



**UNIVERSITY
OF
LUSAKA**

School of Postgraduate Studies

**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO BOY CHILD HIGH DROP-OUT RATE IN SELECTED
PUBLIC DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KABWE DISTRICT, ZAMBIA**

Research Report presented

**in Partial Fulfilment for the requirement of the Award of Masters of
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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my original work, and it has not been submitted to any other college, institution, or university for academic purposes.

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Dr. C. Chagwiza

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all academicians, policy makers and other stakeholders in the world of development studies. I also dedicate this work to my lovely family and friends.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
DEBS	District Education Board Secretary
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MOE	Ministry of Education
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UN	United Nations
ZDHS	Zambia Demographic and Health Survey
ZSA	Zambia Statistics Agency

ABSTRACT

This study examines the factors contributing to the dropout rates of boys in public day secondary schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. The research aims to assess the prevalence of male school dropout and analyze the influence of socio-economic, school-based, and family-based factors on boys' disengagement from education. A mixed-methods approach was employed, incorporating stratified random sampling to collect quantitative data from students and qualitative data from parents and teachers. The study utilized structured questionnaires for students and semi-structured interviews for parents and teachers. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression modelling to establish relationships between the independent variables and dropout rates. The results indicate that financial constraints, household responsibilities, lack of school engagement, and weak parental supervision significantly contribute to dropout rates among boys. Regression analysis confirmed that socio-economic factors had the strongest influence, followed by school-based and family-based factors. The study concludes that addressing dropout requires comprehensive interventions, including financial support for at-risk boys, mentorship programs, curriculum adjustments, and policy reforms to ensure equitable access to education. It is recommended that government and educational stakeholders strengthen retention strategies targeting boys, expand vocational training opportunities, and enhance parental involvement in education.

Keywords: Boys' dropout rate, socio-economic factors, school-based factors, family-based factors, Zambia

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Education in Zambia has undergone significant transformations over the past decades, with government policies to increase school enrolment and retention. The introduction of free primary education in 2002 was a milestone in expanding access to education and removing financial barriers that had previously prevented many children from attending school. This policy resulted in a sharp increase in primary school enrolment, with gross enrolment rates rising from 80% in the late 1990s to over 120% by 2005 due to the inclusion of over-age learners who had previously been excluded (Ministry of Education, 2020). However, secondary education remained largely inaccessible for many children, especially those from low-income families, as tuition fees and indirect costs such as uniforms, books, and transportation continued to pose challenges.

Recognizing the need to extend free education beyond the primary level, the Zambian government implemented the Free Education Policy in January 2022, covering education from early childhood to secondary school (Ministry of Education, 2022). This policy abolished tuition and examination fees, making secondary education more accessible to a larger population. Following this initiative, school enrolment surged, with reports indicating that over 4.3 million learners were enrolled in primary and secondary schools in 2022, an increase from 3.8 million in 2021 (Zambia Parliament, 2022). Removing financial barriers allowed thousands of children from disadvantaged backgrounds to continue their education, reducing early dropouts and ensuring a higher transition rate from primary to secondary school. Government data also showed an increase in secondary school enrolment, particularly among girls, as families previously unable to afford school fees took advantage of free education.

1.2 The Increase in High School Dropout Rates Despite Free Education

Although the Free Education Policy has successfully increased school enrolment, high

school dropout rates have continued to rise, raising concerns about the effectiveness of retention strategies. Despite secondary education being more accessible, data from the Ministry of Education (2023) shows that dropout rates among high school students have increased in recent years. For example, the number of learners leaving school before completing Grade 12 rose from 11.2% in 2020 to 14.5% in 2023, despite free tuition (Ministry of Education, 2023). While enrolment figures have improved, retention remains a critical challenge, particularly for boys, who are increasingly disengaging from formal education.

The rise in dropout rates suggests that factors beyond school fees contribute to students leaving school early. Reports indicate that boys, in particular, continue to drop out due to socio-economic pressures, school-based challenges, and family responsibilities, all of which persist despite the abolition of tuition fees (UNICEF, 2022). Additionally, while free education policies have eliminated direct costs, indirect costs such as transportation, uniforms, and school materials remain significant barriers for many students. Furthermore, some students struggle with poor school engagement, lack of motivation, or external pressures such as informal labor, leading to increased dropout rates, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas.

Although free education has expanded access to schooling, ensuring that students remain in school and complete their education requires more than just financial support. The increasing dropout rates highlight the need for holistic interventions, including enhanced school engagement programs, vocational training, and parental involvement strategies. As Zambia continues to work toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 and African Agenda 2063, addressing the underlying causes of high school dropouts—particularly among boys—remains a pressing priority.

African Agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Emphasizing Education for All

The African Agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 serve as crucial frameworks for achieving universal access to quality education and ensuring that all children, including boys, remain in school. Both initiatives emphasize inclusivity, equitable access, and lifelong learning opportunities as fundamental to Africa's socio-economic transformation (African Union, 2015). However, despite Zambia's progress in reducing school dropout rates, boys continue to face vulnerabilities that require targeted interventions in line with these global and continental aspirations.

African Agenda 2063: The Role of Education in Sustainable Development

African Agenda 2063 is Africa's blueprint for sustainable socio-economic growth and development. One of its seven aspirations is Aspiration 1: A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development, which prioritize investments in education, science, and technology to drive economic progress (African Union, 2015). Under Goal 2, the agenda calls for "well-educated and skilled citizens underpinned by science, technology, and innovation", aiming to achieve universal access to quality education at all levels by 2063 (African Union, 2015).

In Zambia, however, dropout rates among boys threaten the achievement of this goal, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged areas. The agenda recognizes that education must be tailored to address gender disparities, ensuring that both boys and girls have equal opportunities to complete their schooling. While Zambia has successfully implemented policies to support girls' education, the lack of specific interventions targeting boys at risk of dropping out undermines the broader goal of ensuring universal education by 2063 (Chisanga & Phiri, 2021).

For Zambia to align with African Agenda 2063, there is a need to introduce more comprehensive policies to prevent boys from dropping out. This includes:

1. Expanding bursary programs to cover vulnerable boys, particularly in rural areas.
2. Introducing skills-based learning opportunities that integrate vocational training into formal education to keep boys engaged.

3. Strengthening community and parental engagement to support boys' school retention, similar to what has been done for girls.
4. Reducing economic barriers that push boys into child labor and informal employment before completing their education.

Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensuring Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (United Nations, 2015). Specifically, Target 4.1 commits countries to ensure that all boys and girls complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education by 2030 (UNESCO, 2021).

Zambia has made significant strides toward achieving SDG 4, particularly through its free education policy introduced in 2022 (MoE, 2022). This policy eliminated school fees from early childhood to secondary school, increasing enrolment rates among both boys and girls (World Bank, 2023). However, challenges remain, particularly in keeping boys in school through completion.

According to UNESCO (2021), many African countries, including Zambia, continue to experience disparities in school retention, with a particular focus on girls' education. While policies have successfully lowered female dropout rates, boys from low-income households still face significant challenges, including:

- Economic responsibilities, where boys drop out to support their families financially.
- Lack of mentorship programs tailored to support male students at risk of disengagement.
- The absence of re-entry policies for boys, similar to those available for girls after pregnancy.
- A rigid curriculum that fails to integrate alternative learning pathways, such as vocational education, to keep boys interested.

To fully achieve SDG 4 by 2030, Zambia must implement gender-inclusive policies that explicitly address the factors driving boys' school dropouts. The following interventions are recommended:

1. Revising national education policies to include male-targeted support systems, such as mentorship programs and school retention incentives for boys.
2. Enhancing school feeding programs, particularly in rural areas, to ensure boys from low-income households remain in school.
3. Developing alternative education models, such as vocational training and night schools, to accommodate boys at risk of dropping out.
4. Strengthening enforcement of child labor laws, ensuring that boys are not pushed into work at the expense of their education.

Aligning Zambia's Educational Strategies with African Agenda 2063 and SDG 4

While Zambia has taken important steps toward universal education, the growing dropout rates among boys present a challenge to fully realizing African Agenda 2063 and SDG 4 (MoE, 2022). As these global and regional frameworks emphasize, education must be inclusive, accessible, and free from gender biases. Zambia's education system must evolve to ensure that both boys and girls are equally supported in completing their schooling.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Education is a fundamental driver of socio-economic development, yet school dropout rates remain a critical challenge in Zambia, particularly among boys. Despite the increase in enrollment due to the introduction of free education in 2022, high dropout rates continue to undermine retention efforts, mainly among boys in secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 2024). The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) four aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030 (UNESCO, 2024), while the African Agenda 2063 envisions a well-educated and skilled African workforce by 2063 (African Union, 2024). A UNICEF Zambia (2024) study reports that 28% of boys from the poorest households are out of school, while only 3.5% of boys from wealthier families face similar challenges. This stark gap reflects deep-rooted socio-economic inequalities that prevent universal school retention.

Despite national efforts to improve education retention, male students continue to face challenges that hinder their academic progress, contributing to high dropout rates. Past educational interventions have primarily focused on girls, leading to an imbalance in

support programs that often leave boys vulnerable and neglected in educational policies (National Youth Development Council, 2023).

Recent statistics highlight a widening gender gap in educational outcomes. For example, in 2023, more girls (50.6%) sat for the Grade 12 examination than boys (49.4%), and female students also outnumbered male students in university admissions. Despite boys comprising a larger proportion in secondary schools (Zambia Ministry of Education, 2023). This trend suggests that programs for girls' education have made notable strides, while male students are increasingly disadvantaged. The lack of targeted educational support for boys, particularly in urban areas of Kabwe district, has further exacerbated this issue, as boys face several unknown pressures that discourage their academic persistence and increase their likelihood of dropping out (Chisunka, 2023).

Zambia Development Agency report highlights that limited access to vocational training and lack of entrepreneurship opportunities for young boys contribute to school disengagement, as many opt to pursue informal work instead of education. (ZDA, 2024). If these challenges persist, Zambia risks failing to meet its SDG four targets and African Agenda 2063, which require universal access to quality education, skill acquisition, and workforce development. Moreover, it undermines the country's long-term human capital development goals under Vision 2030.

To address the high dropout of boys in the urban areas of Kabwe District, it is crucial to adopt a more balanced approach that targets both male and female students. While gender-focused initiatives have helped improve girls' education outcomes, it is important not to overlook the unique challenges faced by boys, especially in underprivileged areas. A comprehensive strategy that includes targeted support and resources for boys can help reduce dropout rates and ensure educational equity in Zambia, ultimately contributing to the achievement of sustainable development goals related to education (Zambia Ministry of Education, 2023). This study aimed to fill the research gap by investigating the specific factors contributing to the high dropout rates among boys in urban areas of Kabwe District and providing evidence-based recommendations to address this issue.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to evaluate factors contributing to the boy child drop-out rate in selected public day secondary schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. The study was guided by the following sub-objectives:

- i. To assess the prevalence of boys' dropout rate from public day secondary schools in Kabwe District.
- ii. To assess the influence of socio-economic factors on dropout among boys from public day secondary schools in Kabwe District.
- iii. To establish the influence of school-based factors on dropout among boys from public day secondary schools in Kabwe District.
- iv. To establish how family-based factors influence dropout among boys from public day secondary schools in Kabwe District.

1.3 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following specific research questions:

- i. What is the prevalence of boys' dropout rate in public day secondary schools in Kabwe District?
- ii. What is the influence of socio-economic factors on school dropout among boys in public day secondary schools in Kabwe District?
- iii. What is the influence of school-based factors on school dropout among boys in public day secondary schools in Kabwe District?
- iv. How do family-based factors influence the school dropout rate in public day secondary schools in Kabwe District?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study on factors causing the drop-out of boys in public day secondary schools, in Kabwe District, Zambia is very important for several reasons. First and foremost, it may guide education policy and planning. Policymakers can design targeted interventions to reduce boys' dropout rates by finding out the root causes of boys dropping out of school. They may, therefore, be able to effectively address specific issues underpinning educational policies that are all-inclusive and comprehensive. Secondly, there are significant implications for socio-economic development. Knowledge about the socio-

economic factors that lead to school dropouts can help stakeholders come up with strategies that break the cycle of poverty. Educated boys are more likely to have better economic opportunities in the future, which may eventually contribute to an increase in overall economic growth within this region as well. Thirdly, promoting gender equity and social inclusion involves dealing with dropout rates among boys. This research also points out the importance of addressing educational requirements for boys while much attention has been on girls' education. Balanced and inclusive development necessitates both girls and boys having equal chances of success.

