

# Analysis of the Socio-Economic Factors That Contribute to Children School Dropout in Artisanal Small-Scale Gold Mining Communities of Tanzania

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## Abstract

In Tanzania, education has been earmarked as a priority area to stimulate socioeconomic development, however; the increasing number of school dropout cases is posing a huge hindrance to achieving this goal. To establish the major causes of school dropouts, this paper investigated different factors that explain the phenomena with special focus on artisanal mining areas of Nyarugusu village, Geita Region, Tanzania. To collect the required data, random samples of 200 respondents who were residents with previous school enrollment but dropped out from school were selected. From the selected respondents, data on their demographic factors, education history and current activities were collected using a semi structured questionnaire and where appropriate focus group discussions and in-depth one-to-one interviews were used to triangulate the sample population responses. The data was analyzed both descriptively and statistically using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS version 16.1) to establish the determinant factors associated with school dropping out. Results revealed loss of interest to education as one of the major reason for school dropouts in the community alongside several factors such as migration, school absenteeism, death of both parents, and separation of parents, community's poor perception to education, lack of school necessities, peer pressure, family obligations, early pregnancies and early marriages. Major recommendation was that, Tanzanian government should consider to put in place community empowerment programs such as cooperatives and involve all other stakeholders to invest in tailor made 'hands on' education programs for such disadvantaged communities to improve their person skills so as to benefit both in mining and other entrepreneurial endeavors hence reduce the school dropouts problem.

**Keywords:** School Dropout, Artisanal Small-Scale Gold Mining, Nyarugusu Village, Tanzania.

## 1.0 Introduction

Artisanal small-scale mining refers to informal mining activities carried out using low technology or with minimal machinery (Hentschel, 2002). Artisanal small scale mining can potentially contribute to development by; providing employment, increasing local purchasing power, stimulating local economic growth and slowing urban migration (Banchirigah, 2010). It is estimated that more than 100 million people rely on this sector for income, mainly in developing nations (Hentschel, 2002). In recent years; there have been an increasing number of people in Africa leaving subsistence agriculture and joining artisanal small scale mining. An increasing number of rural population have also continuously joined artisanal small scale mining activities to supplement income and support they're left behind families. Maconachie and Hilson (2016), further elaborate that, artisanal small scale gold mining is preferred to agriculture among some rural communities due to its quick returns and less investment in terms of tools. However, artisanal small-scale mining is associated with a number of negative impacts including an influx of workers in mining communities and conflict with existing miners, communicable diseases, environmental degradation, abandoned pits and shafts, as well as school dropouts. (Communities and small- scale mining report,(CASM), 2009).

Globally, there has been a suppressed progress in reducing the rate at which children drop out of school before reaching the highest grade of primary education. For instance, about 137 million children began primary school in 2011, but about 34 million of them drop out of school before reaching the highest grade of primary education (UNESCO,2015). Ricardo Sabates(2010) suggested that; ill-health, malnutrition, and poverty have been some of the reasons to school dropouts among students. Regions like South and West Asia are said to have similar problems. It was revealed that Pakistan has the same problem particularly in the primary education system (Gulbaz et al., 2011). A study in Pakistan indicated that about 50% dropouts rates for both girls and boys (Khan, 2011), while a study in Philippine revealed different reasons to school dropouts including loss of personal interest in school, a high cost which comes with obtaining education and looking for employment (Orbeta, 2010). Likewise, Sub-Saharan Africa is no exception, a number of scholarly studies have shown worrisome reports wherein 2007 to 2012 the number of girls dropped out of school had increased from 12 to 15 millions in Sub-Saharan countries (Msoke, 2012). Previous studies have identified rural population to be the most affected by the school dropout problem. A study conducted in Kenya by Muganda and Omondi, (2010) indicated that students in rural areas particularly girls easily drop out of school compared to those in urban areas because of undesirable cultural forces prevailing in their families and communities. Ernest ( 2014) also points out that

Ghana has the problem of school dropouts despite the government's efforts to lower the problem.

