

## Secondary School Dropout in Tanzania: Evidence from Uyui District in Tabora Region

Enerico John Sumbizi

Department of Technical Education

Mbeya University of Science and Technology, P. O Box 131, Mbeya, Tanzania

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### ABSTRACT

Dropout has remained a major concern in Tanzania's education sector for several years, undermining national efforts to achieve equitable access to quality secondary school education. The study investigated the key factors contributing to secondary school student dropout in the Uyui-Tabora region in Tanzania. It examined the influence of school-related, student-related, and parent-related factors using a mixed-methods approach and an explanatory research design. Data were collected from 180 respondents (students, teachers, and parents) using structured questionnaires, while interviews were conducted with five school heads. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including multiple linear regression, while qualitative data underwent content analysis. Findings showed a significant relationship between dropout rates and school-, student-, and parent-based factors. School-related factors had the strongest influence ( $B = 0.112$ ,  $p = .032$ ), indicating that poor conditions such as lack of hostels, harsh discipline, and inadequate resources contribute significantly to dropout. Student-related factors ( $B = 0.038$ ,  $p = .021$ ), including peer pressure and unethical behaviour, and parent-related factors ( $B = 0.052$ ,  $p = .028$ ), such as poverty, alcoholism, and parental neglect, were also significant predictors. The study concluded that negative school environments, including teacher shortages, poor infrastructure, and limited learning materials, play a central role in student dropout. Additionally, student behaviours influenced by peer and cultural pressures, and lack of basic necessities like uniforms, contribute to the problem. Parental issues such as poverty, substance abuse, and negative attitudes toward education further exacerbate dropout rates. The findings underscore the need for integrated policy responses. The Ministry of Education, local authorities, and communities must work together to improve school infrastructure, support families, and implement learner-centred programmes. Addressing these multi-faceted challenges is vital to reducing dropout rates and ensuring equitable access to quality education in Tanzania.

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\*Corresponding author's e-mail address: mbizisu@yahoo.com (Sumbizi, E.J.)

## 1.0 Introduction

Education is universally recognised as a fundamental human right and a cornerstone for social, economic, and political development. General education equips individuals with essential skills for personal empowerment, employability, and active citizenship, while also contributing to national productivity and social cohesion (UNESCO, 2015). Within this framework, secondary education holds a particularly critical role as it bridges primary education and higher learning, enabling learners to acquire advanced knowledge, vocational readiness, and pathways for lifelong learning. Globally, access to and completion of secondary education is closely linked to reduced poverty, improved health outcomes, and enhanced gender equality (World Bank, 2018). In Tanzania, secondary education is central to national development strategies and human capital formation; however, persistent challenges such as poverty, inadequate school infrastructure, and socio-cultural barriers continue to fuel high dropout rates (URT, 2014; UNESCO, 2022). Addressing school dropouts at this level is therefore imperative for Tanzania to achieve its education sector goals and contribute meaningfully to Sustainable Development Goal 4. The increasing rate of secondary school student dropout remains a persistent challenge globally, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Tanzania. As of 2023, global education statistics indicate that approximately 272 million children and youth were out of school, with 64 million in lower secondary and 130 million in upper secondary education (UNESCO, 2022; 2015). Despite various government interventions and international commitments such as Sustainable Development Goal 4, which emphasises inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030 (UNESCO, 2023), a considerable number of students continue to exit school prematurely before completing basic secondary education. In Tanzania, although enrolment rates have improved following the implementation of the fee-free basic education policy in 2015, dropout rates remain high and disproportionately affect rural areas like those in the Tabora Region (MoEST, 2022). The 2024 Basic Education

Statistics report revealed that 306,113 students dropped out of school in 2023, a slight decrease from 327,900 in 2022. Specifically, Tabora Region reported 8,153 secondary school dropouts in 2022, ranking it among the highest in the country (MoEST, 2024). While detailed data for Uyui District in Tabora is limited, the district's inclusion in Tabora Region's dropout statistics suggests that Uyui faces similar challenges.

