Analysis of Trends Onschool Enrollment and Dropouts Among Pupils Inrural and Urban Areas: A Case study of Kabwe, Zambia

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A B S T R A C T

Click here and insert your abstract text. Many countries in the developing world have embraced the global efforts at promoting education for young people because of the perceived benefits of education to the national economy. In Zambia, Free basic education and the Education For all program has been introduced in order to promote education of young people especially girls. However, Zambia is still experiencing challenges of school dropouts among young people especially in rural areas. The purpose of this study was to determine the trends of school dropouts among pupils in rural and urban areas, focusing particularly on Kabwe Central Province of Zambia. A total number of 172 subjects were surveyed regarding their opinions over the problem of school dropouts. Primary data from questionnaires was collected and analysed using thematic analysis and secondary data was analysed through percentages, graphs and tables using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). A comparative analysis of the trends of school dropouts for rural and urban areas showed that the school dropout rate for rural areas reduced by 56% during the period from 2014 to 2018. However, school dropout rates for urban areas increased by 25%during the same period. A thematic analysis of the young people's responses indicated that the leading causes of school dropout in urban areas mainly include lack of money to pay school fees (52%), teenage pregnancy and early marriages (23%), and peer pressure (23%), In rural areas, the main causes of school dropout are Lack of money for school fees (42%), teenage pregnancy and early marriages (33%), peer pressure (15%), and distance from home to school (5%).Policy implications of the results are discussed and recommendations include enhanced stakeholder engagement on increased sensitisation over the re-entry policy, provision of educational support, building more schools especially in rural areas, upgrading basic schools to secondary schools and providing OVC sponsorship.

Keywords: School Enrolment, School dropout rate, FreeBasic education, Education for All

1. Introduction

Many young people across the world have not completed a full course of quality primary school education that would prepare them to participate in secondary education and development of their society. In most developing countries, young people are spending their adolescence time in school than ever before. Survey data representing 60% of the population of developing countries indicate that the mean number of grades of school completed has risen over the past two decades from 6.0 to 7.0 for young men aged 20 to 24 and from 3.8 to 6.0 for young women aged 20 to 24. In addition the percentage of children from 10 to 14 years who have never attended school has reduced from 21% to 11 % for boys and from 39% to 18% for girls (UNESCO 2006).

In Zambia, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community Development are the main providers of the Education For All programs (GRZ 2007). The goal of the ministry of education is to provide access to nine years of good quality education to young people in cooperation with relevant ministries communities and other stakeholders. One of the strategies for enhancing education among young people is through community schools. Many of these schools offer opportunities for education to under privileged children and orphans in rural areas, although it has some challenges. Community schools in urban areas are seen as interventions by stakeholders, whose targets are the poor, orphaned children, HIV/AIDS affected or infected families.

Research indicate that the number of out of school children of primary school age worldwide has reduced by almost 50% to an estimated 27 million in 2015, from about 100 million in 2000. The sub-Saharan Africa has achieved 20% increase in the net enrolment rate from 2000 to 2015 compared to a gain of 8% between 1990 and 2000 (UN reports 2015).

Zambia has made significant improvement in education since 2000. In 2010, primary school enrolment rates were at 90.9% particularly due to the introduction of free education in 2006 and the Education for All programmes. School enrolment in primary education reached 3.3 million in 2017 from 1.6 million in 2000. However, there are over 800,000 school aged children out of school (UNDP 2011).This situation is likely to have adverse direct effects on children's ability to learn and acquire skills. If this situation is not checked, many young people especially girls and women may not have the opportunity to be active advocates or leaders in their community. People with low or no education are less likely to participate in decisions that affect their lives concerning education and development.

1.1. Family background and education

Children growing up in low-income neighbourhoods are more likely to experience repeated stress that may inhibit cognitive development. Family background influences cultural knowledge and perception towards the education system. It is argued that the middle class knowledge of norms and customs does allow students with such background to better navigate the school system.

Parents of middle class and above also have social networks that are more beneficial compared to parents for students in the lower class. Children from poor families tend to come from families that have negative attitude towards education. The income disparities between rich and poor families and neighbourhoods have increased, thereby widening the gap in opportunities and between schools. The unequal educational success and other outcomes can be attributed to several variables, including family of origin, gender, and social class (GRZ 2011).

