

Approaches Used by School Managements to Interrupt School Setting factors leading to Dropouts among Female Students in Public Secondary Schools in Songea Municipality

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Abstract: Dropouts among female students in public secondary schools in Songea Municipal demand for a study of the strategies employed by school authorities to recognize the early indicators of female pupils who are at risk of dropping out. The study investigated the SM's dedication and approachability in identifying the early warning indications that led to female students dropping out. The study employed a case study methodology and a qualitative approach to collect data from 30 respondents who were purposefully chosen. The study's material was acquired through interviews with the head of school, guidance and counseling, and discipline master. In addition, the researcher led a focus group discussion with 7 members of SM and 20 student leaders. Furthermore, records such as counseling and guidance files were examined. The findings show that SM use school-setting approaches to identify early warning indications of female students dropping out of school. However, it was shown that SM had issues spotting early symptoms of female student dropout, such as a lack of training and insufficient government support. As a result, the government and other stakeholders should work together to overcome all of the hurdles that SM faces when identifying early symptoms of female student dropout.

Keywords— School Management, Early Signs, female students' dropout, public secondary schools

1. INTRODUCTION

The School Managements (SM) is a management organ in support of school administration to smoothly run the school. SM consists of the head of school, assistant head of school, and heads of departments such as academic departments, and guidance and counseling departments (Naidoo, 2019). In Tanzania, the head of the school is the SM's chairperson (Kabelele & Machumu, 2020). The head of the school uses the Head Teacher Guidebook, as a management toolkit that shows the responsibilities of SM (Manaseh, 2016). The SM is responsible for all aspects of planning, organizing, staffing, coordinating, and managing the teaching and learning process (Mwasamale, 2020).

School Managements' can be traced back to Tanzania's decentralization process, which began in 1972 when the government delegated some of its powers and duties to local governments (Godha, 2014). Decentralization sought to increase involvement, transparency, and creativity by raising schools' accountability to their local communities. The management and administration of schools were incorporated since the power to govern and administer education and training was granted to the school (Likwelile & Assey, 2018). Similarly, the management of schools, community engagement, and instruction was delegated to school boards for oversight and administration. The school board was given authority by law to own the school, according to Tanzania's Educational Act No. 25 of 1978, as revised by Laws Nos. 10 of 1995 and 2002 (Onyango, 2020). The law specifies that the school board oversees school funds, regulates teacher and student behavior, and monitors day-to-day activities at the school. However, the school board works together with SM to supervise the daily implementation of school activities (Mngomezulu, 2015). Wangila (2019) pointed out that one of the roles of the SM is to influence students to complete their studies. Therefore, the routine duties of SM may influence students' attendance and dropout rates.

According to the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MOEVT) in Tanzania, the school calendar run from January to early December. whereby a student attends school for 194 days (MoEST, 2019). However, a student is considered to drop out of school when he/she is absent consecutively for a period of 90 days without any permission (Mduma et al., 2019).

Schools in Tanzania experienced a high rate of female students drop out (Doe et al., 2025). For instance, the analysis of Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania for four years from 2017 to 2020 shows that there is an average of 37,000 female students drop out of secondary school every year in the country. Also, an average of 1400 and 85 female students drop-out of secondary school every year in Ruvuma Regional and Songea Municipal respectively due to truancy, pregnancy, indiscipline, and death (PO-RALG, 2020).

Similarly, female students are more likely to quit school early than males because of cultural power, structures, and traditions that specify what roles boys and girls should undertake (Gubbels et al., 2019). Literature shows that approximately 97 million girls are not in secondary school globally (Rehman, 2025). Also, only one-third complete lower secondary schools in developing countries (Stromquist, 2025). Additionally, in Sub-Saharan Africa, no country has achieved gender parity in secondary education (Moyo & Dhliwayo, 2019). Thus, girls consistently lag in terms of beginning their education, finishing it, and becoming literate due to the high percentage of school dropouts (Mnyawami et al., 2025).

2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Tanzania has experienced a shocking increase in female students drop out in secondary schools (Pascal and Mkulu, 2020). Many girls do not complete their secondary school education due to various circumstances such as family environment, school environment, and student issues (Kinisa, 2019). Even though School Managements has formal responsibility to oversee curriculum delivery and ensures that all students finish their studies (Naidoo, 2019). In relation to that numeral studies have investigated the role of SM in controlling academic performance (Jonas & Mkulu, 2025a), the influence of SM in the teaching and learning process (Madondo, 2017), and the functions of SM in school development (Naidoo, 2019). However, they basically focused on the role of SM in managing academic performance and supporting effective teaching and learning process without addressing the problem of female students dropping out of public secondary schools. This study investigated strategies used by SM in identifying the early sign of female student dropout of secondary school. Thus, SM inputs in identifying early signs for female students drop out are crucial because they are closest to students and are the mandatory site where female students drop out occurs and they play a variety of responsibilities in ensuring that female students finish their courses.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To explore approaches Used by School Managements to Interrupt School Setting factors leading to Dropouts among Female Students in Public Secondary Schools. The study was guided by two objectives.