Student dropout undermines individual potential, perpetuates cycles of poverty, and hinders national development by limiting human capital formation (World Bank, 2023). Numerous studies have associated school dropout with a variety of factors, including school-related conditions, student-specific issues, and household or parental characteristics (URT, 2021; Mlozi et al., 2020; Mwidege & Matimbwa, 2023). For instance, inadequate school infrastructure, lack of hostels, harsh teacher-student interactions, and poorly resourced libraries have been identified as discouraging learning environments for learners (Ngussa & Yotam, 2022; Matimbwa & Kipilimba, 2018). In parallel, socio-cultural influences such as peer pressure, lack of scholastic materials, and engagement in early relationships among adolescents increase the vulnerability of students to drop out (Mkumbo, 2021). Additionally, family economic status, parental attitudes, and structural family issues such as divorce or alcoholism further exacerbate the situation (Kayombo & Nyaga, 2023).

While several national-level studies have broadly addressed dropout, there is limited empirical research focusing on context-specific dynamics in districts like Uyui in the Tabora Region, where dropout rates remain alarmingly high (URT-BEMIS, 2023). Understanding the unique interplay of school-based, student-related, and parent-induced factors in the Uyui district is critical to informing localised interventions and policy reforms. This study, therefore, bridges the knowledge gap by examining the determinants of secondary school dropout in Uyui District. Despite various government initiatives and community efforts to improve student retention, there remains limited empirical evidence on the student-, teacher-, and parent-related factors driving secondary school dropout in the Uyui

district, thereby necessitating a focused investigation into this issue.

## **2.0 Materials and Methods**

### *2.1 Ethics Statement*

The study adhered to ethical research standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and participation was entirely voluntary. Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and all data were used solely for academic purposes. Ethical clearance was secured from the relevant institutional review board, and permissions were obtained from the District Education Office and respective school heads before data collection. Special care was taken when dealing with students to ensure that no psychological harm or coercion occurred during the study process.

### *2.2 Study Area*

The research was carried out in the Uyui District, situated in Tanzania's Tabora Region. This district is characterised by a predominantly rural population, limited infrastructure, and socioeconomic challenges that affect educational outcomes. Uyui has several public secondary schools, many of which experience high dropout rates due to a range of school-based, student-related, and parent-related factors. The selection of Uyui was purposeful due to its documented educational challenges and the need for localised data to inform interventions aimed at improving school retention in similar contexts across the country.

### *2.3 Research Approach and Design*

This study employed a mixed research approach using an explanatory research design. The quantitative component involved the use of structured questionnaires to measure the extent and influence of various dropout factors, while qualitative interviews with school heads provided more profound insights and contextual understanding. The explanatory design facilitated the explanation of observed statistical relationships through qualitative elaboration.

### *2.4 Population and Sampling*

The target population comprised students, teachers, and parents associated with selected public secondary schools in Uyui District. From a total population of 315 individuals, a sample of 180 respondents was drawn using stratified and simple random sampling techniques to ensure representation across the three key respondent categories.

### *2.5 Data Collection Methods*

The study utilised two main data collection instruments. First, a structured questionnaire designed with a 5-point Likert scale was administered to students, parents, and teachers to assess their perceptions of school-based, student-based, and parent-based dropout factors. Second, an interview guide was used to collect data from heads of schools to collect insightful data on the experience of school administration on student dropouts. Finally, documentary review was used to obtain secondary data on students' dropout rates. The triangulation of instruments strengthened the validity of findings by capturing both measurable and contextual data. All tools were pre-tested to ensure clarity, reliability, and cultural appropriateness.

### *2.6 Data Analysis*

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics, specifically multiple linear regression analysis, to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between predictor variables (school, student, and parent factors) and the dependent variable (student dropout). The statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26. Also, the qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis and reported in verbatim quotes.