The situation is quite similar in Tanzania, according to Basic Education Statistic in Tanzania report (BEST), (2011), in the year 2007 a total of 448,448 students joined secondary school but it was only a total of 190,186 students who were able to complete their ordinary level of secondary school in 2011. This indicates that about 258,262 had dropped out of school in a span of three years. A study on the causes of school dropouts in secondary school in Tanzania pointed out several reasons to school dropouts including; lack of awareness on education matters, high poverty in families, cultural aspects such as early marriages, divorce, polygamy, lack of family planning and negative attitudes towards education especially for girls and Parents deaths (Kaling, 2013). Further research on the similar subject added that, students' drop out of school for various reasons including; the lack of financial support, loss of parents, parents being sick, poor performance, pregnancy, early marriage and rape (Rwechungura, 2014).

In 2016, Tanzanian government re-programmed the free education program from primary to secondary schools. The program aimed at increasing enrollment from primary to secondary level as well as reducing school dropouts' problem in the country. At present, there have been several studies on school dropouts in Tanzania; however, none of the available studies has addressed the contribution of artisanal small-scale gold mining activities on students' dropouts. To address the gap, this study has investigated reasons to school dropouts particularly from a cohort of the previously dropped out students that are now actively involved in artisanal mining so as to benchmark some important factors that lure them out of school and join mining. Collier P(2010) and Béland et al.(2009) also established that without good policies and institutions mining can be a curse rather than a blessing particularly in developing countries at which their economy depends tremendously on natural resources as the means to eradicating poverty. So the question that remains is if the presence of artisanal small-scale gold mining in the study area a blessing or a curse?

## **2.0 Materials and Methods**

### **2.1 Study area**

To establish the major causes of school dropouts, this study investigated the different factors that explain the phenomena with a special focus on artisanal mining areas of Nyarugusu village, Geita region, Tanzania. The village is strategically located compared to other villages in the Geita region, with a total population of about 5,646 people. Nyarugusu has comparative advantages of big fertile land acreage and gold deposits thus, making it suitable for multi-functional livelihood activities. Traditionally, livelihood in Nyarugusu depended solely on agriculture until the village was discovered to have gold and took a shift from depending only on agriculture for the sustenance of livelihood to artisanal gold mining because of the promising nature of artisanal gold mining. This study noted that more than 80% of the population is now directly or indirectly depended on artisanal gold mining for their livelihoods. Despite the booming gold mining activity, ironically, and surprisingly, the area still harbors evident signs of poverty and underdevelopment with the majority of children dropping out of school for socio-economic reasons.

### **2.2 Data collection and analysis**

To collect the required data, random samples of 200 respondents who were residents with previous school enrollment but dropped out from school were selected. From the selected respondents, data on their demographic factors, education history, and current activities were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire and where appropriate focus group discussions and in-depth one-to-one interviews were used to triangulate the sample population responses. Purposive sampling selected school teachers and officials from the local government from the area, community members who were indigenous of Nyarugusu as well as education stakeholders. In-depth interviews were as well conducted on the reasons behind school dropouts in the study. The data was analyzed both descriptively and statistically using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS version 21) to determine factors associated with school dropping out in an artisanal small-scale gold mining community.

## **3.0 Results and Discussion**

The study highlighted a number of social- economic factors contributing to school dropouts in the study area. Although different factors were mentioned to be the contributing factors as to why a particular student dropped out of school, loss of education interest was identified to be the leading factor to school dropouts in the study area. The study also identified the mentioned factors to have been linked with socio-economic reason following interviews conducted with different indigenous, education stakeholders as well as the concern previously dropout students. In order to get a better understanding of the studied population, the author gave an overview of the different demographic characteristics of the respondents used in the process of data collection as highlighted in table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the studied population**