Fourthly, the study is significant for community and family well-being because reducing dropouts may prevent dangerous actions among them hence safer communities may prevail as a result. Thus, educated young males are more likely to bring positive contributions into their families which, in turn, lead to stability and good living conditions within these units at large. Finally, it would provide insights into improving school environments through this research which looks at some aspects relating to school-based factors such as dropouts today.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The population for this study comprised male learners who dropped out of public day secondary schools within Kabwe District, Zambia. The study selected six schools using purposive sampling, ensuring representation from institutions with varying student populations, dropout trends, and socio-economic contexts. Purposive sampling was chosen as it allows researchers to intentionally select participants with specific characteristics, traits, or experiences relevant to the study's objectives. The selected schools included Chindwin 'A' Secondary School, Kalonga Secondary School, Don Bosco Makululu Technical Secondary School, Mwashii Secondary School, Jasmine Boys Secondary School, and Mtshede Secondary School (DEBS, 2024).

From the total population of 2,490 boys, a sample of 67 students was selected using snowball sampling for the quantitative component of the study. Snowball sampling was used because dropout students and those at risk of leaving school can be difficult to identify through conventional sampling methods. This approach allowed researchers to

identify participants through referrals, ensuring that students with firsthand dropout experiences were included.

For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was used to select 13 participants, including parents and teachers. These individuals were chosen based on their direct experiences with student dropout cases, providing rich, contextual insights into the socio-economic, family-related, and school-based factors influencing school retention. The inclusion class teachers allowed for a policy-level perspective, ensuring a holistic understanding of the issue.

Geographically, this research was situated within Kabwe urban District, a central region experiencing challenges related to school retention, particularly among boys. Although conducted within Kabwe urban, the study's findings are expected to have relevance beyond this district, extending to other regions in Zambia and across Africa facing similar dropout challenges.

1.8 Definitions of Key Terms and Concepts

Boy child: Refers to male students enrolled in secondary schools, who are the focus of this study

Dropout rate: The percentage of students who leave school before completing their education within a specified time frame, typically a school year or a specific grade level.

Factors contributing to dropout: The various socio-economic, cultural, educational, and health-related influences that may lead to students leaving school prematurely, including but not limited to family circumstances, academic performance, peer relationships, and community factors

Family-based factors: Refer to the various dynamics and circumstances within a family that can lead to a boy child leaving school prematurely.

School-based factors: Refer to aspects within the educational environment that contribute to a boy child's decision to drop out of school.

Socio-economic factors: Refers to the social and economic conditions that influence students' ability to access and complete education, such as family income, parental education level, employment status, and access to basic amenities.

1.9 Chapter Organization

This study is organised into six chapters, each addressing a specific aspect of the research. Chapter One introduces the study, outlining its background, problem statement, objectives, research questions, significance, and scope. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature, focusing on theoretical frameworks, past studies, and key concepts underpinning the research. Chapter Three presents the research methodology, detailing the design, data collection methods, sampling techniques, and data analysis procedures. Chapter Four analyses and interprets the research findings, presenting the data in relation to the study objectives. Chapter Five discusses the findings, linking them to the reviewed literature and theoretical framework to draw insights and implications. Finally, Chapter Six concludes the study, summarizing key findings, proposing recommendations, highlighting limitations, and suggesting areas for future research.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This literature review chapter offers a solid understanding of the existing knowledge related to the subject matter of the study. It examines and integrates previous studies from global, regional, and local perspectives, as well as theoretical and conceptual frameworks and significant findings, thus providing a comprehensive basis for the current research.

2.2 Prevalence of Boys' Dropout Rate in Public Secondary Schools

Empirical investigations on the prevalence of boys' secondary school dropouts provide crucial insights into this global issue. In India, a study by Kumar et al. (2021) employed a cross-sectional survey design to assess the dropout rates of boys in public secondary schools across rural regions. The study collected data from 500 students through structured questionnaires and interviews. The research identified economic hardship, lack of parental support, and inadequate school facilities as critical factors leading to boys dropping out of school. The study recommended policy interventions focusing on improving school infrastructure and providing financial support to vulnerable families.

In Kenya, a study by Njeru and Orodho (2014) employed a mixed-method design to explore dropout rates among boys in public secondary schools in rural areas. The study involved quantitative surveys administered to students, teachers, and parents, as well as qualitative interviews and focus group discussions. The findings revealed that poverty and household chores were significant barriers to boys' education, leading to high dropout rates. The study also identified issues such as long distances to schools and lack of motivation among boys as contributing factors, suggesting the need for targeted interventions to address these challenges.

In Zambia, a study by Manda, Mwipatayi and Simumba (2019) utilised a mixed-method design combining surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. They collected quantitative data from students, teachers, and parents, while qualitative data were

obtained through interviews. The findings highlighted poverty and housekeeping duties as significant barriers to boys' education, alongside issues like poor academic performance, lack of adequate school infrastructure, and low teacher quality.

2.3 Socio-Economic Factors Influencing School Dropout Rates among Boys

Socio-economic factors are pivotal in influencing school dropout rates among boys. In the United States, Smith and Brown (2018) conducted a mixed-method study using surveys and interviews to examine the relationship between parental education and boys' dropout rates. The research found a strong correlation between low parental education levels and increased dropout rates, emphasizing the critical role of parental support in ensuring students remain in school. This study underlined the importance of educational programs targeting both students and their parents to reduce dropout rates

In India, Patel and Nguyen (2017) applied longitudinal analyses to evaluate how parental job loss or economic instability affected absenteeism rates for male pupils within time limits. The study found that household financial insecurity and loss of job stand out as major determinants of school dropout among boys necessitating the need for targeted interventions to help out vulnerable families.

Similarly, in Nigeria, a study by Olabisi and Adewale (2018) used a combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to investigate how socio-economic status influences school dropout. The study revealed that boys from low-income families were more likely to drop out of school due to financial constraints, leading to the conclusion that poverty alleviation programs could be instrumental in reducing dropout rates.

In Zambia, a study by Chanda, Mwape and Zulu (2020) employed a mixed-method approach to investigate how socio-economic conditions affect boys' dropout rates in public secondary schools. The study used surveys to collect quantitative data from students and their families, and interviews to gather qualitative insights from teachers and community leaders. The findings revealed that boys from families with low income and parents with limited education were more likely to drop out of school. The study recommended interventions aimed at supporting low-income families and enhancing parental involvement in education.

2.4 School-Based Factors Contributing to Dropout Rates in Secondary Schools

School-based factors significantly contribute to dropout rates among boys. In the United Kingdom, Anderson and Smith (2019) conducted longitudinal research examining the impact of teaching quality on boys' dropout rates. Their study found that students who perceived their teachers as unsupportive or ineffective were more likely to disengage from school and eventually drop out. This finding underscores the importance of teacher- student relationships in fostering student retention

On the African continent, a study in South Africa by Mabena and Dlamini (2020) used a qualitative approach, including interviews and focus group discussions, to explore the role of school-based factors in dropout rates. The study found that the irrelevance of the curriculum and inadequate academic support services led to frustration among students, contributing to higher dropout rates. The research recommended curriculum reform and enhanced academic support to address these issues.

In Zambia, a study by Banda and Tembo (2021) focused on the impact of school infrastructure and teacher quality on boys' dropout rates. Using a combination of surveys, interviews, and classroom observations, the study found that inadequate school facilities and poor teacher-student relationships were significant contributors to the high dropout rates among boys. The research emphasised the need for improvements in school infrastructure and teacher training to enhance student engagement and reduce dropout rates.

2.4 Family-Based Factors Influencing Dropout Rates in Secondary Schools

Family dynamics and socio-economic status significantly influence boys' decisions to drop out of school. In Brazil, Williams et al. (2019) conducted a longitudinal study that used surveys and interviews to examine the role of parental involvement in boys' academic outcomes. The study found that boys who received consistent support and engagement from their parents were less likely to drop out, highlighting the importance of parental motivation in academic perseverance.

In contrast, a study conducted in Kenya by Mwangi and Nyambura (2017) focused on the impact of family socio-economic status on boys' dropout rates. Using qualitative interviews and focus group discussions, the study found that boys from economically disadvantaged families often dropped out of school to take on work or household responsibilities, underscoring the need for social support systems to keep these students in school.

In Zambia, a study by Mulenga, Phiri and Chirwa (2022) used a mixed-method approach to examine how family structure and socio-economic conditions affect boys' dropout rates. The study collected quantitative data through surveys and qualitative insights through interviews with students, parents, and teachers. The findings indicated that boys from single-parent households and economically disadvantaged families were at a higher risk of dropping out of school due to the need to contribute to household income. The study recommended the implementation of social support programs to assist these vulnerable families in keeping their children in school.

2.5 Research Gaps in Empirical Review

Studies on factors contributing to boys' child dropout rates have been done far and wide. However, despite extensive research globally, regionally, and locally, several gaps remain, particularly in the context of Zambia. Most studies, such as those by Manda et al. (2019) and Banda and Tembo (2021), have highlighted socio-economic and school-based factors but often overlook the interplay between these factors and community-level influences, such as cultural norms and peer dynamics, in rural and peri-urban settings like Kabwe District. Additionally, existing studies focus largely on quantitative findings, with insufficient emphasis on in-depth qualitative narratives that capture the lived experiences of boys who drop out. This creates a need for studies that integrate holistic and participatory methodologies to explore the multifaceted and context-specific factors influencing boys' dropout rates in Kabwe District.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The proposed research considers three major theories outlined below to provide a holistic view of what causes boys to drop out in public day secondary schools in Kabwe, Zambia.

The theoretical framework provides the foundation for understanding the factors influencing school dropout rates among boys. This study is guided by Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943), and Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These theories help explain the various social, psychological, and environmental factors contributing to boys' school disengagement and eventual dropout.

1. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977)

Social Learning Theory, developed by Albert Bandura (1977), posits that human behavior is learned through observation, imitation, and modeling. Bandura argues that individuals acquire new behaviors by watching others, particularly those they consider role models. He highlights four key processes in learning: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Attention involves focusing on the behavior of others, retention refers to remembering the observed behavior, reproduction is the ability to replicate the behavior, and motivation determines whether the individual will perform the learned behavior.

Empirical studies have applied Social Learning Theory to education, demonstrating that students are influenced by teachers, peers, and family members. When boys observe older peers dropping out of school or engaging in income-generating activities, they may perceive education as less valuable. Additionally, if boys lack positive role models who emphasize the importance of education, they may become disengaged. Research by Bandura (1986) also highlights that reinforcement plays a role in learning; if dropping out leads to immediate financial gain or social approval, boys may be more likely to leave school.

In the context of this study, Social Learning Theory explains why boys in Zambia may drop out of school due to peer influence and lack of positive educational reinforcement. If boys observe others engaging in informal work or facing educational struggles, they may imitate these behaviors. Additionally, if school environments fail to provide

motivation or positive reinforcement, disengagement becomes more likely. The theory suggests that interventions should focus on providing strong role models, mentorship programs, and reinforcing the long-term benefits of education.

2. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a psychological theory that categorizes human needs into five levels: physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow (1943) argues that individuals must satisfy lower-level needs before progressing to higher levels of development and motivation. Physiological needs include food, water, and shelter, while safety needs involve security and stability. The love and belonging stage include social relationships, esteem needs pertain to self-respect and recognition, and self-actualization refers to personal growth and fulfillment.