- i. To explore the means by which School management use to identify early signs related to school settings that leads to female student drop-out in public secondary schools.
- ii. To assess the approaches used by School management to respond to school settings early signs of female students' dropout in public secondary schools.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings from this study would contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of educational management and leadership together with gender in education. The findings of the study may also provide valuable insight for schools with similar settings and other educational institutions to manage the early signs for female students dropping out of secondary school. Moreover, the study's findings may assist Songea Municipal Executive Director (SMED) in reviewing current dropout policies and regulations. Finally, the study may assist in addressing the difficulties SM faces in reacting to the early indications of female students' dropout in public secondary schools.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1 Theoretical review

The study was guided by the collaborative leadership theory in education, which allows teachers, students, and school management to collaborate to define and co-create learning environments that allow everyone to learn, grow, and succeed (Hafeez & Akhtar, 2025). The theory requires members to develop a cooperative culture, more than merely following a scheduled timetable for meeting, lesson planning, and teaching students. The collaborative leadership requires School Managements to be transparency, honesty, integrity, dependability, accountability, and commitments to shared goals of the school.

5.2 Empirical review

5.2.1 The Concept of School Managements and early signs

School Management is the process of managing the school by the pedagogical principles intended. It considers all aspects of the school which includes policies, materials, human resources, programs, activities, and equipment (Doe et al., 2025). The head of the school uses the Head Teacher Guidebook, as a management toolkit that shows the responsibilities of SM (Manaseh, 2016). SM is responsible for preparing the school development plan and budget; overseeing daily operations of the schools; ensuring a conducive atmosphere is created for teaching and learning and supervising, assessing the quality of instruction provided in schools and compiling the quarterly performance report that includes a report on finances and the environment (Naidoo, 2019). Studies showed diverse roles of SM such as curriculum implementation and management (Mogashoa, 2013), responsibility of SM for monitoring routine activities of the school such as managing the academic performance of the school (Jonas & Mkulu, 2025b), managing the finance of the school (Mwasamale, 2020), and attendance management (Sanya, 2015). Also, the School Managements is responsible

for policy formulation and implementation at the school level (Wyk & Marumoloo, 2012), and managing the physical resources of the school (Mestry & Bodalina, 2015). However, there are few studies showing how SM is responsible for identifying and managing early signs of female student dropout in schools.

According to Burrus and Roberts (2012), early signs are signs or risk factors that become apparent at least a year before a student drop-out of school. The study mentioned absenteeism, truancy, poor academic performance, behavioral problems, and living conditions at home as examples of early signs. Early warning system identifies at-risk pupils and offers focused data that may be utilized to create student interventions that are intended to prevent unfavorable student outcomes (Shah et al., 2020). Davis et al. (2019) argued that the scope of an early warning system is influenced by an education agency's goals, resources, and policies. Also, Kim and Rosa (2021) defined dropout as a process of disengaging from school, however dropping out may be prevented by paying attention to the indicators of absence/attendance, behavioral issues, and course failure or bad grades.

5.2.2 Identification of Early signs related to school settings that leads to Female Student Dropout.

Dropout is not an isolated occurrence; it is a result of several circumstances and choices that a person made long before deciding to stop attending school (Simić & Krstić, 2017). The student displayed several symptoms happened before deciding to stop attending class. Deussen et al. (2017) argued that leaders are identifying and offering support to students at risk of dropping out using early signs to lower dropout rates. The researcher articulated that early signs like attendance, course failures, grade point average, suspensions, and expulsions are used by school systems to identify children who are in danger of dropping out.

Sharma and Levinson (2019) studied the relationship between the distance traveled to school and the dropout level of secondary school students. The researcher recommended that as the distance between the school and home increases the dropout increases too. Several researchers related the distance of travel from home to school as the major factor for female dropout in Developing countries (Amadu, 2016; Bzour et al., 2021; Fute & Wan, 2021; Latif et al., 2015; Shahidul & Karim, 2015). Though, studies do not indicate what happens if the school has transport facilities, or hostels and dormitories.

Similarly, Nabugoomu (2019) commended on low academic performance as a factor to identify female students dropping out of school. Also, Bzour et al. (2021) identified academic aptitude and accomplishment where teachers favor boys over girls, which leads to female students dropping out. On top of that Hapompwe et al. (2020) argued that reduced academic performance and repeated classes can make a student feel demoralized, which can lower self-esteem and increase the likelihood of them to drop out. Studies do not show why dropout of female students occurs even in female students whose performance is high.

Likewise, Nyangarika et al. (2020) suggested that a lack of guidance and counseling services increases the risk of female student dropout. Also, Amadu (2016) suggested that guidance and counseling lead to knowledge of sex education so that female students would be aware of sexual abuses such as harassment, aggression, defilement, rape, and coercion, which contributes to an increase of dropout rate among female students. The authors do not show what happens in schools with guidance and counseling as commended by government circulars and still female students drop out of school.

