





Measures to Curb Lack of Learning Interest among Secondary School Students in Entebbe Municipality, Uganda

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Abstract

The study centered on the measures to curb lack of learning interest among secondary school students in Entebbe Municipality. Our method of investigation was both qualitative and quantitative approaches through a cross-sectional design with a sample size of 383 respondents. From the study findings, it validated 90% with a mean values above 3.0 (M =4.13, Std = 0.89) agreement that collaboration with schools and communities; implementation of student-centered approach, designing hands on activities that involves multiple sense, parents active participation in their child education and provision for economically disadvantaged students are possible solutions to curtail learners' lack of interest. We recommend stakeholders to work collaboratively to strengthen and encourage students to value their education and see reasons to complete their studies. This can be implemented through multisectoral activities geared towards helping the students cope with learning stressors. For that reason, the implementation of these channels or measures aforementioned is every stakeholders business for learners' retention and decrease of dropout rate in secondary schools to be effective and efficient.

Keywords: Measures, Learning Interest, Student-Centered Approach, Secondary School, Parent Participation, Collaborative Education, Dropout Rate, Learners' Retention, Coping with Learning Stressors

Introduction

In an effort to address the issue of dropout rate, education has been designated as

both a human right (UNESCO, 2017) and a Millennium Development Goal (United Nations, 2015). Mpyangu, Ochen, Onyango, and Lubaale (2014) stated that education helps to create a bright future for young people by ensuring that they have good employment, socioeconomic status, and overall health. On the contrary, the study by Kalumba (2018) showed that dropout rate in secondary school is alarming in Wakiso district. In particular, Entebbe Municipality in Wakiso District is no exception to this phenomenon of school dropouts. In terms of education, UBOS report (2017) says that only 56.7% females and 49% males have dropped out of school without completing O'Level education. This poor completion rates are attributed to early pregnancies and marriages. The researchers saw this as a great gap and needed to be addressed in this study.

The education department's study reveals that when the majority of parents stopped providing their children with food and other essentials, the school dropout rate increased dramatically (Wall, Tolar-Peterson, Reeder, Roberts, Reynolds, & Rico Mendez, 2022). Among other things, the decline is being ascribed to hunger, a poor learning environment, parents who marry off their young daughters, and a lack of food support. The researchers found this as part of the challenges that needed to be addressed to in the context of Entebbe Municipality, Uganda.

Numerous investigations of the factors that contribute to high dropout rates, their consequences, and the different approaches taken to try to address these issues have been conducted (Keppens & Spruyt, 2020). However, since students' lack of interest in secondary school is still an issue in Uganda today, it is evident that either the reasons have not been appropriately addressed or the remedies are not effective. Against this backdrop, this research was carried out to fill this gap by investigating the measures to curb lack of learning interest among secondary school students in Entebbe Municipality, Uganda.

Literature Review **Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent Et Al., 1994)**

The theoretical underpinnings of Lent et al.'s (1994) social cognitive career theory served as the study's foundation. Social cognitive career theory was developed as a framework to help understand how people develop career interests, make educational and vocational decisions, and perform; persist in terms of academic and/or occupational endeavours. It was inspired by Bandura's (1986) conceptualisation of social cognitive theory.

This is a relatively new theory, wherein Lent et al. (1994) broadened the scope of Bandura's study to include only the individual's growth in relation to a career. Hackett and Betz's (1981) study, which initially recognised the idea of self-efficacy as a crucial component of professional development, was also included by Lent et al. The researchers found this theory suitable for this study as it envisages the interest of students in making choices for their career and factors that can lead to lack of interest which was the foundation

for this study leading to dropout rate among secondary school learners. This was essential as it dealt with how to model a child in line with proper career guidance towards boosting their interest in remaining at school and completing their studies without dropping out.

Additionally, Lent et al. (1993) made an effort to combine common elements of theoretical frameworks that had been developed and improved by other well-known career theorists, including developmental theory, social learning, life-span, life-space (Super, 2020), person-environment correspondence (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984), and personality typology. By doing this, they developed a system that is more inclusive and able to thoroughly explain each person's professional growth process.