## **3.0 Results**

### *3.1 Influence of School-based Factors on Students Dropping Out*

Regarding school-based factors, the findings in Table 1 highlight a number of school-based factors perceived to influence student dropout in secondary schools. Among these, strict or harsh teacher behaviour received the highest average score (mean = 3.45, SD = 0.75), suggesting that negative disciplinary practices and unfriendly student-teacher interactions are a significant contributor to dropout. This reflects a growing concern in Tanzanian schools and elsewhere, where authoritarian teaching styles can alienate students, reduce motivation, and increase absenteeism. The low standard deviation indicates general agreement among respondents. This calls for the implementation of teacher professional development programmes that emphasise positive discipline, mentorship, and

inclusive classroom practices to foster a safe and supportive learning environment.

Table 1  
*School-Based Factors Affecting Student Dropout*

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Average Score	Standard Deviation
Lack of hostel facilities	180	1	5	3.32	1.1
Shortage of teachers	180	1	5	3.29	1.03
School learning environment	180	1	5	3.27	0.89
Inadequate library services	180	1	5	3.22	0.92
Strict or harsh teacher behaviour	180	1	5	3.45	0.75

Source: Field Data (2025)

The lack of hostel facilities (mean = 3.32, SD = 1.10) was also identified as a major contributor to dropout. In rural districts, students often travel long distances to attend school, which can be physically exhausting and unsafe, particularly for girls. This issue makes the availability of boarding facilities crucial.

A parent highlighted, *"Without a hostel, my daughter has to walk more than five kilometres every day. It is unsafe and she arrives at school already tired."* (Interview with Parent, March 2025). In agreement, a teacher noted, *"If hostels were available, truancy would reduce, especially for rural students who face discouraging long journeys to school."* (Interview with Teacher, March 2025).

The relatively higher standard deviation suggests variability in student experiences, likely influenced by the location of schools. The implication here is that educational authorities should prioritise providing hostels in remote areas to reduce commuting burdens and increase school retention, especially for vulnerable groups. Similarly, shortage of teachers (mean = 3.29, SD = 1.03) was a prominent issue. Inadequate teacher availability often leads to overcrowded classrooms and diminished student engagement. When students do not receive sufficient academic support or attention, they are more likely to disengage and eventually drop out. Overcrowded classrooms with limited teacher attention undermine student learning. As one teacher observed, *"A single teacher attends to more than seventy students in one class. It is impossible to give them all the attention they need, and many eventually drop out because they feel lost"* (Interview with Teacher, March 2025).

Such evidence underscores the need for strategic teacher recruitment and equitable deployment to underserved areas. Addressing this issue requires strategic teacher recruitment, equitable deployment, and incentives to attract teachers to underserved areas.

The school learning environment (mean = 3.27, SD = 0.89) and inadequate library services (mean = 3.22, SD = 0.92) were also recognised as important dropout factors. Poor physical infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching and learning materials, and absence of quiet reading spaces can undermine the quality of education. These conditions often create frustration and disengagement among students. This implies a need for comprehensive investment in school infrastructure and learning resources to create a more conducive academic environment.

A parent echoed this concern, stating, *"When a child only meets a teacher once a week, they lose interest and feel school has no value."* (Interview with Parent, March 2025). Such evidence underscores the need for strategic teacher recruitment and equitable deployment to underserved areas.

These findings are consistent with several studies. For instance, Mkumbo (2014) found that harsh teacher treatment and a lack of student-friendly environments were major causes of school dropout in Tanzanian secondary schools. Similarly, Komba and Nkumbi (2008) reported that inadequate infrastructure and a shortage of teachers contributed significantly to poor student retention. In contrast, a study by Rolleston et al. (2013) in Sub-Saharan Africa found that while school infrastructure matters, household economic constraints were more critical, suggesting the need to consider both school and non-school factors in dropout interventions.

Nonetheless, the consistency of the current findings with local studies underlines the persistent structural and pedagogical barriers within the education system.

A parent similarly emphasised, *"When children lack a good place to study, they spend time loitering in the streets, and eventually they say school is wasting their time."* (Interview with Parent, March 2025).

