

Causes of Female Dropout in Junior High School in Kassena-Nankana West District of Upper East Region, Ghana

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Abstract

The study was designed to examine factors that account for female dropout in Junior High Schools (JHS) in Kassena Nankana West District and to make recommendations. Sample for the study comprised 50 JHS female dropouts. The likert-scale type questionnaire was used to gather data for the study. Data collected was analysed by using frequencies of the responses and their respective percentage. Results of the study revealed major and minor causes of the high rate of female students dropout. The major causes include inadequate school facilities, poor academic performance of students, students' own lack of interest in school and early pregnancy. The rest are peer influence, parents' inability to provide their wards' educational needs, over burden household chores and parents' demand for school girls to help them at their work places. The minor factors are bullying, hard manual work, teachers' poor attitude towards female students and sexual harassment. On the basis of the findings, recommendations were made.

Key words: Dropouts, school-related factors, out of school factors, major factors, minor factors

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Mac-William and Kwamena-Poh (1975) have stated that the main purpose of education whether formal or informal is to produce people who will be useful members of society. In most countries of Africa males are usually given the opportunity and encouragement to develop themselves at the expense of their female counterparts but, in the long run, it is society which suffers from the neglect of female education. Most African countries neglect female education and rather encourage that of boys (Johnson, 2006). Adadevoh (1999) has stated that among the approximately 500 million children who start primary school, more than 100 million, two thirds of which are girls, dropout before reaching the fourth years of Primary School. Despite the tremendous gains made by African governments over the past 30 years in increasing access to education, greater challenges lie ahead if the goal of education for all is to be achieved. There is a high female dropout rates in schools. Females are workers, caretakers and homemakers who could contribute significantly to their families and their nation if they are formally well educated. Female education is one of the most forces for development in low income countries. Education for both males and females is necessary for sustainable development. There is a compelling case therefore for investing in both sexes to promote economic growth and more efficient use of public resources. Salthouse (2006) has stressed that females are more confronted with problems than males in school. In the view of Mamudu (1992) increasing girls' participation in education has been identified as one of the most significant development challenges facing schools in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is because enrollment rates of girls in first year of most Basic Schools remain lower than that of boys and the dropout rates of girls are very high. Table 1 shows statistics of enrollment of JHS female students in the educational circuits in Kassena Nankana West District and the percentage of dropout between 2010/2011 and 2012/2013 academic years in each educational circuits of the District.

Table1: Statistics of female enrollment in JHS between 2010/2011 and 2012/2013 academic year in Kassena Nankana West District

Educational circuit	2010/2011 JHS 1	2011/2012 JHS 2	2012/2013 JHS 3	Drop- out	Percentage dropout
Sirigu	150	130	80	70	46.6
Paga Central	250	200	160	90	36.0
Paga East	210	180	110	82	39.0
Chaina East	120	142	90	80	44.4
Chaina West	160	105	88	92	57.5
Kandiga	124	105	79	45	36.2
Merigu	160	120	70	90	56.2
Total	1174	982	727	549	46.76

Table 1 shows the enrollment of JHS female students in Kassena Nankana West District between 2010/2011 and 2012/2013 academic years. It can be seen from the table that 70(46.6%), 90(36.0%) and 82(39.0%) female

students dropped out of school in Sirigu, Paga and Central and Paga East educational circuits respectively by the end of 2013/2014 academic year. Chaina East and Chaina West also experienced 80(44.4) and 92(57.5) dropouts respectively by the end of the same period while Kandiga and Merigu recorded 45(36.2%) and 90(56.2%) dropouts respectively. This means that out of 1174 females enrolled in JHS 1 in 2010/2011 academic year in Kassena Nankana West District, only 727 completed their studies by the end of the third year (2012/2013 academic year) with as many as 549 (46.7%) of them dropping out. It is necessary therefore that problem is examined critically.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The government of Ghana, recognizing the importance of education, has directed efforts at providing equitable education for all her citizens. All governments that have ruled the country since independence in 1957 have aimed at providing equitable education for all citizens and this has resulted in significant progress in the development of education. The Kassena Nankana West District Assembly in collaboration with Ghana Education Service (GES) has been pulling resources together to ensure that more girls are retained in schools within the District. This notwithstanding, the population of JHS female students in the District continues to dwindle. The question that needs to be answered is whether the combined efforts of Kassena Nankana West District Assembly and GES to ensure that females at JHS level are retained in schools have not been very successful. A comprehensive study into the problem in order to find solutions to minimise it is therefore necessary.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to bring to light reasons for female dropout in JHS in Kassena Nankana West District and to make recommendations as to how the problem could be reduced.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What school-related factors result in female dropout in JHS in Kassena Nankana West District?
2. What out of school factors result in female dropout out in JHS Kassena West District?
3. How can female dropout in JHS be minimised in Kassena Nankana West District?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings and recommendations of the study would help GES to develop and implement policies that can reduce JHS female students dropping out of school. The study would also be beneficial to education officers, parents, teachers and all stakeholders in education as it would guide them in their work.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