According to a study by Zhao et al. (2005), social cognitive career theory can improve people's self-efficacy by favourably enhancing their abilities and results. The idea of "learner's ability" is completely developed in this regard. Students must participate in learning activities for an extended length of time rather than discontinuing them in order to improve their self-efficacy. This will have an impact on their subjective evaluation of actions (challenges) and personal skills (abilities) in relation to environmental possibilities. According to Ryff (2014), students' mental health must be supported throughout their careers in order for them to be content and enjoy life.

In this regard, the researcher's interest in using this model is that it gives the kind of background which support the study in a way that background or environmental influences, that is, a school in this context, can affect how a learner's learning experience would be. That is where the outcome lies whether students' interest to continue or chose another option by choice, goals and actions. If the learner chose opposite of the school when not favourable then they cannot enjoy learning in such environment and this brings us to the end of this model looking at the performance domain and attainment which may lead to either repeating class, expulsion, lack of interest, punishment and then drop out before attaining or completing the study. The career path is already fragmented by default. However, when economic, social, cultural, educational, and familial factors are favourable, students' completion and success rates rise and encourage them to finish their education, which improves their overall wellbeing by fostering self-acceptance, good relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, and a healthy lifestyle, which lowers crime, mental health issues, and other negative effects that may result from school dropout.

Measures to Curb Learning Interest

From the lens of empirical studies, to promote learners' interest, Limone and Toto (2022) suggested that the main factor is positive school climate. Parents, teachers, and school administrators should work together to enhance the educational environment.

Kurian, Kujur, Ahmed, Chopra and Hossain (2023) survey unveiled that dropout rates are greater at government schools than at private ones. This study stopped only at showing the obstacle without much effort to address the situation. Hence the current study

applied mixed methods to uncover rich insights from the participants on the best way possible to increase retention and decrease dropout rate and as well bolster student's interest in education in Entebbe Municipality.

Furthermore, a study by Mendoza-Galindo, Miranda-Gutierrez, and Polo-Rambal (2023) on lowering school dropout rates: an analysis from the perspective of educational management reveals that school dropout has become a common occurrence in institutions worldwide, igniting researchers' interest in understanding its causes and potential solutions to ensure student retention. This is because they are aware of the impact that low schooling has on the development of communities both on individual and social level. Thus, this study's goal is to apply a ludic-pedagogical approach to help sixth-grade students at IETD San José de Sitionuevo better academically. Information was gathered through semi-structured interviews and field diaries using a pre-test-post-test methodology based on the qualitative approach of action-research type. Sixty sixth-graders, three institution teachers, and fifteen parents made up the participant sample. The primary findings include low academic performance, a lack of enthusiasm, and a lack of classroom support systems as contributing factors to school dropout. The offered data demonstrate how pedagogical approaches that incorporate play into instruction can reinforce each of the challenges identified by this study. This study has shown the important role of motivation in teaching and learning process connecting us back to the theory that guided the study that school environment can either contribute to learner's choice and goal to stay or to quit schooling. Therefore, to cover the methodological gaps, application of mixed method was employed to seek the experience and opinions of Ugandans in regard to this topic on identifying possible measures to curb lack of learning interest among secondary school students in Entebbe Municipality.

Dinesen, Blix, and Gramstad's (2023) study on professional strategies for managing upper secondary school dropouts among youth in the Sami areas of Norway reports that two primary strategies—tracking the student and giving the student time—were identified through thematic analysis in a focus group study with teachers, advisers, nurses, and counsellors in the Sami areas of northern Norway. The successful implementation of the two techniques to avoid upper secondary school dropout was shown to require interdisciplinary teamwork, cultural competence, and transparent surroundings. This was a very vital and informative recommendation to be incorporated in the current study. However, an empirical data in the context of Uganda was needed to see the effectiveness in the application of such strategies in curbing lack of interest among learners leading to high rate of dropout rates.

Furthermore, a study on secondary school dropout intentions by Anttila, Lindfors, Hirvonen, Määttä, and Kiuru (2023): It is crucial to identify antecedent factors for the risk of school dropout in order to customize individual support for adolescents. Student temperament and achievement motivation as antecedents also confirm that early school

leaving and dropping out of school pose a challenge for later life adjustment. This study offers novel insights into the relationship between temperament, motivational beliefs and behaviours, and their combined effects on later school dropout intentions. To avoid negative effects on the individual and society as a whole, it would be crucial to support pupils with varying temperaments and motives for achievement.