Similarly, a parent reported, *"My child dropped out because he constantly complained of being mistreated by a particular teacher and preferred to remain at home rather than continue with school."* (Interview with Parent, March 2025).

This statement provides a powerful illustration of how teacher-student relationships can directly influence students' persistence in school. The parent's account highlights the psychological and emotional toll that repeated negative encounters with teachers can have on learners, leading to feelings of rejection, loss of confidence, and eventually withdrawal from formal education.

Table 2

*Student-Based Factors Contributing to School Dropout*

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Average Score	Standard Deviation
Peer pressure	180	1	5	3.79	1.11
Unethical behaviour	180	1	5	3.86	0.92
Cultural influences	180	1	5	3.65	0.93
Inadequate school uniforms	180	1	5	4.72	0.2
Lack of learning materials	180	1	5	4.14	0.86

Source: Field data (2025)

One parent expressed, *"My son missed classes many times because we could not afford another uniform, and he was constantly punished for wearing torn clothes."* (Interview with Parent, March 2025).

A student similarly explained, *"Sometimes I stayed home because I feared being embarrassed by teachers or classmates when my uniform was old."* (Interview with Student, March 2025).

These testimonies demonstrate how uniform requirements can act as barriers for students from low-income households.

This means that students who don't wear the right clothes to school often face stigma, exclusion, or punishment, which can make them less likely to keep going to school. In Tanzanian public schools, uniforms are mandatory, and failure to comply can result in suspension or expulsion, particularly among students from low-

Such testimonies underscore that dropout is not always a result of academic inability but often of hostile social environments within schools that make learners feel unwelcome and unsafe.

### *3.2 Influence of Student-Based Factors on Secondary School Students' Dropout*

The results presented in Table 2 reveal that several student-based factors are perceived to significantly influence secondary school dropout rates. The mean scores for all variables range from 3.65 to 4.72 on a 5-point Likert scale, suggesting a high level of agreement among respondents about the role these factors play in pushing students out of school. The scores are relatively high, reflecting the strong perceived impact of these student-related challenges.

The inadequate provision of school uniforms stands out as the most significant factor, with a very high mean score of 4.72 and a remarkably low standard deviation (SD = 0.20), indicating strong consensus among respondents.

income households. The implication is clear: the government and stakeholders need to expand targeted interventions, such as school uniform subsidies or support programs for disadvantaged students, to ensure equitable access to education. The second most influential factor is lack of learning materials, with a mean score of 4.14 (SD = 0.86).

Similarly, a parent commented, *"My daughter dropped out because we could not afford textbooks, and she kept saying she felt lost in class"*(Interview with Parent, March 2025).

Students without textbooks, notebooks, pens, and other essential materials are likely to struggle academically, fall behind in class, and ultimately drop out due to frustration or poor performance. This finding calls for improved school funding and partnerships with NGOs or private donors to provide free or low-cost learning materials to students, particularly in underserved areas.

Unethical behaviour among students, such as absenteeism, substance abuse, or engagement in criminal activity, had a mean of 3.86 (SD = 0.92), indicating that behavioural issues are a prominent cause of school dropouts. This highlights the need for effective guidance and counselling services in schools, as well as programs aimed at instilling discipline, moral values, and life skills among adolescents.

Peer pressure (mean = 3.79, SD = 1.11) also emerged as a key factor. Students who associate with peers involved in negative behaviours may adopt similar patterns, including skipping classes, engaging in early sexual activities, or withdrawing entirely from school.

The relatively high standard deviation suggests that the impact of peer pressure varies across contexts, which local social dynamics could influence. Schools should therefore implement peer mentorship and positive youth engagement programmes to help students resist harmful influences.

Similarly, one teacher noted, *"We have cases where students become involved in drugs or theft, and eventually they stop coming to school altogether"* (Interview with Teacher, March 2025).

A parent echoed this concern, stating, *"My child joined a group of friends who drank alcohol and skipped classes. Within a year, he had dropped out"* (Interview with Parent, March 2025).