Several educational studies have used Maslow's framework to understand student motivation and dropout rates. Research suggests that when students' basic needs are not met, their ability to focus on learning is significantly compromised. A study by Woolfolk (2020) found that students from low-income backgrounds often struggle to meet physiological and safety needs, leading to disengagement from school. Similarly, a study by Ryan and Deci (2017) indicated that students with weak social connections or low self-esteem are more likely to experience school failure.

In Zambia, Maslow's theory is particularly relevant in explaining dropout rates among boys. Many boys from low-income households struggle to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter, making education a lower priority. Financial constraints often push boys into child labour to support their families, disrupting their academic progress. Additionally, boys who lack a sense of belonging in school due to bullying or weak peer relationships may disengage. This theory highlights the importance of addressing basic needs through school feeding programs, financial assistance, and creating a supportive school environment to enhance boys' retention.

3. Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory explains human development as

influenced by multiple environmental systems. The theory identifies five levels of influence: the microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The microsystem includes direct interactions with family, teachers, and peers, while the mesosystem refers to connections between these environments, such as family-school relationships. The ecosystem involves external influences like parents' workplaces and community policies, the macrosystem includes cultural norms and socioeconomic conditions, and the chronosystem considers life transitions and historical events affecting development.

Empirical research supports the application of this theory in education. A study by Darling (2007) found that children's academic success is shaped by family, school, and community interactions. Another study by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) showed that socio-economic conditions within the macrosystem strongly determine school retention rates, with poverty often being a key factor in school disengagement.

Applying this theory to Zambia, boys' school dropout rates are influenced by interactions at multiple levels. At the microsystem level, boys may face family pressure to work, lack of parental involvement, or negative peer influence. The mesosystem can either strengthen or weaken boys' educational engagement, depending on the quality of parent-school interactions and teacher support. The ecosystem includes economic policies, employment opportunities, and government education funding, all of which affect boys' ability to stay in school. At the macrosystem level, cultural beliefs that prioritize boys' economic contributions over education further contribute to dropout trends. Finally, the chronosystem plays a role in explaining how historical events such as the COVID-19 pandemic have worsened dropout rates, particularly for boys who entered the labour market during school closures.

4. Application of Theories to This Study

These three theories collectively provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the factors influencing school dropout among boys in Zambia. Social Learning Theory explains how peer influence, lack of role models, and observational learning contribute to boys' disengagement from school. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs highlights the

importance of meeting basic physiological, safety, and psychological needs before students can fully engage in learning. Ecological Systems Theory illustrates how family, school, community, and national policies interact to shape boys' educational trajectories.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in Figure 2.0 serves as a foundation for this study, and it also provides the organisational structure for understanding the complex interplay between elements that affect boys' dropout rates in public day secondary schools located in Kabwe District.

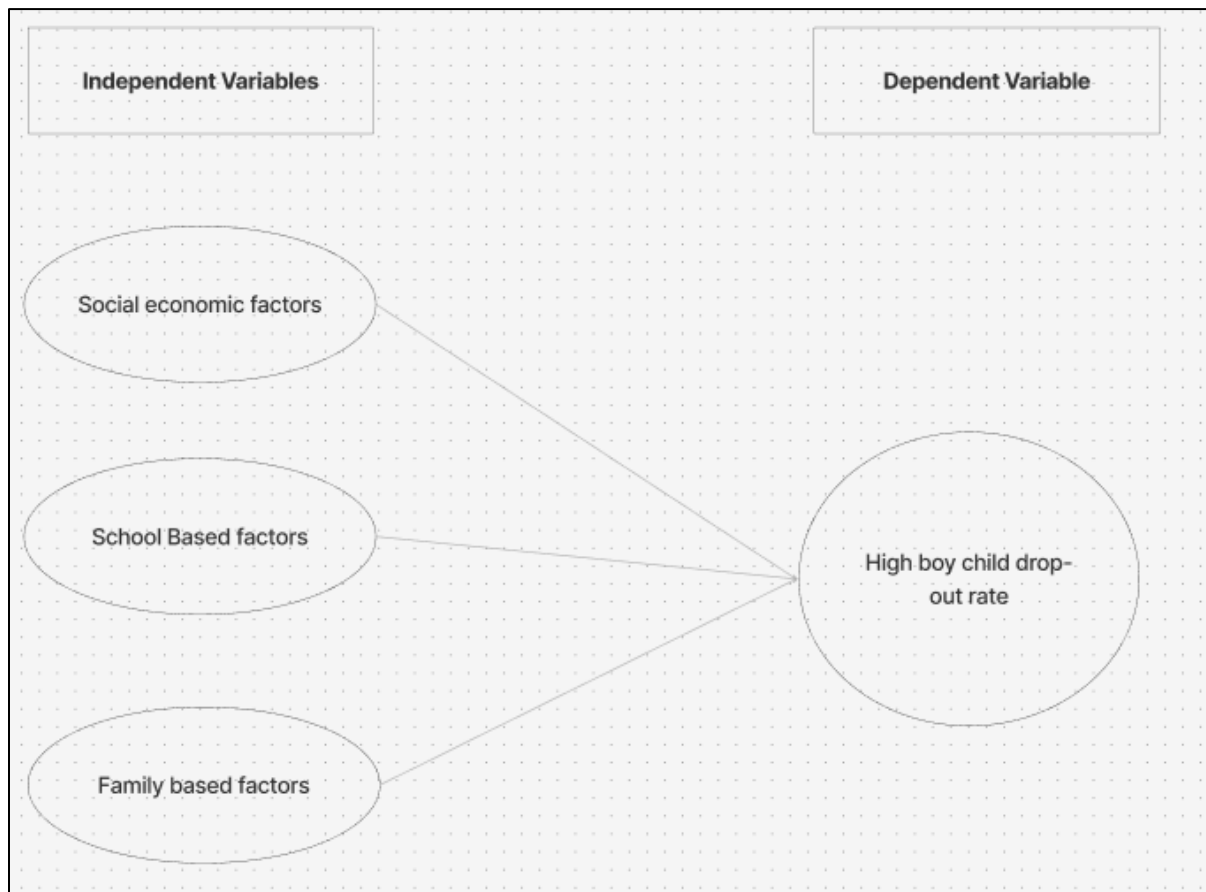


Figure 2.0: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher's conceptualization (2024)

The conceptual framework contains the main goals of the study, but also theoretical

backgrounds, empirical findings and moderating variables that would help in conducting research and analysing data. The basis of the framework is the recognition that boys' drop-out rates are influenced by several factors operating at different levels within socio-ecological systems such as individual level, family level, school level and community level. Theories of educational attainment, social stratification and ecological systems underpin this framework's suggestion that there are complex interactions among socioeconomic factors, school-based factors and family-based factors moderated by the age of the boy child. The conceptual framework consists of the following elements:

2.7.1 Independent variables

Socio-economic factors: This section examines how boys' likelihood of dropping out depends on such socio-economic variables as family income, parent's education and access to resources it relies on theories of critical pedagogy, social stratification and social capital to analyse how systemic inequalities affect educational achievement.

School-based factors: This part investigates why teaching quality, school buildings or disciplinary policies contribute to male students' dropout rates; it employs concepts from organisational behavior theory, school climate theory as well as educational attainment theory which explain why certain students prefer staying in schools while others do not.

Family-based factors: It explains how parental participation matters a lot when it comes to the dropout rate among boys; for example, the structure of the family really matters plus what kind of people they are economically. Using empirical evidence drawn from social learning theory, family systems theory, and so forth, it examines how parents influence their children's academic outcomes.

2.7.2 Dependent variable

The dependent variable for this study is the boy child drop-out rate representing a proportion of all male students who discontinue their studies before completion of secondary education within a given academic year. The rate at which pupils quit attending schools is an important indicator about its efficiency in retaining learners until graduation time happens within any given period.

2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature related to factors contributing to the boy-child dropout rate in public day secondary schools. The chapter explores key theoretical frameworks that underpin the study, including socio-economic, cultural, and educational perspectives. It examines previous research on school dropout trends, identifying critical factors such as poverty, family dynamics, peer influence, teacher-student relationships, and systemic challenges like inadequate infrastructure and resources. The review highlights gaps in existing literature, particularly the limited focus on the unique challenges faced by the boy-child in educational retention within the Zambian context. By synthesizing findings from global, regional, and local studies, the chapter establishes a foundation for understanding the multifaceted nature of school dropouts and informs the research methodology and analysis which follows in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The methodology chapter explains the research design as well as the methods that were used to explore the research questions. This chapter presents a clear framework for understanding how this research was done by explaining the choice of research strategy, sampling methods, data collection instruments and analytical approaches.

3.2 Research Approach

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed in the study, detailing the research approach, strategy, and design. It explains the sources of data used, the sampling technique adopted, and how the sample size was determined. Additionally, the chapter elaborates on the methods of data analysis applied in the study and discusses the ethical considerations undertaken to ensure compliance with research standards.

3.3 Study Area

The study area, Kabwe, and the provincial capital of Zambia's Central Province, is located about 140 kilometers north of Lusaka along the Great North Road, making it a strategic hub for transportation and commerce. Historically known for its lead and zinc mining, the town's economy has diversified following the closure of large-scale mining operations in the 1990s due to environmental concerns. In addition, the extended closure of Mulungushi Textiles in Kabwe has negatively affected its economy which subsequently contributed to an increased number of school dropouts among children. Many households lost their jobs when the mill ceased operating and this reduced household incomes and customer spending in town (Jere, 2021). Figure 3.0 shows the Map of Kabwe town showing the areas of study. Kabwe town which is the provincial headquarters of central province is located at 28 0 26`E and 14 0 27`S.