| Variables                                    | Frequency  | %            |
|--|------------|--------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                                |            |              |
| Female                                       | 64         | 32.0         |
| Male   | 136        | 68.0         |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>200</b> | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Age</b>                                   |            |              |
| 7 -10  | 47         | 23.5         |
| 11-15  | 106        | 53.0         |
| 16 and above                                 | 47         | 23.5         |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>200</b> | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>The Kind of Household</b>                 |            |              |
| Nuclear family                               | 18         | 9.0          |
| Extended family                              | 18         | 9.0          |
| Single parent family of only a mother        | 126        | 63.0         |
| Single parent family of only a father        | 38         | 19.0         |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>200</b> | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Years spent in school</b>                 |            |              |
| 4  | 13         | 5.0          |
| 5  | 15         | 5.8          |
| 6  | 125        | 48.1         |
| 7 and above                                  | 47         | 18.1         |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>200</b> | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Occupation</b>                            |            |              |
| Artisanal small scale gold mining activities | 156        | 60.0         |
| Farming                                      | 9          | 3.5          |
| Business activities                          | 17         | 6.5          |
| A house wife                                 | 18         | 6.9          |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>200</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

*Source: field data 2016*

### **Gender &Age**

Demographic characteristic of the studied population revealed that out of the 200 respondents, 136(68%) were male while 64(32%) were female. Although the study used random sampling, still it was noted male respondents to have exceeded that of female respondents, this indicates that male respondents are more affected by the presence of school dropout in the study area. On the other hand, the study discovered that, children of young age to be involved in the different economic generating activities for income particularly mining after dropping out of school, the study noted about 47(23.5%) dropped out of school at the age of 6-10, about 106(53.0%) dropped out of school at the age of 11-15 while about 47(23.5%) dropped out of school at the age of 16 and above.

### **The Kind of Household**

Different family types were noted to have a different influence on student's school dropouts in the study area. About 18(9.0%) came from nuclear family which is a family consisting of two parents and children 18(9%) were from extended, 126 (63%)respondents came from single parent family of only a mother while about 38(19%)were from single parent family of only a father. Findings indicates that students from single parent family of only a mother were the most affected by the problem of school dropouts, the study noted the lack of enough income in many of the household headed by women, to alternatively use children as one of their assets in helping to sustain livelihoods of the household as a result drop out of school.

### **Numbers of years spend in school**

It was identified that out of the 200 respondents, about 125(48.1%) withdrew from school at after six years of schooling which is equivalent to primary level six, 47(18.1%) left school after seven years which is equivalent to the primary seven level while 15(5.8%) dropped out of school after five years of schooling which is equivalent to primary level five and about 13(5.0%) dropped out of school at primary level four equivalent to four to only four years of schooling. This result implies that, despite of Tanzanian government efforts to embark increased access to basic primary education by introducing free education in the country, the communities around artisanal small scale gold mining to still to drop out of school for different socio- economic reasons.

### Respondent's current occupation

Findings revealed that 156(60.0%) out of the 200 school dropouts sampled for data collection, were involved in artisanal small scale gold mining for their daily income. This indicates that most of the school dropouts in the study area depend on artisanal small scale gold mining for income, while about 17(6.5%) were engaged in business activities(3.5%) and 18(6.9%) were only house wives. Table 2, gives an overview of the different reasons given by the respondents to why they dropped out of school.

**Table 2:** Socio- economic factors contributing to school dropouts

| Reasons for school dropouts         | Female (n %)      | Male (n %)         |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Migration                           | 0(0.0)            | 2(1.5)             |
| School Absenteeism                  | 6(9.4)            | 26(19.3)           |
| Death of both parents               | 0(0.0)            | 10(7.4)            |
| Separation of parents               | 2(3.1)            | 23(17.0)           |
| Community's perception to Education | 3(4.7)            | 13(9.6)            |
| Lack of school necessities          | 4(6.3)            | 14(10.4)           |
| Peer pressure                       | 1(1.6)            | 7(5.2)             |
| Loss of interest to education       | 15(23.4)          | 29(21.5)           |
| Family obligations                  | 5(7.8)            | 11(8.1)            |
| Early Pregnancy                     | 18(28.1)          | 0(0.0)             |
| Early marriages                     | 10(15.6)          | 1(0.7)             |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>64(100.00)</b> | <b>136(100.00)</b> |

*Source: field data 2016*

### Loss of interest to education and school absenteeism

Loss of interest to education was indicated to be one of the most contributing factors to school dropouts in the study area; the study revealed of 136 male respondents dropped out of school because they had no interest in education anymore, while of the 64 female respondents had dropped out of school because of the lost interest in education. It was noted that students preferred to join artisanal small-scale gold mining activities for everyday income thus shift their interests from studies to being artisanal small-scale gold miners. This does not come as a surprise due to the informality of artisanal gold mining in the study area apart from agriculture, artisanal gold mining is perceived to be one of the major economic activities in the study area. The nature of artisanal small-scale mining is that an individual does not require having much capital but limited simple tools; as such a number of young people at the age of attending school would rather work in the mining as gold diggers for their basic needs rather than attending school.