Furthermore, Ahmadi et al. (2014) argued that due to increased antagonism because of harsh punishment, some students decide to drop out of school since they have a negative attitude toward school. Additionally, Kambuga et al. (2018) recommended that in Tanzanian schools, physical punishment, particularly in public schools is acceptable and authorized. Since 1979, it has been permissible to use corporal punishment by the provisions of Article 60 of the National Education Act 25 of 1978, as revised by Act Number 294 of 2002. Likewise, a study by Amadu (2016) in Ghana revealed that physical assault (caning, hitting, fighting, etc.), and verbal (insults, shouts, intimidation) may lead to female dropout. It is unaware whether corporal punishment causes dropout or reduces dropout since in Tanzania corporal punishment is admitted to controlling students' behavior.

Similarly, the nature of the school environment influences female students to drop out of school (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). Latif et al. (2015) argued that an open and positive environment enhances teachers' chances to teach more and decreased student dropout. Moore (2012) reasoned that dropout rates grew because of the school's and buildings' uninteresting environments, and terrible physical atmosphere. Thus, studies do not show why some female students do not drop out even in an uncondusive environment.

Food insecurity has been linked to low school attendance and performance among students (Hapompwe et al., 2020). Correspondingly Amadu (2016) showed that Ghana introduced FFE to improve school enrollment and attendance. Also, the report by UNICEF (2020) states that the unavailability of food in schools has influenced truancy in schools hence the dropout. The study wants to see how SM participates in the feeding programs, while the government directives required food to be organized and managed by parents.

On top of that, the study by Gao et al. (2019) identified Pull-out and Push-out factors for students dropping out. The author described pull-out factors as the criteria that the student weighs the benefits and drawbacks of schooling before deciding to leave school because more vital activities, such as job opportunities or family responsibilities, await outside while push-out factors are those caused by the school that is the school leads students to drop out through expelling out of school due to discipline offenses or academic factors. Moreover, Simić and Krstić (2017) and Ford et al (2020) proposed that the school serves as the agent in the push factors, with the student being pushed out as a result while with pull factors, the student serves as the agent, and decides to pull.

5.2.3 Efforts used by SM in managing Early signs of Female Student's Dropout in Schools

School Management has been identified as critical in promoting the persistence of students who are at risk of dropping out. Kinyagu (2020) commended that it is critical to acknowledge school leaders have significant contributions to students' persistence to graduation. Likewise, Sorensen (2019) argued that individual initiatives, class efforts, school-wide efforts, district-wide efforts, and national efforts are all included in dropout prevention plans. Furthermore, Amadu (2016) proposed that although school leaders are not completely to blame for the dropout phenomena, it is the mandated location of dropout. Several studies conducted described distinct roles played by SM in controlling early signs of female students' dropout in school.

Bzour et al. (2021) suggested that punishments, including physical, psychological, and other punishments such as extra labor or suspension, should be banned. Punishment erodes self-esteem, instills fear, and leads to dropouts. Nisar ul Haq et al. (2019) examined the impacts of corporal punishment from a variety of social, economic, financial, and psychological perspectives. Corporal punishment is harmful to a child's morality. The number of pupils who drop out before the completion of the school year rises because of corporal punishment. However, the study did not show how SM can manage to control students' behavior without corporal punishment.

Likewise raising awareness through parent and stakeholder meetings on the impact of students dropping out on the family and nation. Nabugoomu (2019) for argued the sensitization of parents and the community toward students' academic performance and reducing dropouts. The fundamental purpose of hosting a school meeting was to keep strong social connections between parents, teachers, students, and other stakeholders (Kinyagu, 2020). Thus, studies do not consider how SM organizes teachers, parents, and management to work together to review and analyze strategies to avoid a student dropout.

Moreover, Latif et al. (2015) suggested that there should be positive environmental enhancement since dropout rates grew because of uninteresting school buildings environments, lack of facilities, and a terrible physical atmosphere. Similarly, Hapompwe et al. (2020) suggested leaders' commitment, improvement of classroom layout and physical appearance, first aid services, water and sanitation, and digital appliances reduce student dropout. Thus, does not show how SM can make learning institutions attractive to both teachers and students.

Additionally, Nyangarika et al. (2020) and Amadu (2016) recommended the improvement and activation of guidance and counseling units within the school environment. Amadu (2016) argued that effective guidance and counseling helped many girls to remain in school. However, Nyangarika et al. (2020) suggested that the guidance and counseling departments of schools are not only responsible for dealing with academic concerns but also with issues that are outside the limits of the educational environment including parental skills. Thus, the researcher is looking at how SM engages in guidance and counseling.

Likewise, Hapompwe et al. (2020); (Nabugoomu, 2019; Naidoo, 2019) argued for having a role model for female students. Researchers pointed out that schools with no or few female teachers are frequently less appealing to parents due to the security of female students and the lack of role models to urge female students to continue attending schools. Also, Amadu (2016) contended that the link between role models and civic involvement among young people inspired teenagers to think that they can make a difference in the world by introducing them to other young ladies and successful celebrities or professions. Thus, this study aims on getting more information on how schools use role models to control female student dropout.