1.2. Education structural inequality

In recent years, due to increasing poverty levels, access to quality education between the rural and urban areas remains a challenge with the rural areas experiencing structural inequality in access to primary and secondary education due to distant school facilities. In both urban and rural areas, the most commonly cited reasons for being poor are lack of capital. Analysis by sex shows the reasons cited by male and female headed households for being poor were low salary or wages (16.8 %) , lack of capital (money) to start a business (13.3 %), lack of employment opportunities (11.5%), economic decline of our country (4.9%) and commodities being too high (4.4%)(UNICEF 2011).

However, researchers seem not to have established whether such economic challenges could be a recipe for school dropouts among children in both the urban and rural areas. In any case we would expect high rates of school drop outs among households that have limited sources of capital, especially in the rural area where poverty levels are high (UNICEF 2011). Overall, a significant share of Zambian children is either poor or deprived (64%). Other studies indicate that regarding deprivation (i.e. sanitation, nutrition and education) poverty is significantly higher in rural areas, with poverty rates of 80.5% compared with a 25% in urban areas (UNICEF 2018).

1.3. School attendance and dropouts

In recent years, several Sub Saharan countries have abolished school fees and have experienced dramatic increase in school attendance. An analysis of 1 00 countries between 1960 and 1995 found a significant positive correlation between the average years of adult male secondary school attainment and economic growth. For this reason, many countries the world over have embraced the policy of free education to increase the chances of school attainment on its citizens. For instance, in Yemen education from grade 1 to grade 9 has been free and compulsory since 1990s. In this respect, school enrolment in these grades increased from 2.3 million in 1999 to 3.2 million in 2005 (UNICEF 2011).

In the recent past, most adolescents are spending more of their time in school than ever before, the percentage of youth aged between 10 and 14 years old who have never attended school has reduced from 21 % to 11 % for boys and from 39 % to 18% for girls (UNESCO, 2006).Other reports indicate that variations in school attendance still exist in primary and secondary schools in the developing world. About three quarters of the 10 to 14 year old young people attend school. But whereas primary level attendance is high, secondary and higher education are less common. In secondary schools, teenage attendance rates have reduced suddenly and gaps between boys and girls enrolments in school is wide. For instance, in Mozambique 60% of girls with no education are married by 18 compared to 10% of girls with secondary schooling and less than 1% of girls with higher education. The girls with low or no education are likely to get married by 18 years (World Bank, 2015).

Zambia has made significant improvement in education since 2000. In 2010, primary school enrolment rates were at 90.9% particularly due to the introduction of free education in 2006 (UN Report 2015) and the Education for All programme. School enrolment in primary education reached 3.3 million in 2017 from 1.6 million in 2000. However, young people in rural areas are often challenged by the problem of school dropouts even after being enrolled in the school system.

School dropout rate is the proportion of pupils who leave the school system without completing a given grade in a given school year (GRZ 2011). Research has shown that less than 60 % of young people graduate from high school and only 3% of children in foster care proceed to post-secondary education. High school dropout rates lead to low internal efficiency in the education system. School dropout is lik ely to have adverse effects on children's ability to learn and acquire skills. Many youth especially girls and women rarely have the opportunity to be active advocates or leaders. They do not participate in decisions that affect their lives concerning education and development.

The introduction of free basic education in Zambia has led to increase in primary school enrolment to an average of 9% annually, and improvement in attendance from 57% in 2004, to 76% in 2006 at primary school level and 18% to 37% at secondary school level (GRZ 2006). School

enrolment in primary education has increased from 1.6 million in 2000 to 3.3 million in 2017. In 2010, primary school enrolment rates were at 90.9% not only due to the introduction of free education but also the Education for All program (UN Report 2015).

However, there are over 800,000 school aged children in Zambia who areout of school despite the removal of user fees for primary education (UNDP 2011).The main causes of school dropout among girls are teenage pregnancy, poverty and the parents' failure to pay school fees (Mwaba 2014, in Chaponda 2016). Central Province in Zambia has not been spared by this problem. In terms of provincial distribution, Central Province teenage pregnancies stand at 73 %. In terms of rural urban comparisons, rural schools have more teenage pregnancies than urban areas at both primary and secondary level (GRZ, 2016). Despite the introduction of re- entry policy, very few pregnant girls are re- admitted into school system even after delivery. This situation calls for urgent attention to address the challenges regarding children's education. It is expected that depriving children education is likely to have adverse direct effects on their ability to learn and acquire skills important for national development.