However, this research noted school absenteeism to have an influence on school dropouts in the study area, in which about 6(9.4%) female students dropped out of school due to absenteeism. Whereas absenteeism had a higher impact on male respondents, of which about 26(19.3%) dropped out of school because they devoted more time to non-school activities such as artisanal small-scale gold than attending to school. The study further identified absenteeism to be a common problem among students in Nyarugusu because of the shifted interest from studies to artisanal gold mining activities.

A similar observation was made by Ernest (2014) in a study on 'the effects of artisanal gold mining on school attendance and academic performance of junior high school students in Upper Denkyira West District of Ghana'. In this study, it was indicated that about 96 % of students prefer to engage in artisanal gold mining during school hours while only 4% engage in artisanal gold mining after school hours and during weekends. He further explained that artisanal small-scale mining activities conducted by students have a negative effect on school attendance and academic performance in which he indicated students who attend school regularly perform tremendously while the absence students were observed to perform poorly thus motivated to drop out of school. Shahidul (2015) further elaborates that irregular attendance can be a precursor for dropping out from school regardless of the gender of the pupils.

Hakielimu (2010), established that in Tanzania, there are some circumstances in which parents play a big role in their children's school dropout because they do not realize the importance of attending school. Parents claim that most of their children have acquired an advanced level of education but ended up staying in the village doing nothing. This is also the case in the study area. It was discovered that some parents did not show much concern for their children's education; as a result majority of the parents appreciated their children for helping with raising some of the family income thus in the long run children naturally dropped out of school to focus income generating activities.

### Death of both parents and family obligation

Findings identified about 10(7.4%) male respondents dropped out of school because of the death of both their parents while none of the female respondents dropped out of school because of the same factor. It is traditionally

believed that it is a male's responsibility to take care of the family, therefore in the absence of the both parents a male child assumes the role of the father by starting to work as a gold digger in the mining area. A study on rural livelihoods and poverty in Mkinga District in Tanga region in Tanzania further explained that it is a traditional practice in Tanzania that households are predominantly led by men Xiaoyun, (2016). Therefore, in the absence of both parents, and the absence of a father, a male child will almost naturally assume the responsibility to providing for his siblings and thus he must start earning and as a result, they often will drop out of school.

On the other hand, family obligations were discovered to have contributed to school dropouts for both female and male in the study area. Of 64 female respondents, about 5(7.8%) female dropped out of school because of family obligation while of 136 male respondents 11(8.1%) had dropped out of school because of the same factor. it was noted a number of students in the study area to find themselves in the misty of providing for a family at the young age as a result forced to work for family income to cover different family obligations This establishes that, although it is traditionally believed that male children are the ones to take care of the family in the absence of parents, the study identified that families of only female children, to have a contrary behavior that, in the absence of both parents, it is the female child obliged of looking after her siblings. Speaking to Neema, one of the female despondences on why she had to withdraw from school for artisanal small-scale gold mining, she had the following explanation to say...

*"Life was not difficult when my parents were alive because they used to provide for us even though we had to help in farming during holidays and attend a school like other students but after their death, life became difficult for me and my siblings. Since I am the eldest, I had no alternative except dropping out school in order to work in an artisanal small-scale gold mining so as to take care of my siblings"*

A study in sub-Saharan Africa revealed that more than 12 million children are orphaned by AIDS. Surveys from Kenya, South Africa, and Tanzania established that orphans are more likely to withdraw from school, less likely to be at an age-appropriate grade, and less likely to have limited family resources spent on their education (Ngodu, 2009).