The study should have been conducted to cover all districts in Upper East Region but it was restricted only to Kassena Nankana West District because of the fact that many females drop out of school in the District.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Design

Research design is the logic that links the data to be collected and the conclusions to be drawn to the initial questions of the study (Reid, 1985). The research design used in this study was the descriptive survey. Descriptive survey is a research design that describes existing situations without actually analysing relationships among variables (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). The descriptive survey design was considered the most appropriate design which could lead to the achievements of the intended purposes of this study.

2.2 Population and Sample

The population for the study comprised all JHS female dropouts in Kassena Nankana West District however 50 of them were selected to form the sample for the study.

2.3 Sampling Procedure

Simple random sampling technique was used to select 20 schools from the seven educational circuits in Kassena Nankana West District. The snow ball sampling technique was then used to select 50 JHS females who have dropped out of school in the District. A snowball sample is used in research when the members of a population are difficult to locate and the researcher collects data on the few members of the target population he can locate, and then asks those individuals to provide information needed to locate other members of that population whom they know (Gordon, 2009). Eight female dropouts were selected from Paga Central Circuit while seven were selected from each of the remaining six circuits through the snow ball sampling technique.

2.4 Research instrument

The main instrument used for the study was the questionnaire. The items on the questionnaire were of the 5-point likert-scale type which requested respondents to select either 'Strongly agree', 'Agree', 'Uncertain', 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree'. The questionnaire was in three parts. The first part enquired about personal data of respondents. The second and third parts demanded information from respondents on school and out of school

factors which account for JHS female students dropping out of school. The last part demanded respondents to give suggestions as to what should be done to minimise female dropout in JHS.

2.5 Validation and refinement of research instrument

The instrument was designed in such a way that the items on it were related to the research questions. Three lecturers from University of Cape Coast also reviewed the questionnaire to check if the items would elicit the required responses and to give suggestions. Their suggestions were used to revise the instrument after which it was pilot-tested and then used at the main study area.

2.6 Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaires were administered personally by the researcher after explaining the purpose and the importance of the study to the respondents. All questionnaires were collected back from respondents on the same day after responses had been given.

2.7 Data Analysis Procedure

Data from the completed filled questionnaires were first edited and then transferred to a broad sheet. The aim was to get the key responses that were given by respondents. Frequencies of the responses and their respective percentage were then calculated and used for the analyses.

3. Results and Discussion

The results of the study and discussion are organised according to the research questions that guided the study.

3.1 Research Questions 1.

What school-related factors result in female dropout in JHS in Kassena Nankana West District?

This research question sought to find out from female dropouts factors in the school which result in females dropping out of school. For the purpose of the analysis, Strongly Agree and Agree in the questionnaire were merged to be Agree while Strongly Disagree and Disagree were merged to be Disagree. The responses which are shown in Table 2 reveal three major factors in the school which lead to dropout of JHS female students.

Table 2:
Female dropouts' views on factors in the school that result in female dropouts

Factors	Agree		Disagree	
	Freq.	%	Freq	%
Inadequate resources and facilities such as text books, tables, chairs, science laboratory	80	80	20	20
Sexual harassment of female students by teachers	3	3	97	97
Poor academic performance of student	75	75	25	25
Teachers' poor attitude such as severe punishment	30	30	70	70
Bullying by male students	4	4	96	96
Hard manual work at school	2	2	98	98
Students' own lack of interest in school	70	70	30	30

Table 3 shows that majority of female school dropouts (80%) contended that inadequate school facilities could lead to female students dropping out of school. This assertion was however disagreed by few of them (20%). This finding is highly corroborated by Davidson (1977) who has identified lack of facilities such as school buildings, classrooms, furniture, libraries, laboratories recreational equipment as major factors contributing to dropout in the schools. Table 2 also indicates that majority of school dropouts (75%) agreed that poor academic performance of female students could be a reason why they drop out of school but this was rejected by 25% of them. Furthermore the data in Table 2 shows that most school dropouts (70%) believed that female students' own lack of interest in school could be a condition for them to drop out of the school even though this was disagreed by 30% of them. This finding confirms the assertion by Lamdin (1996) that students who are not very much interested in the teaching and learning process in school tend to find the school very boring and unattractive and can easily drop out of school.