1.4. Conceptual Framework

Considering various interventions that have been put forward by the Zambian government and stakeholders including policies towards promoting access to education, the researcher speculates a reduction of school dropouts in both rural and urban areas among pupils. The conceptual framework suggests that interventions against school dropouts such as promoting quality education, and management of schools, policies, education support and partnerships would foster academic progress among pupils. Other factors like the family background and geographical location (rural/urban) are also likely to affect the academic progression of the young people (Fig 1).
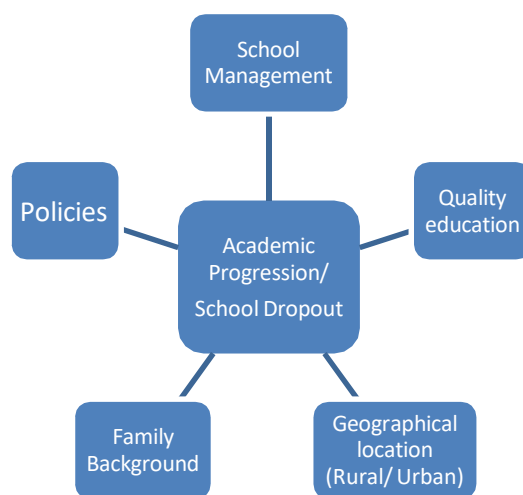

Fig. 1: Factors associated with school dropouts

There has been very little research to investigate the trends in school dropouts among young people in rural and urban areas. This study focused on investigating the trends and causes of school dropouts in rural and urban areas. It was expected that such insights would further elicit interventions against school dropouts among young people in rural and urban areas.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research design

This study used the survey method to generate qualitative and quantitative data in regard to the trends of school dropouts in rural and urban areas. These methods were chosen to provide complementary information on the subject of school drop outs from the participants using questionnaire and scheduled interviews.

2.2. Sampling

A total number of 172 subjects participated in this study. 122 people were aged between 14 and 24 years. Out of the 122 youths, 91 pupils were randomly selected from three rural and three urban schools in Kabwe district involving two primary schools, two basic schools and two secondary schools, while 31 people had dropped out of school were purposefully selected from the rural and urban areas. The head teachers from six selected schools responded to an

interview schedule where they were required to provide information on the school enrolments and cases of school dropouts in their schools for the period from 2014 to 2018.

2.3. Research Objectives

The main objective of the study was to investigate the trends of school dropouts in rural and urban areas. The specific objectives were as follows:
- a. To compare the trends of school enrolments and dropouts in rural and urban areas.
- b. To investigate the factors associated with school dropouts in rural and urban areas
- c. To investigate the strategies that can be used to reduce school dropouts among young people in rural and urban areas.

2.4. Research Questions

The research questions addressed in the study were as follows:
- a. What is the trend of school enrolment and school dropout among pupils in rural and urban areas?
- b. What are the factors associated with school dropouts in rural and urban areas?
- c. What are the strategies that can be used to reduce school dropouts in rural and urban areas?

2.5. Data collection

Primary data was collected from the participants using questionnaires and interview schedules. Secondary data was collected from the Educational Statistical Bulletins for the Ministry of General Education (GRZ 2011, 2018).

2.6. Data analysis

Qualitative data from questionnaires and interview schedules was analysed using thematic analysis. On the other hand quantitative data was analysed through percentages, graphs and tables using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS).

3. Results

This section starts with the presentation on the distribution of the sample followed by the results on prevalence of school dropouts and trends of school dropouts in rural and urban areas. In addition, a comparative analysis of school dropout between male and females is presented and the causes of school dropouts including strategies for reducing dropouts as proposed by the respondents are also presented.

3.1. Sample distribution

The sample consisted of 172 participants. 50 people were key informants who included parents and teachers. Whereas 67 of the 122 young people were males, 55 were females. The 50 key informants selected using purposive sampling consisting of 23 teachers, 6 head teachers, o ne Education officer and 20 parents. Of the 122 young people, 31 were school dropouts and 91 pupils were not school dropout.

Table 1: Distribution of the participants: Adolescents, parents and teachers (N=172)

	Male	%	Female	%	Total
Young people	67	55	55	45	122
Key Informants (Teachers and parents)	23	46	27	54	50
TOTAL	90		82		172

3.2. Prevalence of school dropout

The teachers and parents were asked to rate the problem of school dropout in their area. Results showed that school dropout i s perceived mainly to be moderate in rural and urban areas. However it is relatively higher in rural areas compared to urban areas.