### **Migration and separation of parents**

Findings revealed migration and separation of parents to be one of the reasons contributing to school dropout. Artisanal gold mining is associated with high mobility where gold miners move from one place to another during gold rush; this is the situation in Nyarugusu Village in which artisanal small-scale gold miners mostly men, move to remote places such as forests, mountains, and to other remote regions like Shinyanga. For this reason, women who are left behind are propelled to be the households' bread winners as they wait for their husbands 'luck to obtain gold big enough to pull them out of poverty.

Artisanal gold mining is characterized by low reliability since there are no tools to predict when a person can secure gold if keeps digging. The study identified that over 90 percent of the men who leave their households for gold rush do not return to their households for several years, they often opt to settle down with new families because it is easier for them than going back to the old family, which over the years would may have encountered many structural changes without the 'artisanal husbands'. In this case, a woman would, therefore, be the only one to sustain the livelihood of her household, seeing that, children automatically feel the need to help their mother out of stress and pressure by joining artisanal gold mining.

### **Community's poor perception of education and peer pressure**

Community's poor perception towards education and peer pressure was revealed as one of the causal factors of school dropouts in the study area. It was noted that of 136 male interviewed about 13(6.9%) were influenced to drop out of school because of community's poor perception on education while only 3 (4.7%) 64 female respondents were influenced by the same factor. The study explained that community members in the study area lack awareness on the importance of education, some of them did not attend school and therefore were not aware of any good example to relate to when it comes to the importance of education. The common success stories in Nyarugusu Village are that of rags to riches as a result of artisanal small-scale gold mining. A similar study in rural Pakistan conducted by Loyd, (2009) confirmed that children whose parents received education are more committed to education contrary to those whose parents did not receive education

Furthermore, patriarchal tendencies in society result in more value being accorded to boys' education than girls'. Gender disparities awareness exists at the primary level of education. These are largely explained by the fact that parents are disinterested in their girls' education (Khan,2011). Msoke (2012) affirmed that a higher dropout rate among girls is caused by the negative attitude of parents towards girls' education. Some parents believe that investing in girl's education is a waste of money and resources. They concentrate on boys' education because of a common view that boys will support the parents financially after getting a good job. Lloyd (2009) suggested that girls are denied education opportunities for being seen as unproductive in their ability to support the family financially in the future. Such parental attitudes further perpetuate stereotypes in Pakistani Islamic culture.

Closely linked to the above point, students can easily succumb to the peer pressure and drop out of school. Results from the study indicate that of 136 male interviewees 7 (5.2%) dropped out of school because of peer pressure while of 64 female about 1 (1.6%) dropped out of school because of peer pressure. This implies that, when male students see some of their friends dropping out of school and making money from artisanal gold mining, they can easily become attracted to get involved in artisanal gold mining. Nyaga, (2010) also indicated peer pressure as one of the contributing factors to school dropout in Kenya's secondary schools.

### **Lack of school necessities**

*"My parents are poor and cannot afford to buy School uniforms for me, leave aside buying exercise books. I am too grown to wear turned uniforms, I feel ashamed to walk to school every day looking like a homeless person and I would rather work to help my parents raising a household income"*

This was an explanation given by one of the respondents during an interview when asked the reason as to why he dropped out of school. The study revealed that of 64 female respondents 4 (6.3%) had dropped out of school due to lack of school necessities while about 14 (10.4%) of 134 male respondents had dropped out of school because of lack of school necessities. It was noted artisanal gold mining to be an alternative to many children particularly when they cannot get school necessities from their parents. To avoid teasing from their fellow students, a student prefers to work as gold diggers as well as gold panning consequently drop out of school.

### **Early Pregnancy**

It was noted that, of 64 female respondents about 18 (28.1%) had dropped out of school because of early pregnancy. Growing in the misty of poverty, young girls of school attending age easily fell into temptation hoping to acquire different wants such as chips mayayi (a loyal food delicacy) and trendy clothes. As a result, young girls indulge in sexual relationships for some financial gains. Hallman and Grant (2006) reported that early school leaving and adolescent pregnancy are strongly associated with low economic status.