3.2 Research Question 2:

What out of school factors result in female dropout in JHS in Kassena Nankana West District?

This research question elicited for respondents' views on out of school factors that result in females dropping out of school. Once again, Strongly Agree and Agree in the questionnaire were merged to be Agree while Strongly Disagree and Disagree were merged to be Disagree for the purpose of the analysis. The responses which are portrayed in Tables 3 also bring to light three major factors outside the school which lead to dropout of JHS female students.

Table 3: Dropouts' views on factors outside the school that result in female dropouts

Factors	Agree		Disagree	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Parents inability to provide students educational needs / materials	35	70	15	30
Overburden household chores	5	10	45	90
Parents demand for girls to help in farm, market or trading activities	30	60	20	40
Pregnancy / early marriage	40	80	10	20
Peer influence	30	60	20	40
Protracted illness	1	2	39	98

A close look at the Table 3 shows that majority of female school dropouts (70%) agreed that the inability of parents to provide their wards' educational needs/materials could lead to students dropping out of school with only 30% disagreeing. This finding is supported by Odoom (2009) who has stressed that most students drop out of school because their parents are unable to provide their educational needs. Table 15 also indicates that 40% of female school dropouts agreed that parents' demand of girls to help them in farms, market, or trading activities could also result in female school drop outs, an assertion which was disagreed by 60% of them. This corroborate with the claim by Eshitet (1987) that inadequate provision of instructional materials leads to school dropout. Obeng (2004) has also stated that as a result of economic hardships some parents engage their wards in economic activities even during school hours preventing them from attending, resulting in poor academic performance and eventually dropping out of school. It could also be seen from Table 3 that it was the view of a number of dropouts (70%) that peer influence can cause female students dropping out of school as against 30% of them who disagreed and this corroborates the assertion of Kelly (1991) who found that children who have dropped out of school try to influence their mates to do the same.

3.3 Research Question 3:

How can female dropouts in JHS be minimised?

An open-ended question was asked in relation to this research question and the responses are summarised as follows:

- Government should give scholarships to needy female students, supply school bags in addition to uniforms and exercise books and supply adequate text books and other teaching and learning materials to all the schools to promote effective teaching and learning and reduce the burden of parents.
- The School Feeding Program should be extended to all basic schools to enable students to stay in school to learn
- Severe punishments and the use of canes should be abolished in schools to enable students have conducive environment to learn.
- Parent-Teacher Associations in schools should be rived to promote cordial relationship between teachers and parents to encourage parents to ensure that their wards are always in school.

4. Conclusion

The following major and minor factors have been identified as causes of female dropout in JHS:

4.1. Major factors

- Inadequate facilities and unconducive school environment
- Poor academic performance of female students
- Female students' own lack of interest in school
- Early pregnancy of female students
- Peer influence
- Parents' inability to provide their wards' educational needs and materials
- Over burden household chores.

- Parents demand for school girls to help in farm, market or trading activities.
- 4.2. Minor factors

- Bullying by male students and participation in hard manual work.
- Teachers' poor attitude towards female students and sexual harassment

5. Recommendations

- GES should supply schools with recreational facilities and adequate teaching and learning materials such as text books, laboratories, tables chairs to promote effective teaching and learning
- Parent-Teacher Associations in schools should be revived and the Guidance and Counselling Units of GES invited to educate parents on the need to provide their wards educational needs and encourage them to learn at home instead of overburdening them with household chores and engaging them in farms, markets or trading activities
- Guidance and Counselling Unit of GES should organise seminars for students to encourage them to develop interest in school and avoid peer influence
- Teachers should create good learning environment in schools for students to enjoy academic work and improve upon their academic performance. For instance severe punishment, bullying as well as hard manual work should be abolish in schools
- Teachers found guilty of sexual harassment and other unprofessional conducts should be severely punished.
- Sex education should be well taught in schools to eliminate early pregnancies
- The School Feeding Programme should be extended to all Basic Schools to increase enrolment

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