5.3 Research Gap

The literature reviewed claimed that SM has several roles to perform concerning the daily routine of teachers in schools, which includes curriculum implementation and management (Mogashoa, 2013). However, Parents and other stakeholders blame that when female students are sent to secondary school they drop out regardless of the crucial role of SM (Naidoo, 2019). Their blame is that, if female student dropout is the process that happens over time with several signals shown before actual dropout occurred, how does SM fail to prevent it (Moshidi & Jusoh, 2020)? Little is known about how early signs of female students dropping out are identified in public Secondary Schools in Tanzania. Thus this study aimed at investigating how SM identifies the early signs of female students dropping out in public secondary schools in Songea MC, and the approaches used to prevent its occurrence.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research approach

This study used a qualitative research approach. The approach was non experimental soliciting information from respondents directly using research tools. The approach was appropriate to the study because it entailed an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and behavior (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The approach allowed the researcher to examine issues in a social and individual setting. It was subjective in nature as it requires participants to provide information based on their experiences and perceptions (thanh & thanh, 2015).

6.2 Research Design

This study used a case study design. A case study is an in-depth examination of a particular subject, such as a person, group, location, occasion, business, or phenomenon (Mabry, 2008). A single case study research design is an in-depth analysis of a small non-random sample, it emphasizes in-depth information (Gustafsson, 2017). The design was chosen because of the opportunity it provides for the researcher to examine in-depth data from teachers and students in the study. The researcher planned and developed the case study design to make sure that all the information acquired was pertinent to the study. The case study design benefited and assisted the researcher in focusing on particular and intriguing issues.

6.3 Research Site

The researcher conducted a study in one public secondary school in Songea Municipal. The school is among the twenty-two public secondary schools found in the area. The researcher selected the school purposively by putting into consideration the number of female students available in the school, its accessibility and proximity to the researcher bearing in mind the limited time available for the study (six weeks of data collection) and the financial limitation in conducting this study (Cohen et al., 2002). The school is among the few schools which have a female hostel and is located far from students' homes.

6.4 Research Participants

Human subjects who assisted the researcher in gathering data are referred to as research participants (Albuquerque et al., 2014). Thirty participants of this study were purposefully sampled from among seven hundred and thirty-three students and forty-two teachers at a chosen public secondary school. The study's participant includes ten teachers and twenty students (Etikan et al., 2016). The participant selected from among the teachers and students within the school knew strategies of SM in managing the early sign of female students dropping out of public secondary school.

The researcher chose the head teacher to be one of the participants because SM is chaired by the head teacher. The ten SM members were also chosen by the researcher to represent their departments. These teachers oversaw managing and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, managing, and monitoring the daily operations of the school. The researcher also chose student leaders from the same department as the teachers. These leaders work with the department head to protect their fellow students and are responsible for informing teachers any department-related issues. Five girls and four boys were among the selected student leaders. To get the detailed information regarding the study, the sample size of participants chosen in each category was sufficient. Consider tables of the participant's profiles.

6.5 Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods refer to the strategies used by the study to obtain data from the research participants. In a qualitative research study, the researcher is the primary data collector who interacts with respondents to gain vital information (Sutton & Austin, 2015). In this study data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis to enhance the validity through the consolidation of information from diverse sources.

However, before actual data collection, the researcher conducted the pilot studies of the research guides and data collection instruments from a few teachers and students from different schools who are not used in the main study (Pearson et al., 2020). This helped the researcher in determining the feasibility, reliability, and validity of the proposed study design.

Before data collection, respondents were promised that the information that would be collected would be kept confidential. Additionally, the consent form was supplied to them, and they willingly agreed to participate in the study after being informed about it. An audio recorder was used to capture conversations, and field notes were also taken to supplement the audio recordings and document analysis.

6.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense of the information obtained throughout the study (Haworth, 2018). In this study, the researcher used thematic data analysis since it involves analyzing data related to social context. The researcher reduced the complex process of analysis to four basic elements which were codes, categories, sub-themes, and themes.

During the study, data analysis was an ongoing process because notetaking was going concurrently with the audio recording of data and the transcription of audio was done immediately after the recording of the interview conversation (Creswell, 2014). The interview and focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed in the Kiswahili language and later translated into the English language. After transcription and translation, the information from the interview, focus group discussion and document analysis were grouped into different codes according to their similarities with the research questions.

The codes with similar points concerning research questions were organized into categories to identify emerging patterns in each category which then were built into themes and sub-themes. The researcher revisited transcripts of the recorded interview and focus group discussion clips after analyzing them to check whether there were any common and repeating themes, ideas, or potential issues before creating notes, summaries, and any research study suggestions. Then relevant data extracts were sorted (combined or split) according to an overarching theme, and then writing up analysis of the data by putting into consideration research questions

6.7 Ethical Considerations

Human subjects are used as respondents in educational research. Legal and ethical considerations should be made whenever people are used as research subjects. By taking these ethical factors into account, the potential for physical, social, emotional, or psychological harm is reduced. Therefore, during the study, the researcher took great precautions to uphold the dignity of every participant. The following ethics were put into consideration.