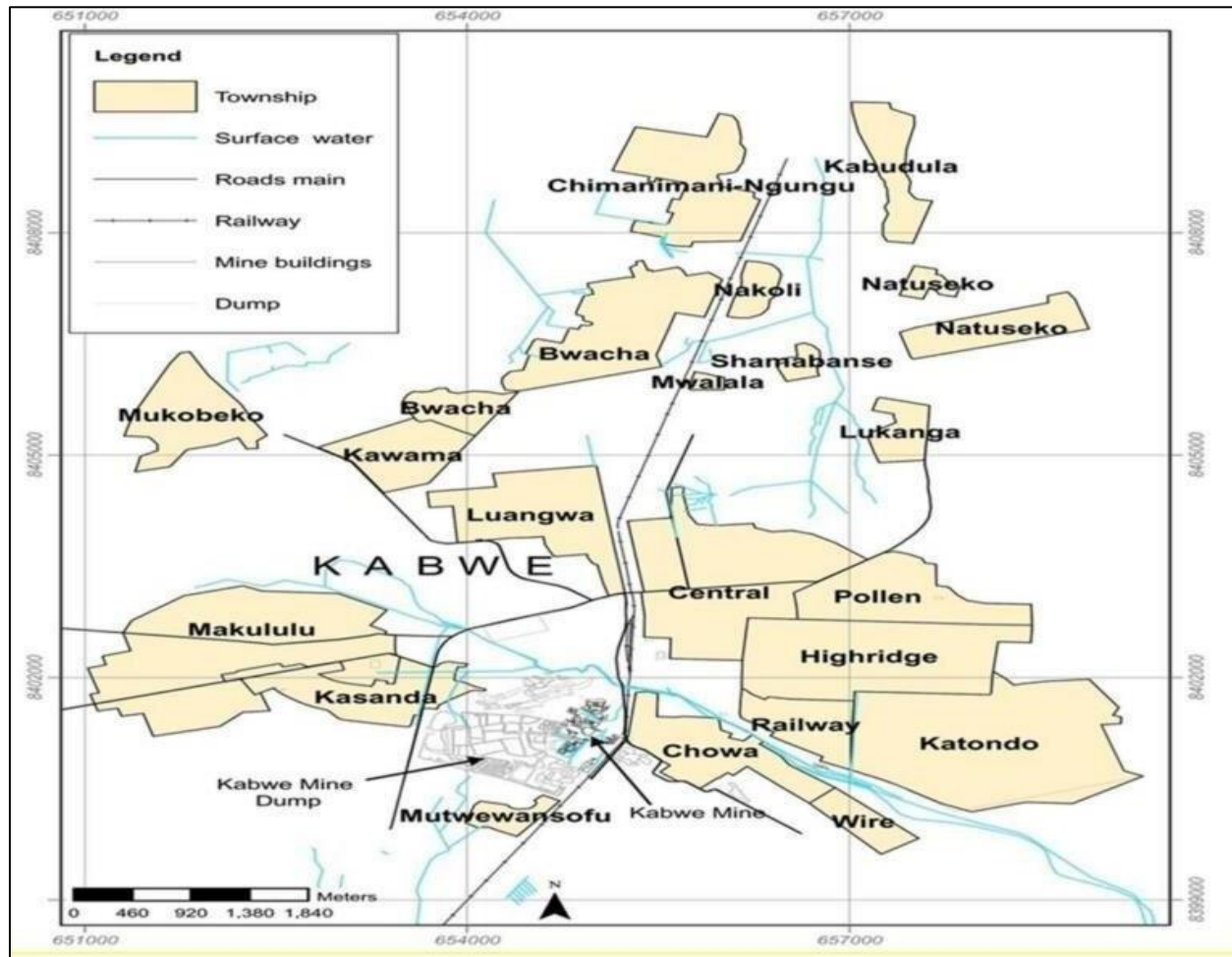


Figure 1:Map of Kabwe Town
Source: <https://www.mapquest.com>

This economic depression forced many families to put off education expenditures for immediate financial needs, leading to rising dropout rates since children had to bring money back home or take on extra roles (Banda & Sinyangwe, 2018; Chirwa, 2019). Furthermore, the shortage of resources and learning materials caused by the economic burden has also undermined the performance of local schools (Malama, 2022). Ultimately, through this shutdown, it is clear how industrial decline worsens socio-economic issues thereby undermining educational attainment.

3.4 Research Approach

A research approach is the overall plan that outlines the strategies used to collect, analyze, and interpret data in a study. It serves as a framework that guides the researcher

in answering research questions effectively (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). There are three main research approaches: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The qualitative approach focuses on exploring phenomena through non-numerical data such as interviews, observations, and textual analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The quantitative approach, on the other hand, relies on numerical data and statistical analysis to test hypotheses and establish relationships between variables (Saunders et al., 2019). Lastly, the mixed methods approach combines both qualitative and quantitative techniques, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

This study adopted a mixed methods approach because of its ability to integrate numerical data with in-depth insights from qualitative findings. Given that the study seeks to explore the factors influencing the dropout rate among boys in public day secondary schools, both statistical data and qualitative narratives were essential. The mixed methods approach facilitated a deeper understanding of how socio-economic, school-based, and family-related factors interact to influence dropout rates (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Furthermore, the use of mixed methods allowed for triangulation, which enhanced the validity of the findings by cross-verifying data from different sources (Bryman, 2016). The quantitative aspect provided statistical evidence on dropout rates and associated factors, while the qualitative component offered insights into the personal experiences and perspectives of students, teachers, and education officials. This methodological choice strengthened the study's conclusions, ensuring that policy recommendations are grounded in both empirical data and lived realities.

3.5 Research Strategy

A research strategy refers to the plan or method employed to investigate a research problem systematically. It provides a structured approach to data collection and analysis, ensuring the study meets its objectives (Yin, 2018). There are various research strategies, including case study, survey, ethnography, experimental, and action research. Each

strategy is chosen based on the nature of the research questions, the type of data required, and the depth of analysis needed.

For this study, a case study strategy was employed because it allows for an in-depth exploration of a specific issue within a real-world context (Stake, 2005). The study focused on selected public day secondary schools in Kabwe District, making the case study approach suitable for investigating dropout factors in detail. By examining multiple schools, the strategy provided a rich understanding of the interplay between socio-economic, school-based, and family-related factors affecting boys' education. The case study approach is particularly useful for educational research as it enables the collection of extensive data from various stakeholders, including students, teachers, and education officers (Yin, 2014).

Moreover, a case study strategy allowed for multiple data collection methods, including structured questionnaires, interviews, and document reviews. This approach facilitated a holistic analysis of the dropout issue, capturing both statistical patterns and the lived experiences of affected students. Unlike experimental research, which seeks to control variables, the case study approach embraces real-world complexity, making it well-suited for understanding educational challenges within a specific geographical and social context (Simons, 2009).

3.6 Research Design

A research design is the overall structure of a study, guiding how data is collected, analysed, and interpreted. It serves as a blueprint that ensures the study is systematic and coherent (Kothari, 2004). There are three primary research designs: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. Exploratory research is used when little is known about a phenomenon and aims to generate new insights (Stebbins, 2001). Descriptive research focuses on systematically documenting characteristics of a population or phenomenon (Babbie, 2020). Explanatory research, also known as causal research, seeks to identify cause-and-effect relationships between variables (Saunders et al., 2019).

This study adopted a descriptive research design because it provides a structured way to document and analyse the dropout rates among boys in public secondary schools. A

descriptive design was appropriate as it facilitated the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, allowing the study to capture the patterns and trends in dropout rates while also examining the underlying causes (Creswell, 2014). Through surveys and interviews, the study identified specific socio-economic, school-based, and family-related factors contributing to boys' dropout rates in Kabwe District.

Furthermore, a descriptive design enabled the study to present findings in a structured manner, using statistical tools such as percentages, means, and correlation analysis for quantitative data, while qualitative data was analyzed thematically. Unlike an experimental design, which manipulates variables to test causation, the descriptive approach focused on providing a detailed and factual representation of the dropout issue. This methodological choice ensured that the study not only captured numerical trends but also contextualized them within the lived experiences of the affected students and educators

3.7 Sources of Data

Sources of data refer to the origins from which information is collected to address research questions and objectives. There are two main types of data sources: primary and secondary data (Saunders et al., 2019). Primary data is collected firsthand by the researcher through methods such as surveys, interviews, and observations. It is original and specific to the research problem, ensuring that the data is tailored to the study's needs (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Secondary data, on the other hand, is obtained from existing sources such as books, journal articles, government reports, and institutional records. This type of data provides background information, theoretical grounding, and comparative insights for the study (Kothari, 2004).

For this study, both primary and secondary data were utilized. Primary data was collected from students who have dropped out, parents, and teachers using structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. This approach ensured that the study obtained first-hand insights into the reasons behind boys' school dropouts in Kabwe District. The students provided quantitative data, while teachers and parents contributed qualitative insights through interviews. Secondary data was gathered from educational

reports, policy documents, and previous research studies on school dropout rates. These secondary sources supplemented primary findings by providing comparative data and reinforcing the study's contextual background.

The combination of primary and secondary data enhanced the study's validity and reliability. Primary data offered real-time, context-specific insights, while secondary data helped to position the research within broader academic and policy discussions. This triangulation of data sources improved the comprehensiveness and credibility of the findings (Bryman, 2016).

3.8 Sampling Technique

Sampling techniques determine how participants are selected to ensure that findings accurately represent the broader population. The two main categories of sampling are probability sampling, where every member of the population has a known chance of being selected, and non-probability sampling, where selection is based on the researcher's judgment and specific study needs (Saunders et al., 2019). This study employed a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques to ensure a comprehensive understanding of school dropout trends among boys. Purposive sampling was used to select six public day secondary schools in Kabwe District, ensuring a diverse representation of educational settings. The selected schools included Chindwin 'A' Secondary School, Kalonga Secondary School, Don Bosco Makululu Technical Secondary School, Mwashii Secondary School, Jasmine Boys Secondary School, and Mtshede Secondary School. These schools were chosen based on their varying student populations, dropout trends, and socio-economic diversity. Similarly, purposive sampling was used to select parents and teachers, particularly those with direct experience dealing with dropout cases, to provide insights into family-based and school-related factors influencing dropout rates. Education officers from the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) office and head teachers from the selected schools were also included to give policy-level perspectives on dropout trends and retention efforts. To reach male students who had either dropped out or were at risk of leaving school, the snowball sampling technique was applied. This approach allowed researchers to identify participants through referrals, ensuring that the study captured a wide range of experiences from students at

different levels of school engagement (Neuman, 2014). The combination of purposive sampling for schools, parents, and teachers, along with snowball sampling for students, ensured comprehensive data collection across different educational, socio-economic, and administrative perspectives. This methodological approach enhanced the reliability and depth of the findings, allowing for a more informed analysis of school dropout trends among boys in Kabwe District

3.9 Population Size

A population refers to the total group of individuals from which the study intends to conclude (Babbie, 2020). In this study, the target population consisted of 80 individuals, including students, parents, and teachers from selected public day secondary schools in Kabwe District. This population was identified based on its relevance to the research objectives, ensuring that data collection focused on individuals with direct knowledge and experience of the dropout issue. The sample size for the study was 67 respondents, distributed as follows:

- Students (boys) – 56 respondents (reached through snowball sampling for quantitative data)
- Parents – 7 respondents (purposively selected for qualitative data)
- Teachers – 6 respondents (purposively selected for qualitative data)

3.10 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of systematically applying statistical and qualitative techniques to interpret and draw meaningful conclusions from collected data. It involves organizing, summarizing, and evaluating data to identify patterns, relationships, and trends that address the research objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

For this study, quantitative data collected from students through structured questionnaires was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the general characteristics of respondents and identify trends in dropout rates. Inferential statistical techniques, such as chi-square tests and correlation analysis, were applied to examine relationships between socio-economic, school-based, and family-

related factors influencing boys' dropout rates. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used for data analysis, ensuring accuracy and efficiency in processing numerical data.

For qualitative data collected through interviews with parents and teachers, thematic analysis was applied. The responses were transcribed, coded, and categorized into themes reflecting common patterns and insights related to school dropout. This method facilitated an in-depth understanding of personal experiences, perceptions, and structural challenges affecting boys' education. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative findings through triangulation strengthened the study's reliability and provided a holistic view of the dropout phenomenon.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are critical in research as they ensure the protection of participants' rights, promote integrity, and maintain the credibility of findings (Bryman, 2016). This study adhered to key ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and data protection.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. They were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks, allowing them to make an informed decision about their participation. For minors, parental or guardian consent was sought following ethical guidelines for research involving children (Resnik, 2020).

Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by assigning numerical codes instead of personal identifiers to responses, safeguarding participants' privacy. All collected data was stored securely, and accessible only to the researcher and authorized personnel. Voluntary participation was emphasized, allowing respondents to withdraw from the study at any point without consequences.

Additionally, the research adhered to academic integrity standards, ensuring that findings were presented truthfully and without bias. The study was reviewed and approved by

relevant ethical review boards to ensure compliance with institutional and national research ethics guidelines.

3.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the research methodology used in the study, covering the research approach, strategy, and design. It detailed the sources of data and the sampling technique, including the rationale for using stratified sampling. The chapter also explained the data analysis methods applied, including descriptive and inferential statistics for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. Lastly, ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were discussed, ensuring that the study adhered to ethical research standards.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology and inferential analysis used to examine the factors influencing school dropout among boys in public day secondary schools in Kabwe District. It includes regression and correlation analyses to establish the relationships between socio-economic, school-based, and family-based factors and school dropout rates. The chapter also provides thematic analyses of responses from parents and teachers, highlighting key issues contributing to dropout trends. Through these methods, the study identifies critical determinants and their statistical significance in explaining dropout patterns among boys.

4.2 Demographic Data Analysis

Demographic characteristics provide essential background information on the respondents, offering insights into their age, grade level which they were when they dropped out, primary guardian, family income source, and number of siblings in school. These variables help contextualize the factors influencing school dropout among boys in public day secondary schools in Kabwe District.