These accounts highlight the urgent need for effective guidance and counselling services in schools to address behavioural challenges and build resilience among adolescents.

Cultural influences (mean = 3.65, SD = 0.93) were also rated significantly. In many communities, traditional beliefs and gender

norms continue to hinder education, especially for girls. Practices such as early marriage, initiation rites, or the undervaluing of girls' education can result in school discontinuation. This finding implies the need for community-based awareness campaigns and inclusive education policies that respect cultural contexts while promoting the right to education.

The findings align with several previous studies. Mgoma and Mapunda (2020) found that the lack of basic school needs, such as uniforms and books, was a primary reason for dropout among secondary students in rural Tanzania. Similarly, Lassibille et al. (2010) confirmed that the provision of school materials significantly reduced dropout rates in Madagascar. Katahoire and Kirumira (2001) also identified peer pressure and student misbehaviour as major factors in Uganda. In contrast, Lewin and Sabates (2011) argued that economic pressure on families and poor academic performance were more critical than peer-related factors, indicating that student behaviour may be context-dependent. Nonetheless, the present findings strongly support the argument that student-based factors, if not adequately addressed, pose a major threat to retention and progression in secondary education.

### *3.3 Influence of Parent-Based Related Factors on Secondary School Students' Dropout*

The data in Table 3 indicate that various parent-related factors significantly contribute to secondary school student dropout. The mean scores, ranging from 3.54 to 4.09, suggest a strong level of agreement among respondents about the influence of these parental characteristics and circumstances.

Table 3

*Parent-Based Factors Contributing to Secondary School Student Dropout*

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Divorce / Separation	180	1	5	4.05	0.89
Unwillingness to Send Students	180	1	5	3.88	0.79
Alcoholism	180	1	5	3.8	0.83
Parental Perceptions of Education	180	1	5	3.62	0.88
Poverty Level	180	1	5	3.51	0.93

Source: Field data (2025)

Each of these factors surpasses the midpoint of the 5-point Likert scale, implying their notable

contribution to dropout rates in the studied context.

The most influential factor was divorce or separation (mean = 4.09, SD = 0.89). This finding highlights the destabilising effect of a family breakdown on a child's schooling. When parents separate, students may experience emotional distress, economic hardship, or relocation, all of which can interrupt their education. Moreover, such instability may result in diminished parental supervision and academic support. The implication here is the need for school-based psychosocial support programmes and community counselling initiatives to help students cope with family disruptions and remain in school.

Similarly, one student explained, *"After my parents separated, I had to move to my uncle's place, and there was no money or support for school, so I stopped attending."* (Interview with Student, March 2025). Similarly, a teacher observed, *"Children from divorced families are often emotionally disturbed, and they lack parental follow-up, which pushes them out of school."* (Interview with Teacher, March 2025).

This data suggests that beyond financial disruption, divorce or separation affects the psychosocial wellbeing of students, making school retention more difficult.

Unwillingness of parents to send students to school was another major factor (mean = 3.90, SD = 0.79). This suggests that despite the availability of educational opportunities, some parents do not value formal schooling, possibly due to entrenched cultural beliefs, gender biases, or a preference for early marriage or child labour. This highlights the need for government and civil society to intensify sensitisation campaigns targeting parental attitudes and emphasising the long-term benefits of education, especially in rural and underserved areas. Additionally, alcoholism among parents (mean = 3.84, SD = 0.83) was also perceived as a key dropout factor. Alcohol abuse in the household often results in neglect, domestic violence, or financial mismanagement, leaving students unsupported or in unsafe environments. Interventions aimed at addressing substance abuse at the family level, such as rehabilitation services, community policing, and parenting workshops, could therefore indirectly reduce school dropout rates.

