).

These voices confirm that early marriage is a major cause of female dropout. The quotations align closely with quantitative data from a teacher, showing a shared understanding that marriage ends girls' schooling. This implies that targeted efforts are needed to protect girls from early marriage in rural communities.

After completing the Likert scale, teachers were asked to describe how various socio-economic activities contribute to school dropout among students in Monduli District. This was an open-ended question that allowed each teacher to provide more than one response while marking reference to document analysis guide on school records and dropout reports, with the possibility of one response being mentioned by multiple teachers. Their responses were organized and three main issues were raised as presented in table 3.

Table 3: Teachers' Responses on How Socio-Economic Activities Contribute to School Dropout

Practices	Explanation on how it contributes to dropout
Cultural practices	• Early marriage makes students not complete their studies • It reduces the attendance of the students to school
Economic activities	• Students keep busy in socio-economic activities rather than in school practices • The need to earn money for the family prevents students from focusing on their studies
Pastoralism	• The children spend much time looking for livestock which is one of the major investments in the community

Source: Field data (2025)

Referring to table 3, teachers indicated that cultural practices such as early marriage were among the leading causes of students' dropout in public secondary schools within Monduli district. The teachers explained that some students, especially girls, are forced into marriage before completing their education which prevents them from continuing with school. This situation leads to low school attendance and reduces the chances of academic progress. Teachers indicated that the value placed on traditional roles and expectations outweighs the importance of education in some families. The influence of elderly people in decision-making within households often reinforces early marriage practices. Students who are withdrawn from school to fulfill marital roles lose the opportunity to develop academically. Teachers also noted that the fear of being married off discourages other students from attending school regularly. This cultural environment contributes to a cycle where dropout becomes a common outcome for female students in Monduli district.

4.2 Strategies to Mitigate Dropout among Students in Monduli District

The second objective of this study aimed at proposing the strategies that can be adopted to mitigate the contribution of socio-economic practices on dropout among male and female students in public secondary schools in Monduli district. The teachers gave their responses when answering to an open-ended question in their respective questionnaires while the key informants provided their verbal answers during interviews. The responses from teachers are presented in table 4.

Table 4: Teachers' responses on strategies to mitigate dropout

Suggestion	Frequency	Percentage
Strengthening parental involvement	78	71.56
Policy development	65	59.63
Community sensitization	43	39.45
Preventing child labour	21	19.27
Law enforcement	18	16.51

Source: Field data (2025)

The responses from teachers as presented in table 4 show that strengthening parental involvement was the most commonly suggested strategy to reduce student dropout in public secondary schools in Monduli District. This strategy was supported by 78 teachers, representing 71.56 percent of the total responses. Teachers explained that when parents follow up on their children's academic progress, provide encouragement and collaborate with teachers, learners are more likely to stay in school. They further noted that lack of parental attention contributes to poor attendance and eventual withdrawal. This finding is supported by Hilal et al. (2024) who noted that parental involvement in keeping students engaged in education practices is a key focus in preventing school dropout. Teachers in Monduli believed that involving parents through education meetings and community outreach would improve student retention. These findings suggest that enhancing parental roles can be a powerful approach to address dropout challenges especially in rural settings where education may not be given priority.

Parental involvement in education related matters was also raised by the key informants during interviews. For instance, one of the head of school said;

> The community should continue to support students by providing them with school needs and by allowing and encouraging them to attend school. When parents show support in this way it helps students to feel motivated and focus more on their

education (Personal interview, 07.05.2025).

This was further supported by one ward education officer who said;

> Parents should also take time to talk to their children and explain to them the importance of education. They should work together with teachers to make sure their children attend school regularly and study hard. This teamwork between parents and teachers can help students stay in school and do well in their studies (Personal interview, 14.05.2025).

Responses from these key informants imply that enhancing parental cooperation is seen as a helpful step towards reducing school dropout among students in Monduli district. When parents provide school needs encourage attendance and work closely with teachers, they create a strong support system for their children. This is in agreement to what the teachers indicated about the importance of parental involvement in helping students to stay in school and remain focused on learning.

The second most reported strategy was policy development which was mentioned by 65 teachers which is equivalent to 59.63% of the respondents. Teachers believed that well-formulated and enforced education policies would help address the structural and economic factors that contribute to dropout. They mentioned that some policies in place do not adequately respond to the realities faced by students in rural and pastoral communities. They further explained that effective policies should ensure that learners are retained through supportive measures such as bursaries transportation and learning materials. This observation is supported by Banaag et al. (2024) who stated that school dropout policy reinforcement is an important intervention towards decreasing dropout incidents in schools. Teachers in Monduli emphasized that policy effectiveness should be measured by its ability to address both school-based and community-level challenges. This suggests that policy interventions must be practical and context-specific in order to successfully reduce the rate of student withdrawal from education.

Community sensitization was also raised as a strategy by 43 teachers which accounts for 39.45% of the total responses. Teachers believed that increasing awareness among community members on the importance of education could change social norms that encourage dropout. They observed that certain cultural practices such as early marriage or pastoral duties are still valued more than formal education. Teachers recommended organizing public dialogues involving elders and religious leaders to promote education and challenge beliefs that contribute to school withdrawal. This finding is supported by Hilal et al.

(2024) who indicated that involving the wider community in school affairs helps reinforce positive attitudes towards learning and discourages dropout. Teachers in Monduli pointed out that when the community values education, children will be in a better position to receive consistent support from home and school. This implies that community sensitization can serve as an effective bridge between traditional beliefs and modern schooling goals.