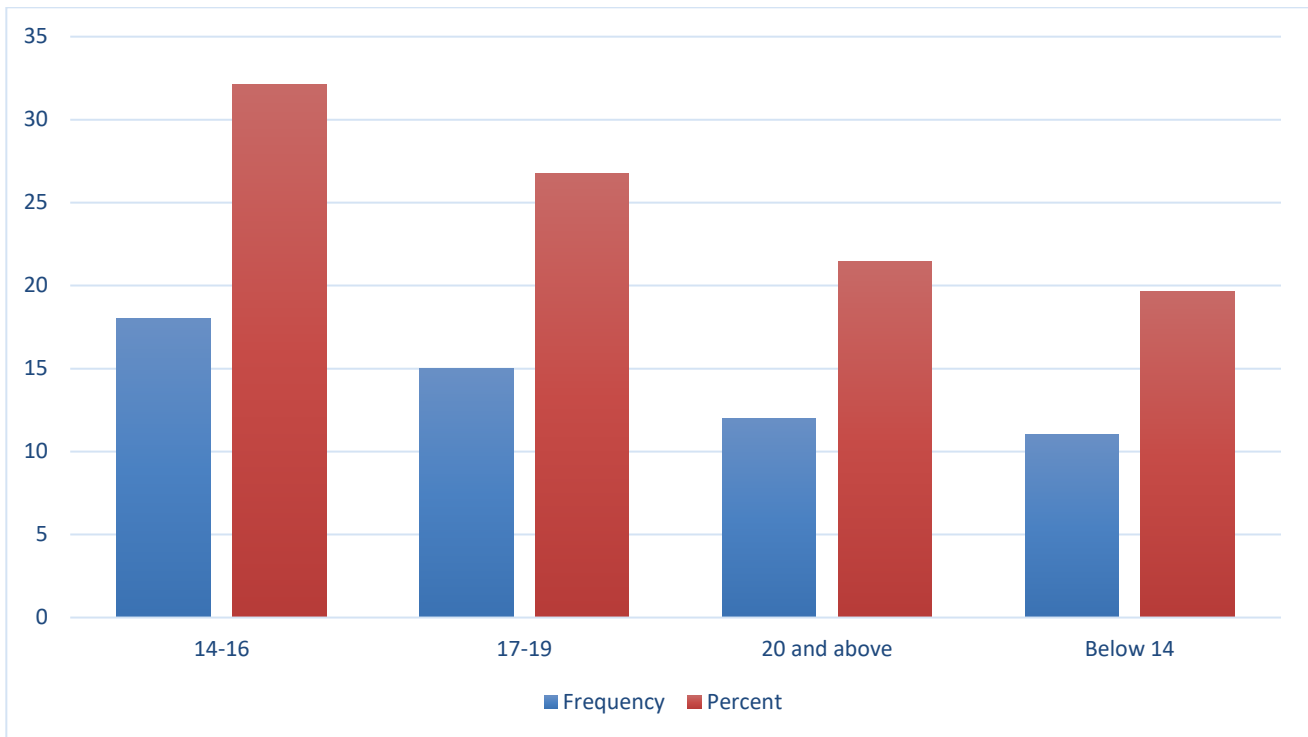


Figure 2: Age Distribution

The age distribution of the respondents shows that the majority fall within the 14-16 age group, accounting for 32.1% (n=18) of the sample. This is followed by students aged 17-19 years at 26.8% (n=15), while 21.4% (n=12) are 20 years and above. The youngest group, below 14 years, constitutes 19.6% (n=11) of the total respondents. The age distribution suggests that while most boys in school fall within the expected age range for secondary education, a considerable proportion (21.4%) consists of older students, possibly indicating cases of repetition or delayed entry into school.

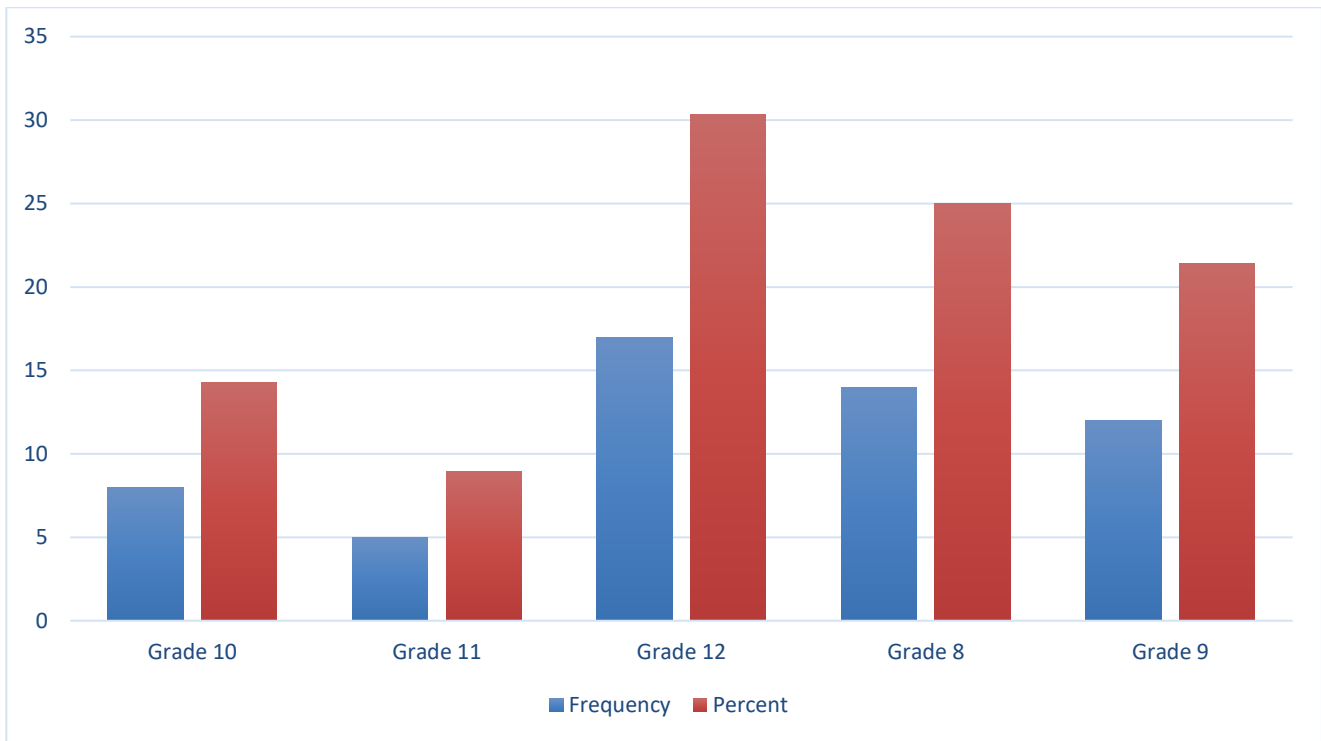


Figure 3: Grade Level

Regarding grade distribution, the highest proportion of respondents, 30.4% (n=17), were once in Grade 12, followed by 25.0% (n=14) in Grade 8. Students in Grade 9 represent 21.4% (n=12), while 14.3% (n=8) were in Grade 10, and 8.9% (n=5) in Grade 11. The significant representation of students in Grade 12 suggests that dropout risks persist even at the final stages of secondary education, possibly due to examination pressure or financial challenges. Meanwhile, the relatively high number of respondents in Grade 8 and 9 indicate that dropout issues may start becoming prevalent in early secondary education.

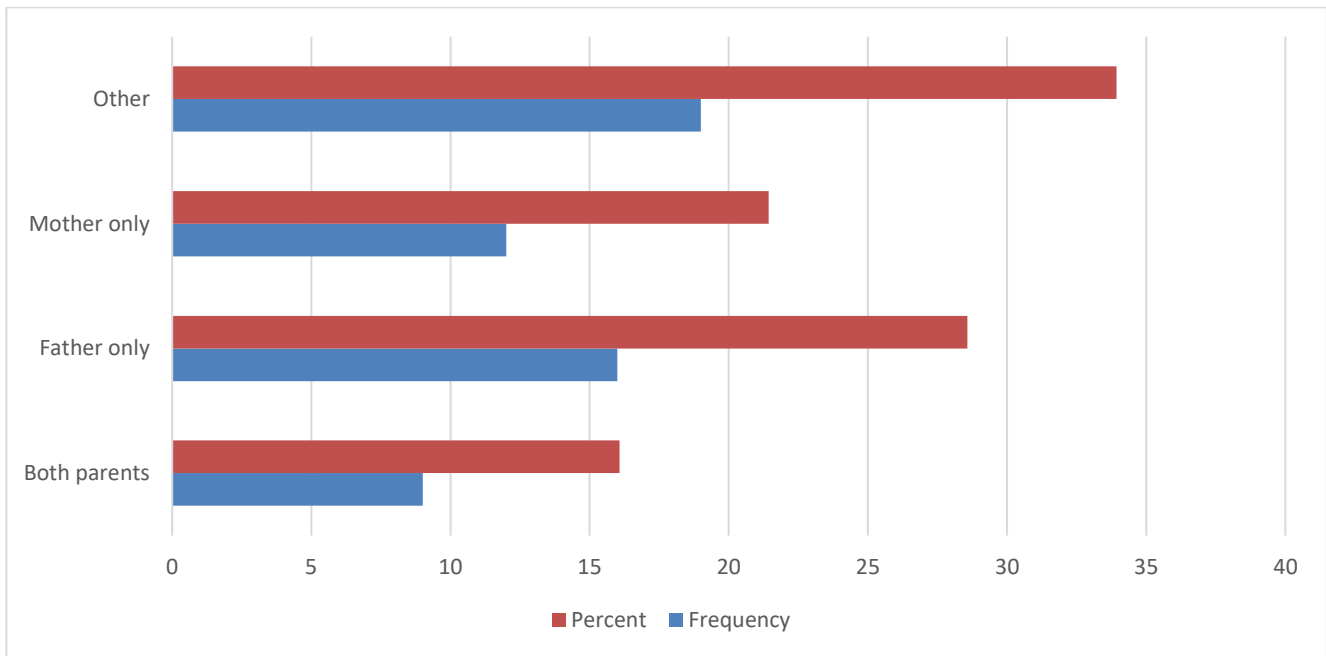


Figure 4: Primary Guardian

The data on primary guardianship reveals that 33.9% (n=19) of respondents are under the care of guardians other than their biological parents, while 28.6% (n=16) live with their father only. Those under the care of their mother only account for 21.4% (n=12), while only 16.1% (n=9) live with both parents. These findings highlight that a large proportion of boys are being raised in single-parent or guardian-headed households, which may contribute to financial instability and reduced parental supervision—factors that influence school dropout rates.