Finally, research by Kumar, Patel, Debbarma, and Saggurti (2023) on the factors that influence teenage school dropouts: India has the highest adolescent population in the world, according to data from a longitudinal study conducted there. Still, a large number of underprivileged Indian teenagers are unable to finish their education. Therefore, it is necessary to comprehend the causes of school dropout in this demographic. The goal of the current study was to uncover the causes and elements that contribute to teenage school dropout and to comprehend the determinants of this phenomenon.

The factors influencing school dropout among adolescents aged 10 to 19 have been determined using longitudinal survey data from Understanding Adults and Young Adolescents (UDAYA) for Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. 2015–2016 saw the first wave of the survey, while 2018–2019 saw the second wave. In order to monitor school dropout rates and factors related to them among teenagers, descriptive statistics were employed in conjunction with bivariate and multivariate analysis. According to the results, married girls aged 15 to 19 had the greatest school dropout rate (84%), followed by unmarried girls (46%), and boys (38%) in the same age range. Teenagers' chances of dropping out of school declined as household affluence increased. Adolescents with educated mothers were far less likely to drop out of school than those with uneducated mothers. The likelihood of dropping out of school was 2.56 times higher for girls [AOR: 2.56; CI: 1.79–3.84] and 6.67 times higher for younger boys [AOR: 6.67; CI: 4.83–9.23] who worked for pay. In comparison to boys who did not use any substances, the chance of school dropout was 89% higher for older boys [AOR: 1.89; CI: 1.55–2.30] and 3.14 times higher for younger boys [AOR: 3.14; CI: 2.26–4.35]. Older girls [AOR: 1.30; CI: 1.05–1.62] and younger girls [AOR: 2.05; CI: 1.37–3.05] who reported at least one type of parental discrimination were more likely to drop out of school than their peers. Among younger males, the most common cause for dropping out of school was lack of interest in studies/education not necessary (43%), followed by family reasons (23%), and paid work (21%).

According to the study's findings, dropout rates were higher among those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. School dropout rates are decreased by mother education, family engagement, sports participation, and role models. On the other hand, risk factors for teenage dropout include things like working for a living, substance addiction in boys, and gender discrimination against girls. Dropout rates are also increased by hereditary factors and a lack of enthusiasm in study. According to the study, it is necessary to raise socioeconomic standing, postpone girls' marriage, increase government incentives for education, provide them with legitimate employment after graduation, and

raise awareness.

This was an in-depth study though it was only quantitative approach. There was context gap as this study was done in India not Uganda. So, it was imperative to carry out this current study to identify possible measures to curb lack of learning interest among secondary school students from the lens of respondents within Entebbe Municipality using cross-sectional design to gather rich data that has both practical and theoretical implications.

Materials And Methods

For this study, the researchers utilised a cross-sectional research design to investigate the measures to curb lack of learning interest among secondary school students in Entebbe Municipality, Uganda. “The cross-sectional design” was preferred in this study because it supported collection of data from a big population one point in time. It was also cost effective and fit in the study. 383 respondents were sampled for the study utilising “simple random sampling” to enroll the students and “purposive sampling” techniques to enroll government officials, counselors, parents and educators. Data was collected through questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews. This approach enabled the researchers to collect quantitative and qualitative data at the same time and analyzing the descriptive and thematic data simultaneously. After both analyses were complete, the results were compared to draw overall conclusions.

Ethical Considerations

Observance of ethical issues pertaining to this study was focal from start of the investigation. The respondents' rights, the goal of the study, and the fact that participation was optional were all explained to them in detail by the researchers. They were given a consent form describing these details, and their consent were sought before participation in the study. Also, confidentiality was ensured by anonymizing any revealing or personal information of the respondents. Acknowledgement of scholarly work incorporated into this inquiry was done through citation and appending reference list of all sources.

Results

The analysis of results was done according to the objective of the investigation. The study focused on 383 total sample size. 300 respondents participated in quantitative survey and 40 respondents participated in qualitative study.