Table 2: Perception of parents and teachers over the prevalence of school dropouts

Level of School dropout	Rural Area		Urban Area	
	No.	%	No.	%
Low	3	9	4	33
Moderate	17	53	5	42
High	12	38	3	25
TOTAL	32	100	12	100

Table 2 shows that school dropouts is mainly perceived as moderate in rural areas (53%) and urban areas (42 %). However, school dropout is higher in rural areas compared to urban areas.

3.3. Trend of school enrolment and dropouts in rural and urban areas

In order to investigate the trends of school dropouts the head teachers for the selected six schools (i.e. three rural schools and three urban schools) were asked to provide information on enrolled children and school dropouts in the primary, basic and secondary school in their areas for the period from 2014 to 2018. The dropout rate was computed by finding the percentage of young people who had left school without completing a given grade in a particular year. Results showed that school enrolment for urban areas increased from 862 in 2014 to 1,088 in 2018, representing an increase of 21%. On the other hand, the school dropout rates for the urban are asduring the same period increased from 2.0 % to 2.5% (Table 3a).

Table 3a: School enrolments and dropouts in urban areas

URBAN SCHOOLS	YEAR				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
School Enrolments	862	1,160	1,076	1,244	1,088
School dropouts	17	20	25	28	27
Dropout Rate (%)	2.0	1.7	2.3	2.3	2.5

Table 3a shows that school enrolment for urban areas increased from 862 in 2014, to 1,088 in 2018. This represents an increase of 21%. However, school dropout rates during the same period increased from 2.0 in 2014 to 2.5 in 2018. This represents an increase of 20% on school dropout in urban areas.

Table 3b: School enrolments and dropouts in rural areas

RURAL SCHOOLS	YEAR				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
School Enrolments	592	640	619	1052	1087
School dropouts	32	24	19	12	26
Dropped out Rate (%)	5.4	3.8	3.1	1.1	2.4

Table 3b shows that school enrolment in rural areas increased from 592 in 2014 to 1,087 in 2018, representing an increase of 46%.On the other hand, school dropout rates in rural areas reduced from 5.4% in 2014, to 2.4% in 2018. This represents a reduction in school dropout rates by 56% during the period under consideration.

3.4. Comparison of trends in school dropouts between urban and rural areas

School dropout rates in rural areas reduced from 5.4% in 2014 to 1.1 % in 2017, but increased to 2.4% in 2018. On the other hand, school dropout rate for urban areas increased from 2.0% in 2014 to 2.5% in 2018(Figure 2). This shows that there was an overall reduction of 56% in school dropouts for Rural Areas. On the contrary there was a slight increase in school dropouts for urban areas by 20%.
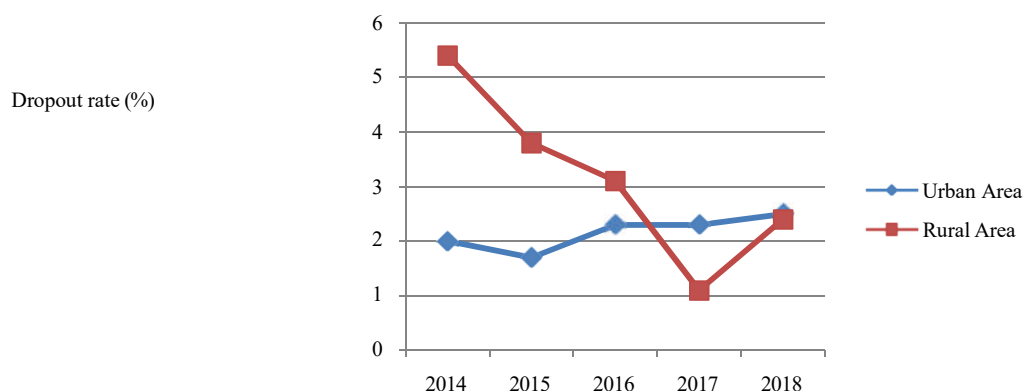
Figure 2: Trends of school dropouts in rural and urban areas.