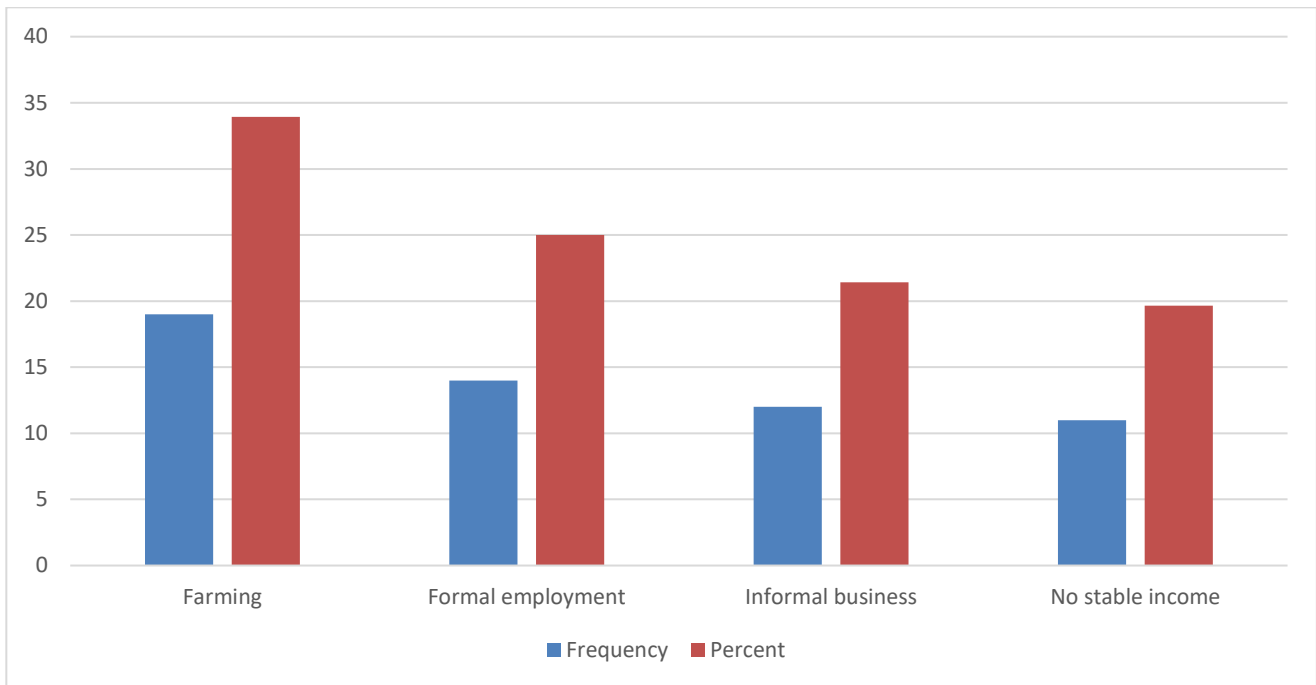


Figure 5: Family Income Source

The primary source of family income is farming, reported by 33.9% (n=19) of respondents. Formal employment is the main source of income for 25.0% (n=14), while 21.4% (n=12) depend on informal businesses. Notably, 19.6% (n=11) of the respondents come from households with no stable income. The predominance of farming and informal employment suggests that many families rely on irregular income sources, which may limit their ability to provide for school-related expenses. Boys from households without a stable income may face greater financial pressures, increasing the likelihood of dropping out to support their families financially.

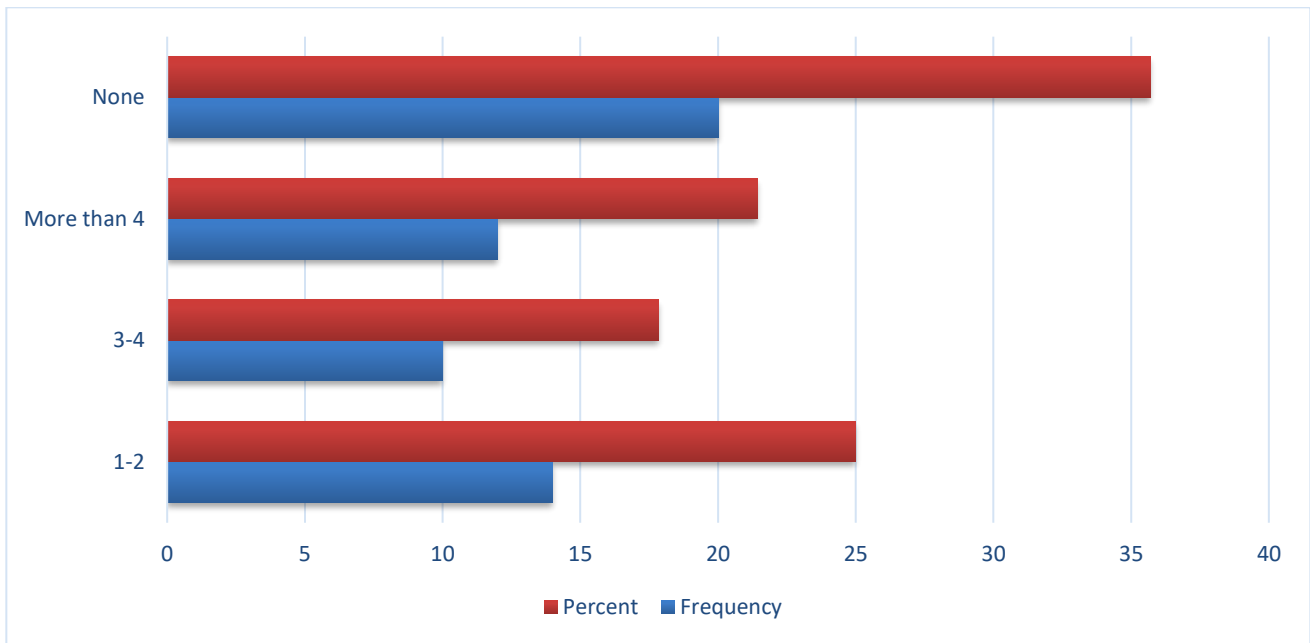


Figure 6: Number of Siblings in School

The analysis of sibling enrolment in school shows that 35.7% (n=20) of respondents have no siblings currently in school, which could indicate economic hardships preventing multiple children from receiving education within the same household. A total of 25.0% (n=14) have 1-2 siblings in school, while 21.4% (n=12) have more than four siblings currently studying. Lastly, 17.9% (n=10) of respondents have 3-4 siblings in school. These findings suggest that families with multiple school-going children may struggle to meet educational costs, increasing the risk of some children—particularly boys—dropping out to ease the financial burden on the household.

4.3 Influence of Socio-Economic Factors on School Dropout Among Boys

Economic challenges significantly impact boys’ ability to stay in school. Many students struggle with financial constraints, hunger, and the need to work to support their families, leading to increased dropout rates. Table 2 presents the findings on how socio-economic factors influence school retention.

Table 1: Frequency and Mean Distribution of Socio-Economic Factors Affecting School

Dropout

Variable Code	Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean
SEF1	Lack of financial support affects my ability to stay in school.	9	6	11	13	2.32
SEF2	I have missed school to work and support my family.	7	11	13	12	2.52
SEF3	The high cost of school materials prevents me from continuing school.	13	13	7	15	2.54
SEF4	Hunger affects my school attendance and performance.	8	17	11	14	2.79
SEF5	Family financial struggles make it difficult for me to remain in school.	10	9	15	9	2.38

Source: Author`s using study data

*SEF = socio-economic factors

The findings in Table 2 indicate that hunger affecting school attendance and performance has the highest mean (2.79), showing that it is a significant factor influencing dropout decisions. A considerable number of students (14 strongly agreed, 11 agreed) confirmed that food insecurity directly impacts their ability to focus and perform in school. Given Zambia's economic situation, food insecurity remains a persistent challenge for low-income households, making it harder for boys to remain committed to their studies.

The high cost of school materials also has a relatively high mean (2.54), with 15 students strongly agreeing that school-related expenses are prohibitive. School fees, books, uniforms,

and examination costs are often barriers, leading some boys to drop out. Similarly, missing school to work has a mean of 2.52, suggesting that economic hardship forces some boys to prioritise income-generating activities over education.

Lack of financial support and family financial struggles have slightly lower means (2.32 and 2.38, respectively), but they still significantly impact school dropout rates. While some boys disagreed with these statements, a considerable proportion acknowledged that economic instability influences their education. This indicates that while financial struggles are a major challenge, some students receive support from extended family, scholarships, or other sources that help them continue schooling.

4.4 Influence of School-Based Factors on School Dropout Among Boys

School-related factors, such as lack of teacher support, harsh disciplinary measures, and an unengaging curriculum, can contribute to boys dropping out. Some students struggle with bullying and inadequate learning resources, further affecting their motivation to stay in school. Table 3 presents the findings on school-based factors influencing dropout rates.

Table 2: Frequency and Mean Distribution of School-Based Factors Affecting School Dropout

Variable Code	Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean
SBF1	Lack of teacher support affects my motivation to stay in school.	13	12	10	12	2.45
SBF2	The school environment (e.g., infrastructure, resources) negatively impacts retention.	13	11	10	9	2.14
SBF3	Strict disciplinary measures make it difficult	6	10	11	15	2.59

	for boys to continue schooling.					
SBF4	The school curriculum is not engaging or relevant for boys.	9	13	10	14	2.59
SBF5	Bullying and peer pressure contribute to boys dropping out.	18	5	14	13	2.66

Source: Author`s using study data

*SBF = school-based factors

The findings reveal that bullying and peer pressure have the highest mean (2.66), indicating that these social pressures significantly contribute to school dropout rates. 14 students agreed and 13 strongly agreed that peer victimization and negative influences impact their education. However, 18 students strongly disagreed, suggesting that while bullying is a major issue, its impact varies among students depending on their experiences and resilience.

The perception that strict disciplinary measures contribute to dropout also holds weight, with a mean of 2.59. A notable 15 students strongly agreed that punitive discipline affects retention, suggesting that harsh punishments, suspensions, or expulsions could be pushing boys out of school rather than correcting their behaviour. Similarly, the school curriculum being unattractive holds the same mean (2.59), showing that some boys find the current academic system disengaging or irrelevant, possibly leading them to seek alternative paths outside formal education.

Lack of teacher support has a lower mean of 2.45, with 12 students strongly agreeing that inadequate teacher engagement affects their motivation to stay in school. However, 13 students strongly disagreed, showing that not all students feel unsupported, indicating that teacher influence varies depending on personal experiences or school policies.

The lowest mean is for school environment challenges (2.14), with a near-equal spread of responses. While 9 students strongly agreed that poor infrastructure and limited resources affect

their retention, 13 strongly disagreed, indicating that while some schools may lack resources, other factors like economic hardship or personal motivation could play a larger role in dropout decisions.

4.5 Influence of Family-Based Factors on School Dropout Among Boys

Family dynamics, including parental supervision, household responsibilities, and financial stability, play a crucial role in school retention. Some boys drop out due to a lack of parental encouragement or the need to support their families. Table 4 presents the findings on family-based factors influencing school dropout.

Table 3: Frequency and Mean Distribution of Family-Based Factors Affecting School Dropout

Variable Code	Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean
FBF1	Lack of parental emphasis on education affects my schooling.	10	11	9	9	2.02
FBF2	Household responsibilities interfere with my education.	8	9	12	13	2.48
FBF3	Family conflicts negatively impact my ability to stay in school.	12	11	7	9	1.91
FBF4	My parents/guardians cannot afford extra school-related expenses.	11	12	15	10	2.59
FBF5	Lack of parental supervision affects my academic performance.	13	10	8	13	2.32

Source: Author`s using study data

*FBF = family-based factors

The findings suggest that financial constraints in the household have the highest impact on school dropout, as parents' inability to afford extra school-related expenses has the highest mean (2.59). With 15 students agreeing and 10 strongly agreeing, it is evident that beyond tuition fees, additional school costs such as examination fees, transport, and learning materials create financial pressure that forces some boys to drop out.

Household responsibilities interfering with education also has a high mean (2.48), indicating that many boys take on domestic or income-generating duties at the expense of school attendance. 13 students strongly agreed and 12 agreed, reinforcing that economic hardships often lead to boys being pulled out of school to support their families. This aligns with the socio-economic challenges previously highlighted, showing a recurring theme of financial burden affecting boys' education.

Lack of parental supervision has a moderate mean (2.32), suggesting that while some students feel the absence of active parental guidance, others are not significantly affected. 13 students strongly disagreed, implying that certain boys still have structured parental oversight, despite financial difficulties.

Lack of parental emphasis on education has the second-lowest mean (2.02), suggesting that while some boys experience a lack of encouragement from their parents, others receive sufficient support. 9 students strongly agreed, but a larger group (10 strongly disagreed and 11 disagreed) indicates that family values on education are not universally negative, and some households prioritize school completion despite challenges.

Family conflicts impacting education recorded the lowest mean (1.91), with 12 students strongly disagreeing and 11 disagreeing, meaning that while domestic disputes affect some students, they are not the primary cause of school dropout for most boys.

4.6 Analysis of School Dropout

Various factors contribute to school dropout among boys, including financial struggles, lack of support, and peer influence. Understanding these factors helps in identifying key areas for intervention. Table 5 presents the findings on the main reasons students consider dropping out.