Lloyd and Mensch (1995) revealed that, lack of opportunities for girls and women and the demands placed on them, coupled with the gender inequalities of the education system, may result in unsatisfactory school experiences, poor academic performance, and endorsement of early motherhood. Related findings from 17 regions of Tanzania revealed an alarming number of girls who dropped out of school because of pregnancy (TAMWA, 2010). Madeni et al. (2011) add that, teenage pregnancy is one of biggest challenge among adolescent girls and pushing factors to young girls school dropout in Tanzania. Lack of motivation is another major cause of the problem of girls' dropout. Given the high rate of unemployment among graduates, some parents feel less motivated to continue sending their daughters to school (Hunt, 2008).

Over the years, there have been discussions on whether previously dropped out of school girls could rejoin school after delivery, as an initiative to reduce the number of illiterate population and provide equal opportunity for girls and boys. However, no substantial progress has been done on this there is no official record to show that girls who dropped out school due to early pregnancy were readmitted to complete their studies.

Hallman (2008), indicates that in some countries girls' re-entry into school after pregnancy depends on being able to acquire a caregiver for the child or else if they can share or relinquish child care responsibility on a caregiver. Contrary to Hallman study, evidence from the study area, revealed that regardless of the zeal of a concerned student to rejoin school after delivery, less importance attached to education by families and society limits girls from going back to school after an early pregnancy. In addition, unending discussions and lack of official clarity on the readmission procedure further complicates the efficacy of the readmission of young girls into schools.

### **Early marriages**

Findings from the study identified early marriage as one of the factors influencing school dropout in the study area. Out of 64 female respondents, 10 (15.6%) dropped out of school because of early marriage compared to male respondents on whom out of 136 respondents it was only 1 (0.7%). This implies that early marriage is still a problem among young girls due a number of reasons including poverty which contribute to early pregnancy and finally early marriage.

According to Boyle et al., (2002) there is a link between girls' early marriage and dropping out of school. In many cases, parents believe that it is in their daughters' interests to marry at an early age. They think that early marriage will protect them from spinsterhood and honor defilement. In other places, some parents decide to keep their daughters out of school due to misinterpretation of some religion. They believe that it is evil for girls to access secular education because according to God's law only men or boys have the right to get education and engage in productive roles. Girls' have to remain at home and participate in domestic roles Birdsall et.al, (2005). This outdated belief has been a barrier to girls' education and the main source of illiteracy among women in rural areas.

Some of the familiar cases identified were that; girls at the age of 13, 14, and 16 had to drop out of school because of early marriage. As a result of early pregnancy young girls preferred to marry men who migrated to the study area for artisanal small-scale gold mining activities instead of going back to school. On the other hand, early marriage was used as one of the coping strategies to sustaining girls' livelihoods and the livelihood of her newborn babies. Farmer (1990) concurs that some girls in school tend to lack concentration as they hope for marriage hence more failures in schools.

#### 4.0 Conclusion and Suggestions

Tanzanian government should consider to put in place community empowerment programs such as cooperatives and involve all other stakeholders to invest in tailor made 'hands on' education programs for such disadvantaged communities to improve their person skills so as to benefit both in mining and other entrepreneurial endeavors hence reduce the school dropouts problem .

Despite government's attempt to eradicate school dropouts through the Free Education Policy, there is a robust need for the government to amend the policy and include other packages such as uniforms and stationary. In addition, the School Feed Programme should be rolled out to Nyarugusu so that the poor pupils can benefit and therefore help to reduce school drop outs.

Development practitioners and Tanzanian government should introduce different approaches when designing development programs because different regions may have different unique features hence the same problem may need different approach. Makewa and John (2013) pointed out that parents and guardians should be educated in order to gain knowledge and guidance on how to teach their daughters on reproductive issues and the importance of girls' education. This will lower the problem of adolescent pregnancies. There should be increased effort to address social problems such as poverty, as a matter of urgency by the community and the government.

#### 5.0 Acknowledgment

This study was made possible by the China Scholarship Council (CSC) through China Agricultural University (CAU) Department of Development Studies, College of Humanities and Development Studies (COHD).

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