Permission from Relevant Authorities Conducting any research study is a process that requires seeking permission from relevant authorities (Roth & Von Unger, 2018). Before the actual data collection, the researcher applied for an ethical review clearance certificate. Then the researcher received the clearance certificate and the introduction letter from the relevant authorities. During the study, the researcher informed the participants about the research topic and the whole procedure to be involved in the study. The researcher made them aware that during interviews and FGD their contributions would be recorded using the mobile phone. The participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time without giving any reasons. Teachers who participated in the study signed the consent forms whereas the head of school signed consent forms on behalf of students' parents and students were given assent forms to sign for acceptance to be involved in the study.

The researcher told participants that the information they provided would only be utilized for the study. The information gathered in the field notebook was kept in a secured and locked cabinet. The data that was captured on a mobile device was moved to a laptop and saved in a folder that was securely protected by a strong password. Instead of using the names of the respondents from whom the data were collected, the research used pseudonyms.

No harm to participants, it is an ethical requirement that during the study, participants should not be exposed to any risky situations (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). In this study, embarrassing questions were avoided during the data collection process to prevent psychological stress for participants. The time taken during the interview and FGD session was negotiated between the researcher and participants to avoid any inconveniences to participate on the issue of time. Moreover, the place where the interview and FGD were held was safe and comfortable for the participant to express their views freely following the study guides.

7. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The choice to stop going to school is the result of several decisions and experiences the student got before actually dropping out. The female student displays signs such as truancy and indiscipline cases before she decided to stop attending school. The early signs of female students may be identified using the school-setting factors and student-related factors as follows;

7.1 School-Setting Factors

Based on the findings, the school-related early signs that can lead to female students dropping out are those factors related to school settings that when poorly managed, resulted in student dropout. The school setting factors obtained from findings include severe punishment, indiscipline cases, failure to participate in extracurricular activities, lack of feminine facilities in schools, teacher attitudes toward students, school feeding programs, and distance from school.

7.1.1 Severe Punishment

The findings revealed that teachers tend to punish students physically in ways that are too painful for them to tolerate. From the findings, it was revealed female students were occasionally subjected to harsh punishment, such as caning, making bricks, and gardening, which is technical and physically demanding and difficult for them to finish on time, and when delayed more punishment was given to them. Thus, the student decided to drop out of school. For instance, during FGD discussion one student said that: -

The reason for female students dropping out of school is due to severe punishment, for example, if a female student makes one mistake, she is given to make 300 bricks and if she sees that she cannot do it she thinks it is better to stay at home to avoid more punishment, then finally she decides to drop out of school (FGD with FS, 13/09/2025).

During the interview with students it was revealed that even though teachers punished students severely and harshly, there was a special consideration for students with health issues and special needs. Teachers gave them alternative punishments that are milder compared to those given to students without exceptionalities. The alternative punishment given include cleaning classes and washing dishes. In the interview, the teacher said that.

For those who have permanent disabilities, the department always recognizes them and when punishment occurs, we do not like them to be stigmatized, instead, we always advise teachers to provide an alternative punishment like washing the dishes and other punishments that cannot harm them (interview with GT on 14th September 2025).

Similarly, findings revealed that teachers knew that admitting corporal punishment violates adolescents' rights to dignity and protection. They are aware of the negative effects of harsh punishment, particularly corporal punishment on students' health and their carrier. They argued that severe punishment undermined students' confidence, implanted fear, and worsen their health relationships with teachers. Thus, they always provide alternative punishment rather than caning to avoid violating children's right, also they call parents or guardians of misbehaving students for counseling the student.

When a female student is subjected to corporal punishment and accidentally damaged because of poor approaches to punishing then it affects not just you as a teacher but also the parents and other leaders who approach you (FGD, SM on 16th September 2025)

The findings are consistent with the study by Ahmadl et al. (2014) who recommended that because of harsh punishment, some students decide to drop out of school due to negative attitudes toward school. Similarly, Kambuga et al. (2018) suggested that in Tanzanian schools particularly public schools, physical punishment is acceptable and authorized. Likewise, Amadu (2016) pointed out that Female dropout may be caused by physical and verbal abuse. Therefore, it is important to be aware that, frequently subjecting students to severe punishment, led to students' fear, truancy, and dropping out of school rather than altering their conduct.

7.1.2 Distance from Home to School

Findings revealed that the distance between home and school leads to students dropping out. Since some students in CH secondary school walk more than eight kilometers to school. There is no public transportation in the area. The research demonstrates that distance from school interferes with their ability to focus on class due to tiredness, latecomers, and absenteeism. Hence causing mediocre performance in class which is accelerated by missing sessions due to absenteeism and late coming.

During FGD with students' leaders, they said that; "the majority of those who drop out of school are girls and the main reason why female students drop out of school is the distance from home to school."

Also, the contribution from teacher DT argued that.

Another indicator is the distance between the school and the residence, this causes students to encounter a lot of pressure on the way when they are coming and going back home, for example, children who come from Mhombeza distance of 8 kilometers (interview, DT, 15/9/2025).