Table 4: Frequency and Mean Distribution of School Dropout Factors

Variable Code	Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean
SD1	I have considered dropping out of school due to the challenges I face.	9	11	5	14	2.16
SD2	Some of my classmates have dropped out of school for similar reasons as me.	8	12	14	9	2.38
SD3	I believe dropping out of school is a realistic option for boys facing hardship.	16	10	7	11	2.13
SD4	If my family's financial situation improved, I would be more motivated to stay in school.	15	13	9	8	2.09
SD5	The school system does not adequately support boys at risk of dropping out.	8	13	18	10	2.79

Source: Author's using study data

*SD = school dropout

The results indicate that lack of school support for at-risk boys has the highest mean (2.79), highlighting a critical gap in the education system's ability to retain struggling students. A significant proportion of students (18 agreed and 10 strongly agreed) felt that they were not

adequately supported in overcoming their challenges. This suggests that interventions such as counselling, mentorship programs, and financial aid could help in reducing dropout rates.

The perception that classmates have dropped out for similar reasons has a moderate mean (2.38), with 14 students agreeing and 9 strongly agreeing. This suggests that school dropout is a visible issue within the community, reinforcing the idea that systemic barriers such as financial struggles, peer influences, and school-related factors contribute to dropout trends among boys.

Considering dropping out personally has a slightly lower mean (2.16), indicating that while some students have thought about leaving school, others are still determined to continue despite challenges. 14 students strongly agreed, but a notable 9 students strongly disagreed, suggesting that some boys still have resilience and support systems that keep them in school.

The belief that dropping out is a realistic option for boys facing hardship has a lower mean (2.13), showing that while some students feel forced to consider leaving school, others do not see it as an inevitable outcome. The high number of strongly disagree (16 students) suggests that many boys still prioritize education despite financial and school-based difficulties.

Motivation to stay in school if finances improved has the lowest mean (2.09), indicating that while financial struggles are a major concern, they are not the sole determinant of dropout decisions. Although 9 students agreed and 8 strongly agreed, a larger number (15 strongly disagreed and 13 disagreed) suggests that factors beyond financial issues—such as school environment, discipline policies, and personal ambition—also play a role in dropout decisions.

4.7 Thematic Analysis of Parents' Responses on School Dropout Factors

Theme 1: Financial Constraints and Economic Pressures

Parents consistently emphasized that financial difficulties play a major role in boys dropping out of school. Many families struggle to afford school fees, uniforms, and learning materials, forcing boys to either stay home or engage in income-generating activities to support their households. One parent stated, *“I have other children to feed and clothe. When there is no money, school is not a priority. My son understands that, and sometimes he chooses to help out instead of going to school.”*

This sentiment highlights how economic instability directly affects school attendance. Some parents mentioned relying on seasonal farming, informal businesses, or casual work, which do not always provide a steady income. Another parent shared, *“We do not always have money at the right time. Some days, I tell my son to wait at home because we have to look for fees first.”*

Theme 2: Lack of Parental Supervision and Guidance

Some parents acknowledged that their involvement in their children's education is minimal due to work demands or other family responsibilities. As a result, boys often make their own decisions regarding school attendance. One parent admitted, *“I leave early for work and come back late. I do not even know when he goes to school or when he stays home.”* This lack of oversight can contribute to irregular attendance and eventual dropout.

Others noted that boys tend to be more independent and difficult to monitor, especially in households where parents are absent for long hours. Another parent explained, *“I have tried to advise my son to focus on school, but he says he is tired and that school is not helping him.”* This highlights the challenge of keeping boys motivated in education without close parental supervision.

Theme 3: School Environment and Peer Influence

Parents also cited school-related factors as contributing to dropout rates, particularly bullying and the lack of teacher support. Some boys feel discouraged due to harsh disciplinary measures or negative peer interactions. A concerned parent noted, *“My son told me that teachers do not care. When he fails to submit homework, they just punish him, but they never ask why he is struggling.”*

Peer pressure also emerged as a significant issue. Some parents observed that their sons associate with friends who have already dropped out, which influences their attitudes toward education. One parent stated, *“His friends have all left school. Now he tells me, ‘Why should I go when they are making money outside?’”* This suggests that external influences shape boys' decisions about staying in school.

Theme 4: Household Responsibilities and Gender Expectations

Some parents expressed that boys are expected to contribute to the household, making it difficult for them to focus on school. Traditional gender roles often require boys to engage in physical labor or take on responsibilities that compete with their education. A father explained, *“I tell my son that as a man, he must learn to work. If he does not work, who will feed him?”*

This expectation can lead to situations where boys prioritize income-generating activities over schooling. Another parent added, *“There are times when we send him to help his uncle at the farm. If we do not, the family will suffer.”* This reinforces the idea that boys are sometimes seen as contributors to the family’s survival, which can push them out of school.

4.8 Analysis and Interpretation

The thematic analysis reveals that school dropout among boys is driven by a combination of financial struggles, lack of parental supervision, negative school experiences, and household responsibilities. The most dominant issue appears to be financial hardship, with many parents expressing that education is secondary to immediate survival needs. Boys from low-income households are more likely to drop out as they either lack the necessary school materials or feel compelled to contribute financially to their families.

Parental supervision plays a crucial role, as boys who lack guidance are more susceptible to missing school or abandoning education altogether. Many parents, due to work commitments, are unable to closely monitor their children’s school attendance and performance. This allows boys to make independent decisions that may lead to dropout.

The school environment also emerges as a key factor, with some boys experiencing a lack of teacher support or facing social pressures from peers. Parents observed that boys who are not academically strong often feel neglected or unmotivated to continue, especially if they associate with peers who have already dropped out.

Finally, traditional gender expectations shape boys' experiences in education, as some parents believe that boys should learn to work and contribute to household income early. This perspective further increases the risk of dropout, particularly in families that rely on subsistence farming or informal labour.

Thematic Analysis of Teachers’ Responses on School Dropout Factors

Theme 1: Economic Hardships and Financial Barriers

Teachers overwhelmingly pointed to financial difficulties as a major factor contributing to boys dropping out of school. Many students come from low-income households that struggle to afford school fees, uniforms, and learning materials. One teacher noted, *“Some boys miss school because they don’t have transport money or even proper uniforms. They feel ashamed and eventually stop coming.”*

Another teacher highlighted the inconsistency of financial support, saying, *“We see boys coming to school irregularly because their families cannot afford to pay exam fees on time. They lose hope and give up.”* This suggests that the unpredictability of financial resources leads to frustration, making some boys opt out of the education system.

Theme 2: Lack of Parental Involvement and Supervision

Teachers emphasized that boys who lack parental guidance and encouragement are more likely to disengage from school. Some parents do not actively monitor their children’s education, leading to absenteeism and eventual dropout. One teacher explained, *“Some parents are completely unaware of their child’s academic progress. They only show up when the situation is beyond repair.”*

Others pointed out that some parents prioritize work over supervising their children's school attendance. *“Parents are busy making ends meet. Sometimes, they assume the boy is in school when in reality, he is out working or loitering,”* one teacher observed. This lack of direct supervision allows boys to make independent decisions about attending school, increasing the risk of dropout.

Theme 3: Peer Influence and Negative Social Circles

Several teachers noted that boys are highly influenced by their peers, particularly those who have already dropped out. This pressure makes them question the value of education, leading them to consider alternative ways of making a living. One teacher stated, *“When a boy sees his friends making money in the streets or working in local businesses, school starts to feel like a waste of time.”*

Another teacher pointed out the role of neighbourhood influences, saying, *“Some boys come from communities where education is not a priority. They see older boys who have dropped out surviving without school, and they start believing they can do the same.”* This highlights how social environment plays a role in shaping boys’ attitudes toward education.

Theme 4: Harsh Disciplinary Measures and Lack of Teacher Support

Some teachers acknowledged that school disciplinary practices may discourage boys from continuing their education. Strict punishments, suspensions, and expulsion policies often push students further away from the classroom. One teacher explained, *“Some boys make mistakes, and instead of being guided, they are suspended. Instead of correcting the issue, we end up pushing them out.”*

Another teacher reflected on the need for more teacher-student engagement, stating, *“Boys who struggle academically are often left behind. Some feel ignored and decide to leave on their own.”* This suggests that a lack of personalized support contributes to dropout rates, particularly among students who need extra help.

Theme 5: Curriculum Relevance and Practical Learning

Teachers also pointed out that many boys feel disconnected from the school curriculum, as they do not see how it applies to their future. Some students struggle to remain motivated when they do not understand the long-term benefits of formal education. One teacher noted, *“Some boys ask us, ‘How will algebra help me survive?’ They do not see the relevance of what they are learning.”*

Another teacher highlighted the need for vocational training, stating, *“If we introduced more practical subjects, like mechanics or agriculture, many boys would stay. They want to learn skills that can help them earn a living immediately.”* This suggests that making education more skill-based and job-oriented could help reduce dropout rates.

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Analysis and Interpretation

The thematic analysis reveals that financial struggles, lack of parental involvement, peer influence, strict discipline, and curriculum relevance are key contributors to school dropout among boys. Economic hardships remain the most dominant factor, with teachers frequently

mentioning that boys drop out due to the inability to afford school-related expenses. The **absence of parental supervision** further exacerbates this issue, as boys without guidance tend to become disengaged from education.

Social influences also play a crucial role, with many boys being drawn toward economic activities outside school due to peer pressure. Teachers highlighted that boys often see their peers leaving school and becoming financially independent, which makes them question the value of continued education. This indicates that beyond financial struggles, there is a perception issue—boys may not see education as an immediate or necessary investment for their future.

School disciplinary measures and lack of teacher support were also identified as barriers. Boys who feel unsupported or continuously punished for minor infractions may choose to leave rather than endure a system they feel is against them. This suggests that alternative discipline methods and increased mentorship from teachers could help retain at-risk students.

Finally, curriculum relevance is an emerging concern. Many boys disengage from school because they do not see a clear link between their studies and future job opportunities. Teachers proposed integrating more vocational and skill-based training to help boys stay motivated and see education as a stepping stone rather than an obstacle.

4.10 Teachers' Responses on the Prevalence of Boys' Dropout Rate in Public Day Secondary Schools in Kabwe District

Theme 1: Increasing Dropout Trends Over the Years

Teachers reported that the dropout rate among boys in public day secondary schools has been increasing over the years. Many noted that while dropout was previously more common in upper grades, it is now starting as early as Grade 8 and 9. One teacher shared, *“Five years ago, we would mostly see boys dropping out in Grade 11 or 12. Now, we are losing them earlier, sometimes before they even reach their final exams.”*

Another teacher observed that dropout cases are now more frequent than they used to be. *“In the past, we would have maybe one or two cases in a term. Now, in some classes, we see three or four boys dropping out in just one school year.”* This suggests that the dropout rate is

becoming more common, affecting multiple grades and occurring at a higher frequency than before.

Theme 2: Seasonal Dropout Patterns

Some teachers pointed out that dropout rates tend to fluctuate during certain times of the year, particularly during farming or business seasons when families need extra help. One teacher explained, *“Around planting and harvesting time, some boys leave school temporarily to help on family farms. The problem is, not all of them come back.”*

Another teacher highlighted a similar pattern in urban areas, where boys are drawn into casual labor. *“During market seasons or busy business months, boys drop out to work in bus stations, markets, or construction sites. Some plan to return after making some money, but most of them never do.”* This indicates that economic opportunities, even temporary ones, contribute to a steady dropout trend throughout the year.

Theme 3: Hidden Dropout – Absenteeism Leading to Permanent Exit

Several teachers noted that some cases of dropout do not happen suddenly but start with repeated absenteeism. A teacher explained, *“Some boys start by missing school one or two days a week. Then it becomes a week, then a month, and before you know it, they are gone completely.”*

Another teacher described the difficulty in tracking these cases: *“Some boys do not officially drop out. They just disappear. The school has no way of knowing whether they are still enrolled or not, unless parents inform us, which rarely happens.”* This hidden dropout pattern makes it difficult to estimate the exact dropout rate, as some boys remain registered on school lists but are no longer attending classes.

Theme 4: Gender-Based Differences in Dropout Rates

Teachers pointed out that dropout rates among boys are often higher than those among girls, mainly due to economic and social pressures. One teacher noted, *“We are seeing fewer girls*

dropping out compared to boys. Girls usually get more encouragement and support from parents, while boys are expected to be independent.”