Parental perceptions about education (mean = 3.60, SD = 0.88) also play a role. If parents see little value in formal education, especially beyond primary school, they may be reluctant to invest in their children's continued schooling. Changing such perceptions requires long-term engagement through public awareness campaigns, radio programmes, and community leaders who advocate for the value of education, especially in lifting families out of poverty. The poverty level (mean = 3.54, SD = 0.93), although the lowest rated among the listed factors, remains significant. Poverty limits the ability of parents to pay for school-related costs such as uniforms, books, meals, and transport. Although Tanzania provides free secondary education, indirect costs still pose a barrier to many families. To address this, there is a need for targeted financial aid, school feeding programmes, and conditional cash transfers to support children from extremely poor households.

Additionally, a parent explained, *"Even if school fees are free, I cannot afford exercise books, pens, or bus fare, so my son dropped out."* (Interview with Parent, March 2025). Similarly, a teacher pointed out, *"Students from poor families miss classes frequently because they cannot afford meals or uniforms, and eventually they disappear completely."* (Interview with Teacher, March 2025). This indicates that poverty, while not the only factor, creates an environment where other vulnerabilities compound the risk of dropout.

These findings are consistent with prior research. For instance, Sabates et al. (2010) discovered that poverty, parental attitudes, and unstable family structures markedly elevated the risk of school dropout in Sub-Saharan Africa. Chireshe and Shumba (2011) in Zimbabwe similarly demonstrated that parental neglect resulting from alcoholism or family disintegration diminishes student morale and academic involvement. In Tanzania, Makwinya and Ndibalema (2020) documented the adverse influence of low parental involvement and negative cultural beliefs on secondary school retention. On the other hand, a contrasting study by Hunt (2008) argued that economic hardship is often the overriding factor, with cultural beliefs being secondary. Nevertheless, the current study

supports the view that multiple parental-related issues collectively influence school dropout rates.

### 3.4 Regression Analysis

The findings from the regression analysis offer details about the influence of school-based, student-based, and parent-based factors on secondary school student dropout in Tanzania. The model summary (Table 4) shows a coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of 0.108, meaning that

approximately 10.8% of the variance in student dropout can be explained by the combined predictors. Although the model is statistically significant, the low  $R^2$  indicates that other variables not captured in the study may play a more dominant role in influencing dropout. The adjusted  $R^2$ , which accounts for the number of predictors, decreases slightly to 0.079, further underscoring the model's limited explanatory power.

Table 4  
*Model Summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.329a	0.108	0.079	2.02115

*a. Predictors: (Constant), School factors, Students Factors, and Parents factors*

Source: Field data (2025)

The ANOVA results (Table 5) confirm the overall significance of the model, with an F-value of 10.835 and a p-value of .000. This suggests that

school, student, and parent-related factors, when considered together, have a statistically significant impact on student dropout rates.

Table 5  
*ANOVA*

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	132.58	3	44.193	10.835	.000**
Residual	1120.42	176	6.368		
Total	1253	179			

*a. Predictors: (Constant), School Factors, Students Factors, Parents Factors*

*b. Dependent Variable: Student Dropout*

Source: Field data (2025)

Despite the modest  $R^2$  value, the significant F-statistic implies that these factors are meaningful contributors and cannot be ignored in dropout intervention strategies.

The coefficients table (Table 6) provides a deeper understanding of the contribution of each predictor variable.

Table 6  
*Coefficients – Relationship between Predictors and Student Dropout*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	12.735	1.095	—	11.632	.000**
School factors	0.112	0.068	0.167	1.647	.032*
Student factors	0.038	0.026	0.131	1.292	.021*
Parent factors	0.052	0.032	0.157	1.625	.028*

*a. Dependent Variable: Student Dropout*

Source: Researcher (2025)

School-based factors had the highest unstandardised coefficient ( $B = 0.112$ ,  $p = .032$ ), suggesting that negative school conditions, such

as lack of hostels, harsh disciplinary measures, or insufficient learning resources, significantly increase the likelihood of students dropping out.



Student-related factors ( $B = 0.038$ ,  $p = .021$ ), including peer pressure and unethical behaviour, also had a significant impact, although their relative influence was lower. Parent-related factors ( $B = 0.052$ ,  $p = .028$ ), such as poverty, parental alcoholism, and unwillingness to send children to school, likewise significantly predicted dropout rates.