Gender of the Participants

The results of the participants' gender were represented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Showing gender of the respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Interviews	Frequency	Percent
Male	110	37	Male	14	35
Female	190	63	Female	26	65
Total	300	100.0		40	100

Source: primary data (2024)

Data above showed that greater percentage of 63% of the gender who shared their insights were females and 37% were males who participated in the quantitative study. Among the interview respondents, results showed that 35% were males and 65% were females. This implied that majority of the respondents were females. This showed that females were more to males both in qualitative and quantitative study. This was important to the study to know the most group opinion by sex that participated in the study and their knowledgeable about the measures to curb lack of learning interest among secondary school students in Entebbe Municipality, Uganda.

Possible Measures to Curb Lack of Learning Interest

The possible measures to curb lack of learning interest among secondary school students in Entebbe Municipality was analysed descriptively.

Table 2: Showing possible measures to curb lack of learning interest

Items	Responses in Percentages (%)					Mean	Stand Dev
	SD %	D %	N %	A %	SA %		
Strengthen collaboration between schools and the community encourage shared responsibility for children's educational access and opportunity. This can involve joint efforts in monitoring learners and addressing their needs	3.7	3.0	4.3	36.3	52.7	4.31	0.96
Implement student-centered approaches "such as project-based learning, collaborative activities, and real-world problem-solving."	10.0	1.7	2.7	66.0	19.7	3.83	1.08
Design hands-on activities that involve multiple senses. These experiences spark curiosity and guide learners through engaging experiences while achieving learning outcomes.	4.3	4.0	4.3	61.0	26.3	4.01	0.93
Encourage parents to actively participate in their child's education. Regular communication, parent-teacher meetings, and involvement in school matters can positively impact student interest.	1.7	1.0	4.7	46.7	46.7	4.35	0.76
Provide support for economically disadvantaged students. This could include scholarships, mentorship programs, and addressing poverty-related issues that hinder learning	1.7	2.3	4.3	60.7	31.0	4.17	0.75
Overall						4.13	0.89

Source: Primary data, 2024

The results confirmed that 89% of the participants agreed that strengthening collaboration between schools and the community encourage shared responsibility for children's educational access and opportunity. This can involve joint efforts in monitoring learners and addressing their needs. 4.31 Mean value on the scale of 1-5 was high this showed that encouraging shared responsibility for children's educational access and opportunity improves learner's interest. On the other hand, a discrepancy of 0.96 suggested that at times maintaining learner's interest is not easy to predict so as to retain them in school due to different learning styles and interest but joint efforts in monitoring learners and addressing their needs is key.

The findings showed that 86% of respondents agreed that implementing student-centered approaches "such as project-based learning, collaborative activities, and real-world problem-solving," with the mean of 3.83 confirmed that student-centred approach should be reinvigorated. On the contrary, adjustment of 1.08 meant that such approach is not easy to utilise but implementing it can be a way of curtailing lack of learning interest among secondary school dropout students.

The statistical results also unveiled 87.3% confirmation from the participants that learner's lack of interest can be curbed by designing hands-on activities that involve multiple senses. 4.01 was the mean score suggesting that these experiences spark curiosity and guide learners through engaging experiences while achieving learning outcomes. 0.93 variation underscored that it depends on the views and the kind of hands-on activities designed to interest the learners.

By 93% of participants' agreeableness, it is imperative to encourage parents to actively participate in their child's education to enhance learners' interest and retention at school. 4.35 was the mean value affirming that regular communication, parent-teacher meetings, and involvement in school matters can positively impact student interest. Although, 0.76 variation captured that for this to be effective, there is a need for proper encouragement and concord to reach a consensus.

Lastly, the results were at a high rating of 92% agreement by the raters that "specific roles assigned to different team members provide support for economically disadvantaged students." This could include scholarships, mentorship programs, and addressing poverty-related issues that hinder learning. Again, with a high mean score of 4.17 further confirms that scholarships, mentorship programs, and addressing poverty-related issues that hinder learning ought to be endorsed. Interestingly, 0.75 disparity posed that criteria for the selection of economically disadvantaged students may affect scholarships and mentoring.