The finding concurs with Sharma and Levinson (2019) who studied the relationship between the distance of travel to school and the dropout level of secondary school students. Similarly, (Amadu, 2016; Bzour et al., 2021; Fute & Wan, 2021; Latif et al., 2015; Shahidul & Karim, 2015) compared the distance traveled as the major factor for female dropout. Therefore, the distance from the school to the student's homes determines the possibility of female students' dropout. When the distance from school increases then the possibility of female students dropping out of school increases

7.1.3 The Nature of the School Environment

The study's findings indicate that the school environment had an impact on female students who drop out. The physical setting of the school, the nature of the curriculum, and the relationships between students and teachers all make up the school environment. The results showed that the physical environment of the school, including the lack of water-filled restrooms, lack of girls' changing rooms, incinerators, and classrooms without desks and chairs, together with an unfavorable school environment, causes female students to drop out of secondary school. During FGD with SL, it was noted that.

As a school we have toilets that have water, also the school has a changing room but no incinerators, the school environment is clean, classes are available with few enough tables together with chairs, but also the class floor is not good. (SL, FGD, 13th September 2025).

Additionally, the results showed that there were, no administration and departmental offices. The lack of guidance and a counseling office makes it challenging for the department to fulfill its responsibilities while maintaining student confidentiality. The interview with GT narrated that.

"There is an office challenge, as a department, we do not have an office. Instead, when a sensitive issue arises, we borrow other people's offices and ask them to vacate. So that we can confidentially attend our customers" (interview, 14th September 2025)".

Also, the findings revealed that participation in extracurricular activities correlates to the dropout rate among female students. When female students did not engage in extracurricular activities such as debate, scout, games, gardening, and cultural dances they have a high likelihood of dropping out of the school system. It was found that some students are attracted to go to school due to other extra programs conducted such as sports and games, talent day and debates. The Members of SM in the FGD argued that.

We help them with various extracurricular activities such as sports, talent day every Friday, and even the sports they see outside and here where they can sing and dance as they do outside if they don't break the values of the school and so it attracts them to come to school (FGD with SM on 15th September 2025).

The findings correspond to Moore (2012) and Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey (2018) who studied the contribution of the school environment to students' and teachers' dissatisfaction in public schools. Therefore, students and teachers got dissatisfied due to an uncondusive environment that increases the possibility of student dropout becoming higher

7.1.4 School Feeding Program

The findings revealed that a lack of feeding programs contributes to female students' low attendance, and dropout rates increase. Despite their early arrival at school, many students do not have breakfast and lunch at school. This study has found that when

female students did not have enough food at school, they develop a habit of skipping classes, being absent, and exiting school. During the FGD with SL, one of them argued that.

As a leader in ensuring that girls do not drop out of school, I always advise them to plant different crops that we can cook and eat, so we can get food like makande and ugali at school, at the end of the day they stay at school without trouncing (FGD, FS, 13th September 2025).

Similarly, findings revealed that members of SM have planned for food to be served at school by involving students to grow their farms. The study found that the program keeps them getting food for only three days. On the other hand, SM has arranged for parents to contribute food for their children as stipulated in government Education Circulars. However, the feeding program was organized and controlled by parents. Students at CH Secondary School got food, but it is only for students who contributed for it. In the FGD with SM, they said that.

“Our farms are often small, so when we grew food, it last three days before it runs out. This is because our farms are small, and running expenses are also higher but they are often associated with parents being able to contribute and those who can afford to contribute and the children get food at school as they have contributed (FGD, with SM, 15th September 2025)”.

The findings resonate with Hapompwe et al. (2020) and Amadu (2016) who argued that food insecurity has been linked to low school attendance and performance among students. Also, the report from UNICEF (2020) states that the unavailability of food in schools has influenced truancy and dropout. Therefore, when the school lacks a feeding program it increases the chances of female students dropping out of school of hunger.

7.1.5 Discipline cases

From the finding, respondents argued that cases of indiscipline correlated to a change in a student's behavior which results in student dropout. The findings showed that a student who is about to leave school repeatedly misbehaves and demonstrates a distinct personality from who she was before she decided to drop out. During FGD, HS argued that:

You can know her by looking at her behavioral change, that is, she had good behavior, a good character, she cooperates well with her classmates, you see a person who is not understood, i.e., she just changes suddenly, she does not get along well with her classmates, she rarely attends school (FGD, HS 13th September 2025).

Similarly, findings showed that when a student violated school rules, such as theft they are suspended for a period before the school board decides to expel her or not. Many pupils in CH secondary school decide to leave the school as soon as they are suspended for a disciplinary fault. The suggestions from the interview with DT show that; -

When a student misbehaves, the school discipline department decides to suspend the student for not more than three weeks before the final decision of the school board to either expel her or not. But when they are suspended, they do not want to come back to school for a board decision (interview, DT, 15th September 2025).

The findings concur with Kinyagu (2020) who pointed out that indiscipline cases may lead to female students dropping out. Similarly, Simić and Krstić (2017) indicated that the dropping out process begins long before a child leaves school, with poor grades, numerous absences, and incidents of indiscipline. Thus, indiscipline cases may lead to a high possibility of female students dropping out of school.

7.1.6 Lack of School Requirements

Findings indicated that some families' particularly low-income families, fail to provide students with essential school supplies including female pads, exercise books, and school uniforms. This makes it difficult for a female student to go to school without an exercise book or with worn-out attire. As a result, she may decide to stop attending school.