Several studies support these findings. For instance, Komba and Kafanabo (2020) found that inadequate school infrastructure and poor learning conditions were significant contributors to student dropout in rural Tanzania. Similarly, Ngussa and Role (2016) emphasised the role of student attitudes and peer influence in shaping school attendance patterns in East Africa. UNESCO (2023) also confirmed that parental challenges, including poverty and negative attitudes toward education, contribute significantly to school dropout, especially among girls.

Nonetheless, divergent findings are also present. Kabayanda et al. (2021), in a study conducted in Uganda, reported that student-related factors such as early marriage and pregnancy were more influential than school conditions. Mkude (2022) found that in urban Tanzanian settings, parent-related factors like poverty had minimal influence, with urban-related issues like crime and technology misuse being more dominant. Furthermore, a World Bank's (2022) report emphasised macroeconomic and systemic factors such as inadequate government funding and national economic instability as primary reasons for student dropout, suggesting a broader structural framework beyond individual or household-level predictors.

These findings carry important policy implications. First, addressing school-based challenges such as building hostels, improving teacher-student ratios, and enhancing learning environments can directly reduce dropout rates. Second, engaging parents through community outreach and education campaigns is vital in changing perceptions and improving support for children's education. Third, providing psychosocial support and mentorship for students can help mitigate behavioural and peer-related pressures. Finally, the relatively low  $R^2$  value suggests that future research should include broader socioeconomic, cultural, and policy-level factors to gain a more comprehensive understanding of dropout dynamics in Tanzania.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

The study concludes that student dropout is a multifaceted social issue influenced by a variety of school, student, and parental factors. School-based challenges, such as harsh teacher behaviour, inadequate facilities, and a lack of hostels, emerged as particularly influential. Others, such as student-related factors, including lack of uniforms, peer pressure, and unethical behaviour, also significantly contribute to dropout. Parental influences, such as divorce or separation, alcoholism, and limited support for education, further compound the problem. Quantitative analysis confirmed that these factors jointly exert a statistically significant impact on dropout, although the model's explanatory power was modest. Importantly, qualitative findings from interviews with school heads, teachers, and parents enriched these results, revealing perceptions, pressures, and contextual nuances that quantitative data alone could not capture. Themes emerging from these qualitative responses, such as teacher attitudes, community expectations, and resource constraints, provided critical validation and triangulation of the statistical findings. This finding underscores that dropout cannot be addressed solely through numerical analysis; effective policy interventions require an integrated approach that considers school practices, family dynamics, and broader social contexts.

#### **5.0 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, several strategic recommendations are proposed to address secondary school dropouts in the Uyui District and similar contexts. First, there is a need to enhance school infrastructure by constructing hostel facilities and improving libraries to create a more supportive and accessible learning environment. The government should also prioritise the recruitment and equitable deployment of teachers, particularly in underserved rural areas, to reduce overcrowded classrooms and improve teacher-student interaction. Teacher training programmes should emphasise positive discipline, mentorship, and inclusive pedagogy to mitigate the adverse effects of harsh treatment. Additionally, targeted support programmes such as school feeding, uniform subsidies, and the provision of free or affordable learning materials should be implemented to ease the burden on low-income families.

Schools are also encouraged to establish peer mentorship and counselling services that help

students resist negative peer pressure and develop appropriate behaviour. Community sensitisation campaigns should be intensified to change parental attitudes and cultural norms that discourage schooling, especially for girls. Moreover, psychosocial support mechanisms should be introduced in schools to assist students affected by family disruptions such as divorce or alcoholism. Financial interventions, including conditional cash transfers and sponsorship schemes, can play a crucial role in supporting at-risk students. Finally, future research should explore broader structural and policy-level factors that influence dropout, including economic instability and systemic gaps in education policy implementation.

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## 8.0 Statement of Competing Interest

The author declares that there was no competing interest in conducting the study throughout.

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