Overall, the study confirmed that 90% agreed that collaboration with schools and communities; implementation of student-centered approach, designing hands on activities

that involves multiple sense, parents' active participation in their child education and provision for economically disadvantaged students are possible measures to curb lack of learning interest among secondary school students in Entebbe Municipality.

The quantitative findings provide additional support for the qualitative findings; one informant (*KII=Key Informant Interviews 1, 2 ...*) was quoted

“As parents it is on us to strive to provide our part in the USE agenda not everything is free so that our children also look like others and be able to stay in school and know the value for education. If we don't act now we shall regret later.”(KII 1)

Furthermore, another informant noted that

“Look at it this way if the communities cooperate with schools to ensure that a child doesn't run away from school and also families are empowered to understand the dangers of early marriage, dropout of school would be gone but we are in a business it is not my child thus this same people come to harass us in the community because they lack manners, they terrorize our communities, steal our properties because of lack of what to do as a result of the behaviours that arose while they were growing up at school. It vital to engage everyone in this regard.”(KII 2)

The study further revealed that the ways to motivate learners to remain at school is through collaboration. This is parent-school-community relations to help track when a child is nursing the idea of dropping out of school and the possible early intervention to curb this situation. Enhancing psychological assistance through professional therapy for students is necessary to reduce their lack of interest. One of the respondents, who was quoted, disclosed this:

“...it is demotivating how some schools handle learners and as such anyone decide to withdraw from school especially when things are hard and no one to express how they feel. I recommend experts to be employed in schools to offer therapies to students as it can help them go through their schooling successfully.”(KII 3)

This is a justification that when there are professionals who know how to handle demotivated learners they can help them in getting back on track through therapeutic interventions that suits individual cases as may not be effective to leave to teachers alone to handle at the same time teaching. What matters is the readiness to work together and support these students when they are in need or facing academic challenges.

Discussion

The findings confirmed that (90%) agreeableness and mean score above 3.0 ($M = 4.13$, $Std = 0.89$) implied that collaboration with school and community; implementation of student-centered approach, designing hands on activities that involves multiple sense, parents active participation in their child education and provision for economically disadvantaged students are possible measures to curb lack of learning interest among secondary school students. The practical implication is that with these possible measures in place, learner's interest will increase as well as students' retention, dropout rate will decrease and students' general wellbeing will improve. This is line with Mendoza-Galindo, Miranda-Gutierrez, and Polo-Rambal (2023), pedagogical approaches that include play into instruction have been shown to increase students' motivation to learn. Furthermore, Dinesen, Blix, and Gramstad (2023) emphasised that interdisciplinary cooperation, cultural competency, and transparent environments were shown to be necessary for effectively putting the two strategies to avoid upper secondary school dropout into practice.

In contrast, Anttila, Lindfors, Hirvonen, Määttä, and Kiuru (2023) pointed out that in order to avoid negative outcomes for both the individual and society, it would be crucial to help students with varying temperaments and achievement incentives. Similarly, Kumar, Patel, Debbarma, and Saggurti (2023) hypothesized that having role models, involvement in sports, parental interaction, and mother education all lower school dropout rates. According to Cummins and Huddleston (2013), ways to increase students' interest in learning include stimulating young children, making sure classrooms are stocked with educational resources and that teachers are motivated, and giving out-of-school children and adolescents second chances or alternative learning opportunities, such as life skills.

Conclusion

This study was carried out to investigate measures to curb lack of learning interest among secondary school students in Entebbe Municipality, Uganda. From the results, the study concluded that collaboration with schools and communities; implementation of student-centered approach, designing hands on activities that involves multiple sense, parents active participation in their child education and provision for economically disadvantaged students are possible measures to curb lack of learning interest among secondary school students in Entebbe Municipality. This study recommends multisectoral approach and stakeholders collaboration to strengthen and encourage students to value their education and see reasons to complete their studies. This can be implemented through multisectoral activities geared towards helping the students cope with learning stressors. For that reason, the implementation of these channels or measures aforementioned is every stakeholders business for learners' retention and decrease on dropout rate in secondary schools to be effective and efficient.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest arising from this work, and we have no interest in anything aside from knowledge sharing and improvement of institutions to function better and improve the rate of dropout in the country and the world at large.

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