During the FGD, HS said that “If there is a difficult environment at home, such as a lack of a uniform or exercise book, a female student may decide to drop out of school”.

Similarly, one of the members of SM contributed to that.

I think from my experience the reason that contributes to girls dropping out of school is the lack of basic needs such as uniforms and exercise books, and if she compares herself to others, who have good uniforms while hers are worn out, she decides to drop out of school (FGD, SM on 15th September 2025).

The study's findings concur with Kinyagu (2020) who commented that the low financial situation of families leads pupils to drop out because parents fail to purchase school uniforms, transportation fees, and meals.

7.2 Approaches used by SM to respond to early signs of female students' dropout in public secondary schools

The findings showed that SM uses various strategies to control the early signs of female students dropping out. Strategies used by SM include strengthening the guidance and counseling departments, establishing feeding programs, Community, and parent engagements. As well as the introduction of female role Modelling and creating a conducive learning environment

7.2.1 Strengthening Guidance and Counseling Departments

The results of the study showed that one of SM's tactics for managing female students is to strengthen the guidance and counseling departments. The findings indicated that the school has a guidance and counseling department. But staff members had neither undergone formal training nor a seminar on how to conduct it. Thus, the school needs to have in-service training on guidance and counseling. During the interview, GT said that.

I do not have a specific counseling profession aside from the one I received from my career, but when I first came here, I did not have any training. I had never received an invitation to a seminar and never attended a seminar (interview, GT 14th September 2025).

Similarly, the finding indicated that the guidance and counseling department has set out a timetable for conducting its obligations. Their schedule involves one-on-one counseling, which is provided daily, and group counseling, which is offered after every three months and conducted by all teachers. The interview with HST revealed that.

But there are also frequent one-on-one guidance and counseling sessions with students where the teacher sees the student's behavior is different, even physical changes, absenteeism without reason, failure in class the teacher calls one by one and listens to her if she has something to consult with her (interview, HST, 20th September 2025).

Also, the comment from SM was, "Every three months, we have a mechanism in place at the school where we talk to a chosen group of students. The girls talk to female teachers, and the boys to male teachers (FGD, SM 15th September 2025)."

The study's findings suggested that female student's day should be introduced. Student leaders agreed that there should be a day set aside solely for female students. when all female students come together and are guided, like how Women's Day is honored. One of the students said that.

I think the country should a special day for girls like women's day, where they sit, advise and listen to their problems so that they can be helped (FGD, SL, 14th September 2025).

The findings resonate with the study conducted by Amadu (2016) who argued that effective guidance and counseling helped many girls to remain in school. Correspondingly Nyangarika et al. (2020) suggested that the guidance and counseling departments of schools are not only responsible for dealing with academic concerns but also other issues like health skills. Thus, strengthening the guidance and counseling departments is very crucial for controlling female students' dropout.

7.2.2 Improving Feeding Programs

The study's findings showed that SM participation in improving feeding programs at school reduces female students' dropout. It has been noticed that the school has introduced a feeding program as it has stipulated in the government circulars. Parents contribute to the costs of the provision of food for children. Findings showed that students who contributed to the feeding program attended schools frequently. During FGD members of SM states that.

Pupils receiving school meals at school normally attend classes and getting school meals is associated with parents' capacity to pay for students' meals. The pupils must pay for their meals at school (FGD, SM, 15th September 2025).

On top of that, the study indicates that the school practiced farming their student produces maize and Beans which they use to get food at school. The food obtained from the school farms can be used for only three to four days. The contribution by FS during FGD was.

To prevent girls from dropping out of school, I always advise them to grow different crops that we can cook and eat food at school. As some students arrive at school from 11 am to 12 pm but do not get any food (FGD, FS, 13th September 2025)

The findings resonate with Amadu (2016) who argued that the introduction of a school feeding program reduces dropout among female students. Also, the report by UNICEF (2020) shows that the unavailability of food in schools has influenced truancy in schools hence dropout of many children. Thus, to reduce female students' dropout, the government should establish laws and regulations requiring all parents to contribute food to school for their children, or it should offer meals for all pupils, as this would lessen hunger and consequently boost school attendance

7.2.3 Improving Students, Parents, and Community Engagements

Research findings revealed that there are strong connections between the SM, students, families, and community members in the school. The researcher found that students participate in preventing their peers' dropout. They arrange financial contributions to assist female students who are in need. The FGD with student leaders indicated that.

As students, we often meet with students prone to leave school to provide guidance and identify the underlying cause. If there is a difficult home circumstance, such as a lack of uniforms, we contribute some amount of money and offer uniform, but if we have spare uniforms, we give them (FGD with S, 14th September 2025).

Additionally, the results demonstrated that SM consistently schedules parent consultations to examine the most effective strategies for reducing the dropout rate for female students. To monitor their children's conduct, academic achievement, and attendance, parents organized a committee of parents known as UWAWA. On this committee, the parents collaborate with the classroom teachers. The study also observed relationships between the school and the community. By creating a community education mobilization called WJE, the SM arranges gatherings of teachers and the community to improve communication between them. Its

goals include raising community awareness of educational issues and preventing student dropouts. The SM members during the FGD suggested that.