During interviews, the key informants also emphasized on the importance of community sensitization on the importance of educating their children. This was made evident as one of the head of school said;

> Parents should be educated about the importance of education for their children. When parents understand the value of education they will take part fully in helping the child to learn. If the community knows why education matters they will do whatever they can to make sure children go to school (Personal interview, 20.05.2025).

This was further supported by one ward education officer who said;

> The community should also be taught to provide children with basic needs so they can study without problems. Parents need to understand that free education does not mean they have no role to play. They still have a duty to support their children's learning in different ways (Personal interview, 20.05.2025).

Similarly, one school board chairperson added;

> The importance of education should be taught to the community through seminars and workshops. The government together with NGOs should organize these events so that parents can be encouraged to send their children to school instead of keeping them at home to look after livestock (Personal interview, 12.05.2025).

These responses imply that sensitizing the community on the value of education is considered to be an important strategy towards reducing school dropout among students in Monduli district. When parents and community members understand the importance of sending children to school and supporting their learning needs, they are more likely to take part in ensuring regular attendance. Educating the community helps to change negative attitudes and beliefs that prevent children from completing school. It also encourages parents to take responsibility even in the presence of free education by providing basic needs and giving their children the support they require to succeed in school.

Preventing child labour was another strategy reported by 21 teachers representing 19.27% of all responses. Teachers highlighted that many students drop out of school because they are required to engage in income-generating activities to support their families. These include working in markets, herding livestock or helping with family businesses. Teachers emphasized that families should be assisted to reduce reliance on child labour and that students should be protected through strict enforcement of child protection laws. This aligns with Wortsman et al. (2024) who noted that child labour is one of the causes of school dropout and that developing and implementing strict laws can help reduce child labour. The findings suggest that economic hardship in the household often shifts students' focus from education to earning income which disrupts their schooling. Therefore, effective interventions should target both child protection and household economic support to prevent dropout.

Law enforcement was mentioned by 18 teachers, accounting for 16.51 percent of the responses. Teachers explained that enforcing existing laws on compulsory education and penalizing those who contribute to dropout such as parents who force children into early marriage or employers who hire underage children would help to reduce school withdrawal. They reported that the lack of consistent law enforcement encourages harmful practices to continue without consequence. Teachers believed that collaboration between schools and law enforcement agencies could help create accountability in the community. This view is supported by Wortsman et al. (2024) who noted that implementing strict laws is necessary to reduce child labour which remains one of the key drivers of school dropout. Teachers in Monduli indicated that legal action must be taken seriously to protect the rights of students and support their academic journey. These findings imply that enforcement of education laws can serve as a deterrent to those who interfere with students' access to and completion of schooling.

Law enforcement was also reported by the key informants during interviews as one of the ward education officer said;

> It is important to take strong action against those who influence students to drop out of school. Community members who encourage children to leave school for other activities should face serious consequences. This can help stop others from doing the same and protect the future of many children (Personal interview, 06.05.2025).

This was further supported by one of the head of school who had the following to say;

> Strict action should also be taken against students who drop out without any serious reason. In some cases, they can be taken to the police to show that dropping out is not accepted. This can serve as a warning to other students who may be thinking of leaving school without a valid cause (Personal interview, 08.05.2025).

Responses from these key informants imply that law enforcement by taking serious measures towards the ones who encourage students to leave school can be effective towards mitigating dropouts in public secondary schools in Monduli district. The key informants consider punishment to these individuals as lessons to others who may have similar intentions. These findings are in agreement with what was identified by teachers whereby they mentioned law enforcement to be a mitigating factor.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the study findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

Socio-economic practices influence school dropouts among students in public secondary schools in Monduli district by limiting their ability to participate consistently in education. The findings revealed that domestic work reduces students' time for academic engagement and disrupts concentration in class. Parental withdrawal of children from school for family labour due to financial hardship contributes to dropout. Early marriage leads female students to assume responsibilities that conflict with regular school attendance. Cultural beliefs foster negative attitudes toward education, especially for girls, reducing motivation and support for continued schooling. Financial difficulties prevent many students from accessing essential resources such as meals, transport, and learning materials.

It is also concluded that strategies such as enhancing parental involvement, strengthening policy frameworks, and increasing community sensitization are essential to mitigating the effects of socio-economic practices on school dropout in Monduli district. These strategies aim to address challenges such as early marriage, child labour, and limited access to education by fostering greater community engagement and ensuring that both parents and local authorities play a more active role in supporting students' education. Strengthening enforcement mechanisms and raising awareness within the community could also contribute to reducing the socio-economic barriers that hinder students from remaining in school.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the study, the researcher recommended the following:

1. Community leaders should prioritize community sensitization campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of education. This would help to shift cultural norms that contribute to early marriage and gender discrimination, ultimately encouraging families to prioritize education for all children.

2. The government should formulate and enforce policies that address the root causes of school dropout, such as early marriage and child labour. Clear, comprehensive school attendance policies should be established to ensure that every child's right to education is protected.

3. Law enforcement agencies should ensure strict implementation of laws against child labour and early marriage. This would safeguard children's right to attend school regularly and prevent socio-economic factors from forcing them out of education.

4. Parents should be actively engaged in their children's education by monitoring their academic progress, ensuring regular school attendance, and resisting cultural pressures that lead to early marriage or domestic responsibilities. Their involvement is crucial in reducing school dropout rates.

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