3.5. Causes of school dropouts in rural and urban areas

About 122 young people were asked to explain the causes of school dropouts. Whereas 57 participants were from the urban areas, 65 were from the rural Area. A thematic analysis of the young people's responses indicated that the leading causes of school dropout in urban areas are lack of money(52%), teenage pregnancy and early marriages (23%), peer pressure (23%), and drug abuse (5%). In rural areas the main causes of school dropout are Lack of money (42%), teenage pregnancy and early marriages (33%), peer pressure (15%), and distance from home to school (5%).(Table 4)

Table 4: Causes of school dropouts in Rural and Urban Areas

	Young Peoples Responses			
	RURAL		URBAN	
Causes of school Dropouts	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1. Lack of money	39	42	42	52
2. Teenage Pregnancy and Early Marriages	31	33	19	23
3. Peer Pressure	14	15	15	19
4. Drug Abuse	3	3	4	5
5. Distance From home to school	5	5	0	0
6. Lack of interest in school	2	2	0	0
7. Fear of being Discriminated	0	0	1	1
TOTAL RESPONSES	94	100	81	100

4. Interventions

4.1. Strategies for reducing school dropouts

The parents, teachers and young people were asked to indicate their opinion regarding strategies they would recommend in order to reduce school dropouts. Results showed that parents and teachers advocated for continued sensitization over Re-entry policy (22%), Building more schools (18%), enhanced guidance and counselling in schools (15%) and upgrading basic schools (11%).On the other hand, young people advocated for the provision of free education (20%), OVC sponsorship (17%), Building more schools (12%), reducing school fees and empowering parents (11 % respectively).(Figure 5a)

Table 5a: Intervention strategies for reducing school dropouts by parents and teachers

	PARENTS/TEACHERS RESPONSES	
INTERVENTIONS	**Frequency**	**Percentage(%)**
1. Re-entry policy	20	22
2. Building more schools	17	18
3. Enhance guidance	14	15
4. Upgrading Basic schools	10	11
5. School Nutrition Programmes	9	10
6. OVC Sponsorship	8	9
7. Empowering Parents	6	6
8. Reducing School Fees	4	4
9. Provide Quality Education	3	3
10. Psychological support	2	2
11. Free Education	0	0
12. Sex Education	0	0
TOTAL RESPONSES	**93**	**100**

Table 5b: intervention strategies for reducing school dropouts according to the opinions of young people in Rural and Urban Areas

	Young Peoples Responses			
	RURAL		**URBAN**	
Strategies for reducing school Dropouts	**FREQUENCY**	**%**	**FREQUENCY**	**%**
Building More schools	17	29	4	7
Sensitization/Sex education	16	28	7	13
Education support	10	17	14	25
Free Education/Reduce fees	7	12	25	44
End Early Marriages	4	7	1	2
Re- entry policy	3	5	3	5
Empowering Families	1	2	0	0
More teachers	0	0	1	2
Recreation	0	0	1	2
Total Responses	**58**	**100**	**56**	**100**

5. Discussion

This study was designed to investigate the trends of school dropouts in urban and rural areas. The study also investigated the strategies for reducing the problem of school dropouts. These aspects are discussed in relation to the findings and the existing literature on the subject.

5.1. Trends of dropouts in rural and urban areas

The head teachers and education officers were asked to provide information on the enrolled children and school dropouts in the primary, basic and secondary school in their area in order to determine the trends of school dropouts in urban and rural areas.
Results showed that school dropout rates for rural areas have reduced from 5.4% to 2.4 % during the period from 2014 to 2018. This shows a reduction of

about 56%. However, the school dropout rate for urban schools increased from 2.0 % to 2.5 % during the same period. This signifies an increase of about 20% in regard to urban areas school dropout.

The reduction in school dropout rates in rural areas can be attributed to the multi sectorial approach undertaken by the Zambian Government to reduce young people vulnerability to early marriages. For instance some non-governmental organisations like the World Vision have worked with stakeholders under child protection and advocacy project and managed to withdraw about 150 girls from child marriages in the project areas. Child marriages mostly affect girls in rural areas, the uneducated, undereducated and youth from poorest households.

The slight increase in the trends of school dropout in urban areas can be attributed partly to teenage pregnancies, lack of financial support amidst increase in costs of living and lack of school infrastructure in some parts of the urban area. Nevertheless, the upward trend in school dropout for both rural and urban areas for the period 2017 to 2018 (Fig 2) suggests the need for urgent intervention to address the situation. After reducing from 5.4% in 2014 to 1.1% in 2017, dropout rates for rural areas increased to 2.4% in 2018 (Table 3a). This shows some laxity in the implementation of interventions against school dropouts by stakeholders which needs to be checked in both rural and urban areas. School dropouts in urban areas have steadily increased during the period from 2014 to 2018.The Zambian governments has put across various policy measures and programs to reduce school dropouts. The parents, teachers and young people were asked to indicate their opinion regarding strategies they would recommend in order to reduce school dropouts.