At meetings, we always sit with the community in the sense that the school belongs to the whole community and in there we discuss many things, one of the agendas is to prevent absenteeism and for parents to provide their needs (FGD, SM, 15/9/2025).

The findings argued for the importance of NGOs like PADI in avoiding student dropouts. For instance, a non-governmental organization, helped the school build a female hostel where female students whose parents could afford the cost of the hostel sent their children.

The findings concur with West (2021) who argued that cooperation among teachers, managers, and the community helps to reduce female students' dropout. Also, Durrani et al. (2021) suggested that there should be the creation and implementation of a shared task coordination platform for government personnel, Parents, Teacher Groups, and other stakeholders. Thus, when stakeholders are included in the process of planning to keep female students in school, the number of dropouts reduces.

7.2.4 Creating a Conducive Learning Environment

The learning environment is the summation of all the contexts in which people interact to enhance experiences and promote learning. Findings revealed that the learning environment and female student dropout rate are positively correlated. The conversation held with SM members and student leaders demonstrates that the number of students who drop out of school reduces when the learning environment is positive and supportive. SM members argued that the government, in collaboration with other stakeholders, should improve the learning environment by constructing administrative buildings, adding more classes, and providing furniture like tables and chairs. The interview with HST shows that.

The government needs to spend money on the maintenance of learning environment. The government should spend money building hostels and a suitable environment to assist female students in schools (interview, HST on 20th September 2025).

Additionally, findings showed that the school has a playground where students play games and engage in sports to relax their minds. Thus, the availability of sports and games arenas is important in any school as it has a positive impact on female students' attendance. SM members who participated in the FGD argued that.

But perhaps I should add that we also assist them with different types of activities, such as sports and games and a talent show every Friday where they can sing and dance as they do outside school if they don't violate school rules (FGD, SM on 15/9/2025).

The findings correspond with the study by Hapompwe et al. (2020) and Mosha (2014) who argued that the improvement of infrastructures such as classrooms, toilets, and girls change room leads to a conducive environment for girls to learn and complete their studies. Also, Kassanga and Lekule (2021), argued on the involvement of NGOs such as Firelight Foundation in assisting female's student to complete their education. Thus, one of the most inventive components of teaching is creating a welcoming, exciting teaching and learning environment for the schools

7.2.5 Introduction of Female Role Modeling

The findings confirmed that role models are particularly beneficial for females because of the institutional obstacles, gender biases, and unfavorable attitudes that female need to overcome in the education sector. The findings showed that teachers at CH secondary schools serve as role models to their students. Teachers demonstrate to female students how they overcame obstacles to entering the teaching profession and how their upbringing has affected who they are today. During the interview, HST said that.

We also advise them as female teachers, citing our own experiences as examples because even us went to comparable educational institutions and situations as they do. So, we constantly remind them that we too have encountered similar and related conditions. This helped students to understand where we come from as teachers (interview with HST, 20th September 2025)

The findings are congruent with studies by Hapompwe et al. (2020); (Nabugoomu, 2019; Naidoo, 2019) who suggested the importance of having a role model for females' students. Role models have a crucial role in encouraging female students to finish their education. At least once a year, SM should invite women who have earned an education and are actively employed in a variety of professions to speak with female students about how they overcame obstacles to become in the position they hold today

8. CONCLUSION

This study was carried out to explore the strategies of School Managements on managing the early signs of female students' drop out of public secondary school. The major focus of this study was basically on explorations of the strategies used by SM to identify the early signs of female students' dropout and the approaches used by SM to respond to early signs of female students' dropout in public secondary schools.

By using the data collected from respondents and the analysis of data the study found that School Managements apply different strategies to identify female students' dropouts by considering different environments and situations based on school setting factors and Student related factors. The researcher argues that to reduce female students' dropout all challenges encountered by SM must be resolved.

Therefore, based on the research problem and research gaps identified in this study, through data collection, analysis, and data presentation the study argued that SM should not be the only to be blamed for failing to identify and control early sign of female students' dropouts. However, the government and other stakeholders should strongly come together to get rid of all the challenges facing SM during identification of early signs of female students' dropout.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends the government to provide teachers with pre-service and ongoing professional development on gender responsive pedagogy and guidance and counseling, so that they are equipped with the knowledge of serving all students, regardless of their gender and ability. Likewise, this study recommends that the government should give schools adequate funding so that they can renovate classrooms and latrines, and purchase female-specific supplies. Also, repair chairs and tables, build hostels, administrative buildings, and the departmental office. The researcher recommends that the school should arrange regular consultations with parents to engage them on education policies and circulars so that they perform their obligations and responsibilities as stipulated toward their children's education. Also, the study recommends that parents should be educated on the outdated and oppressive customs, and beliefs, such as early marriages that limits female students' educational completions. Moreover, the study recommends further research to be done by involving as many schools as possible or conduct the same study in different places. The researcher conducted a qualitative study therefore other studies can also be done quantitatively.

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