5.2. Causes of school dropout

School dropout rates are perceived as moderate. However, school dropout is higher in rural areas compared to urban areas (Table 2). This implies that partnerships and support to the educational system needs to be enhanced to enable many adolescents in rural and urban areas to access the education systems.

The young people in rural and urban areas were asked to explain the main causes of school dropouts among pupils. A thematic analysis of the young people's responses (Table 4) indicated that the leading causes of school dropout in urban areas are lack of money for school fees (52%), teenage pregnancy and early marriages (23%), peer pressure (23%), and drug abuse (5%). Similarly, in rural areas the main causes of school dropout are Lack of money for school fees (42%), teenage pregnancy and early marriages (33%), peer pressure (15%), and distance from home to school (5%). The distant school places problem cited mainly by people in rural areas suggests the need for intervention on school infrastructure in such areas.

These results are in conformity with Plan International findings who have noted that the challenges faced by children in Central province Zambia, include problems with education and early marriages. Other problems are that children's rights to education are compromised, long distance to school and sexual exploitation (Plan International 2015). In addition, UNICEF (2011) findings have cited the economic reasons for school dropout that included low salary or wages, lack of capital (money) economic decline of our country and commodities being too high, among other causes. These findings suggest the need for developing interventions to address these problems faced by parents in order to promote the education of young people.

5.3. Strategies for reducing school dropouts

The respondents were asked to state the intervention strategies that would help in the reduction of school dropouts among the young people. Results showed that parents and teachers advocated for continued sensitization over Re-entry policy (22%), Building more schools (18%), enhanced guidance in schools (15%) and upgrading basic schools (11%).On the other hand, the young people advocated for the provision of free education (20%), OVC sponsorship (17%), building more schools (12%), and reducing school fees, empowering parents and provision of sex education (11 % respectively) in order to reduce school dropouts. We can note the vast difference in priorities advanced as interventions against school dropouts by young peopleand the parents or teachers. Whereas the teacher and parents priorities are re-entry policy, nutrition programs and infrastructure development, the young people advocate mainly for free education, sponsorship and school infrastructure development.

The government has continued working in partnership with stakeholders in the provision of basic education through partnerships. The modalities for partnerships include business entities or industry taking responsibility for meeting the maintenance and other costs for the schools or institutions. The Advisory councils and PTAs make up representatives from various sectors and the community which assist government in the formulation and implementation of policies and programs. School development associations and committees share the costs and r esponsibilities for the development of educational programs.

The Zambia National Conference on Education for All states with respect to community involvement that the responsibility for the education of a child rests with the parents who have conferred life on the child. Therefore the primary educative force for every individual is the family and after that the wider community in which the individual lives. The fact that parents and young people advocate for continued free education, OVC support, building more schools especially in new settlements should be a basis for investing more in education in order to reducing the gap between the rural and urban communities to facilitate participation of young people in national development.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

This research was designed to investigate the trends of school dropouts among young people in rural and urban areas. Results showed that the prevalence of school dropout is moderate in rural and urban areas. School dropout rates have reduced in rural areas. But in urban areas school dropout rates have increased over the period from 2014 to 2018. This calls for urgent interventions against school dropouts in both rural and urban areas. The main causes of

school dropouts in urban and rural areas are lack of money or financial support in the education of children, teenage pregnancies and early marriages, peer pressure, and lack of school infrastructure. In some cases children walk long distances to school especially in rural areas.

In view of the research findings the researcher recommends enhanced stakeholder engagement on increased sensitisation over the re-entry policy, the provision of educational support in form of free basic education from grade 1 to 9, building more schools especially in rural areas, upgrading basic schools, providing OVC sponsorship and reducing school fees, providing guidance and counselling to young people, empowering parents and providing sex education in the schools. In addition, the needs of the vulnerable households and OVCs should be addressed. The vulnerable low income families can be given grants to support their children in school. Policies against early marriages, and programs to consider upgrading of basic schools and construction of new schools in some parts of the country should be enhanced to promote the education of young people and to enhance their participation in national development. Future studies on the same should consider increasing the sample size for participants in urban and rural areas; explore the effects of school management and quality of education on the educational attainment of young people.

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