Another teacher added, *“Girls often receive bursaries and scholarships from organizations, but boys are overlooked. Without financial support, many boys just give up on school.”* This suggests that targeted interventions are needed to address the specific factors pushing boys out of school.

4.11 Analysis and Interpretation

The thematic responses indicate that boys’ dropout rates in public day secondary schools in Kabwe District are increasing, affecting multiple grade levels and occurring at a higher frequency than in previous years. The pattern of dropout is not always immediate—some boys leave gradually through increased absenteeism before completely disengaging from school. Seasonal economic opportunities also play a role, particularly in rural farming communities and urban informal employment settings, where boys take on work responsibilities and fail to return to school.

The responses also highlight that boys experience higher dropout rates than girls, mainly due to financial struggles, household expectations, and a lack of support systems such as bursaries or mentorship programs. Teachers believe that boys are often expected to take care of themselves, making them more vulnerable to early school exit.

Moreover, hidden dropout remains a challenge, as many boys do not officially withdraw from school but instead fade out through repeated absenteeism. This makes it difficult for schools to keep accurate records of dropout rates, suggesting that the problem may be even larger than reported.

4.12 Correlation Analysis of School Dropout Factors

Correlation analysis helps determine the strength and direction of the relationship between school dropout and its predictive factors. Understanding these correlations provides insight into which factors contribute most significantly to dropout rates among boys. Table 5 presents the correlation matrix for school dropout and the identified influencing factors.

Table 5: Correlation Matrix of School Dropout and Predictive Factors

Variables	School Dropout	Socio-Economic Factors	School-Based Factors	Family-Based Factors
School Dropout	1.000	0.749	0.526	0.482
Socio-Economic Factors	0.749	1.000	0.612	0.543
School-Based Factors	0.526	0.612	1.000	0.498
Family-Based Factors	0.482	0.543	0.498	1.000

Source: Author`s using survey data

The correlation matrix in `table in 5 above analysis reveals strong relationships between school dropout and the three predictor variables, with socio-economic factors having the strongest correlation (0.749). This confirms that economic hardships significantly impact boys' likelihood of dropping out, as earlier thematic and regression findings suggested. The positive correlation indicates that as financial struggles increase, so does the likelihood of school dropout.

School-based factors also show a moderate positive correlation (0.526) with school dropout. This suggests that issues such as lack of teacher support, harsh disciplinary policies, and an unappealing curriculum contribute to school disengagement, but to a slightly lesser extent than financial difficulties. The correlation of 0.612 between socio-economic factors and school-based factors suggests that financial difficulties may indirectly influence school-based challenges, such as affordability of learning materials or inability to meet school requirements.

Family-based factors have the lowest correlation with school dropout at 0.482, indicating that while family circumstances (e.g., lack of supervision, household responsibilities, family conflicts) contribute to dropout, they do so to a lesser extent than financial and school-based factors. However, the correlation between family-based factors and socio-economic factors (0.543) suggests that financial difficulties within households may drive parental decisions that ultimately affect boys' education

4.13 Regression Analysis of Factors Influencing School Dropout Among Boys

The regression analysis examines the relationship between school dropout and three independent variables: socio-economic factors, school-based factors, and family-based factors. The model summary indicates that the overall model is a good fit, with an R-value of 0.749, meaning that there is a strong positive correlation between the predictors and school dropout. The R-Square value of 0.561 suggests that approximately 56.1% of the variation in school dropout rates can be explained by these three factors. The adjusted R-Square of 0.535 confirms that even after adjusting for the number of predictors, the model still explains a significant proportion of dropout behaviour. The standard error of 0.29399 indicates a relatively small margin of error, reinforcing the model's reliability.

The ANOVA results further validate the model's significance. The F-statistic (22.115) and a p-value of 0.000 indicate that the combined effect of socio-economic, school-based, and family-based factors on dropout rates is highly significant. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis that these factors do not influence dropout is rejected. This confirms that the predictors significantly contribute to explaining the variation in school dropout among boys.

Table 6: Factors Affecting School Dropout Rate

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.598	0.350	-	4.571	<.001
Socio-Economic Factors	0.416	0.061	0.627	6.782	<.001
School-Based Factors	0.169	0.059	0.269	2.864	0.006
Family-Based Factors	0.153	0.059	0.241	2.570	0.013

Source: Author's using survey data

Looking at the coefficients table, socio-economic factors have the highest impact on school dropout, with a B-value of 0.416 and a Beta coefficient of 0.627. This means that for every unit increase in socio-economic difficulties, the likelihood of school dropout increases by 41.6%. The

t-value of 6.782 and p-value of 0.000 indicate that this relationship is highly significant. This finding reinforces earlier thematic results where financial struggles, inability to afford school materials, and the need for boys to engage in income-generating activities were dominant reasons for dropout.

School-based factors also significantly contribute to dropout rates, with a B-value of 0.169 and a Beta coefficient of 0.269. This means that for every unit increase in school-related challenges (such as lack of teacher support, harsh disciplinary measures, and an unattractive curriculum), the probability of dropping out increases by 16.9%. The t-value of 2.864 and p-value of 0.006 confirm that this effect is statistically significant. The earlier qualitative findings support this, as students who experienced bullying, lack of teacher engagement, and unappealing learning experiences were more likely to drop out.

Family-based factors also play a significant role in dropout rates, with a B-value of 0.153 and a Beta coefficient of 0.241. This means that for every unit increase in family-related challenges (such as lack of parental supervision, family conflicts, and household responsibilities), dropout likelihood increases by 15.3%. Although the impact of family-based factors is lower than socio-economic and school-based factors, it remains statistically significant (t-value = 2.570, p-value = 0.013). These findings align with the earlier thematic results, where parents acknowledged limited involvement in their children's education, assigning boys more household responsibilities, and family conflicts leading to disengagement from school.

Interpretation and Implications

The results indicate that socio-economic factors are the strongest predictor of school dropout among boys, suggesting that addressing financial challenges, reducing school costs, and providing financial aid or scholarships could significantly reduce dropout rates. Interventions should focus on school feeding programs, bursary schemes, and vocational training that allow students to balance work and education.

School-based factors also play a significant role, implying that schools should create more supportive environments for boys at risk of dropping out. This could include strengthening

teacher-student engagement, improving discipline policies to be corrective rather than punitive, and making the curriculum more relevant by incorporating practical skills.

Finally, family-based factors contribute to dropout, highlighting the need for increased parental involvement in education. Awareness programs targeting parents, mentorship initiatives, and stronger school-community partnerships could help reduce the burden of household responsibilities on boys and encourage families to prioritize education.

4.14 Chapter Summary

This chapter analysed the factors influencing school dropout among boys using regression and correlation analyses. The findings showed that socio-economic factors had the highest impact on school dropout, followed by school-based factors and family-based influences. The thematic analysis revealed that financial struggles, lack of parental involvement, negative school experiences, and household responsibilities contribute to boys leaving school. The correlation matrix confirmed strong associations between these factors, with economic hardship emerging as the most significant predictor. The results emphasize the need for financial support, school interventions, and parental engagement to mitigate dropout rates.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the study's findings on school dropout among boys in public day secondary schools in Kabwe District. The discussion is structured based on the study objectives and is supported by relevant literature to compare and contrast the findings with existing studies. The analysis integrates both qualitative and quantitative results to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing dropout rates. The first objective explores the prevalence of boys' dropout rates in public day secondary schools in Kabwe District and compares these findings with previous studies.

5.2 Prevalence of Boys' Dropout Rate in Public Day Secondary Schools in Kabwe District

The study findings indicate that the dropout rate among boys in public day secondary schools in Kabwe District is increasing, with cases reported across different grade levels. The teachers' responses suggested that dropout, which was previously more common in Grade 11 and 12, is now affecting boys as early as Grade 8 and 9. This trend aligns with findings by Mumba and Phiri (2020), who reported that dropout rates in Zambia are rising, particularly among boys in early secondary education due to economic pressures and social influences. Similarly, a study conducted by Nyirenda (2019) in Lusaka found that boys are more likely to drop out earlier than girls, often due to work-related responsibilities and limited parental supervision.

Furthermore, the regression analysis showed that 56.1% of the variation in dropout rates could be explained by socio-economic, school-based, and family-based factors. These findings are consistent with research by UNICEF (2021), which highlighted that in sub-Saharan Africa, more than 30% of boys drop out before completing secondary school, with financial constraints and lack of school engagement cited as major contributing factors. The findings also support the study by Chisanga et al. (2018), which reported that boys in Zambia face higher dropout risks than girls due to the expectation that they contribute to household income.

The study further revealed that dropout is not always sudden but occurs in phases, often starting with absenteeism before a complete exit from school. Teachers noted that some boys begin by missing school one or two days per week, which gradually increases until they stop attending

altogether. This aligns with findings by Kainja (2020), who argued that hidden dropout is a major issue in many African schools, where students remain officially registered but no longer attend classes. Similar patterns were observed in a study conducted in Malawi, where Chimwala (2017) found that boys progressively disengage from school due to economic and social pressures, eventually leading to permanent dropout.

The seasonal pattern of dropout was also evident in the study findings. Teachers reported that dropout rates tend to increase during farming seasons and peak business periods, where boys are pulled into work to support their families. This finding is consistent with research by Banda and Zulu (2019), who found that in rural Zambia, many boys drop out of school during planting and harvesting seasons to assist their families with farm work. Similarly, a study by Hara and Chirwa (2020) in Malawi found that boys from low-income households often engage in informal labour during peak economic seasons, leading to fluctuating school attendance and eventual dropout.

Another significant finding is the gendered nature of dropout, where boys are at a higher risk of leaving school compared to girls. This contrasts with global trends, where girls are generally more vulnerable to dropping out due to early marriages and pregnancy (World Bank, 2021). However, in Zambia, studies by Mwale and Simukonda (2018) suggest that boys are more likely to drop out due to pressure to earn an income, lack of financial assistance, and lower parental involvement in their education. The current study supports this by showing that boys often face higher economic and social expectations that push them out of school earlier than their female counterparts.

Finally, the study revealed that hidden dropout remains a significant issue, with many boys remaining registered in school records but no longer attending classes. This is consistent with findings by Jere and Mwansa (2022), who reported that schools in Zambia often struggle to track dropout rates accurately, leading to an underestimation of the problem. This suggests that many boys who appear to be in school may already be disengaged from learning, emphasizing the need for improved tracking mechanisms and intervention strategies to identify at-risk students early.

5.3 Influence of Socio-Economic Factors on School Dropout Among Boys in Public Day Secondary Schools in Kabwe District

The study findings indicate that socio-economic factors are the strongest predictor of school dropout among boys, as revealed by the regression analysis, where socio-economic factors had the highest Beta coefficient (0.627) and a statistically significant p-value (0.000). This suggests that financial constraints, household economic pressures, and lack of resources significantly increase the likelihood of boys dropping out. These results are consistent with studies by Mweemba and Phiri (2020), who found that in Zambia, boys from low-income families are twice as likely to drop out compared to those from middle-income backgrounds. Similarly, a study conducted by Chanda and Banda (2019) in the Copperbelt Province found that in households where families struggle with financial insecurity, education for boys is often deprioritized in favor of work opportunities.

One of the key socio-economic factors influencing dropout rates in this study was the inability to afford school materials and tuition fees. The findings showed that a significant number of boys struggle with the cost of school uniforms, books, and other necessary supplies, leading to irregular attendance and eventual dropout. This aligns with the findings of UNESCO (2021), which reported that over 50% of secondary school dropouts in sub-Saharan Africa are due to financial constraints. In Zambia, Mufune (2018) found that families facing extreme poverty often choose to invest in basic survival needs rather than education, forcing boys to drop out to seek alternative income sources.

The study also revealed that many boys are expected to contribute financially to their households, which interferes with their ability to attend school regularly. Teachers reported that some boys engage in informal work, such as selling goods in markets, doing construction work, or helping on farms. This is supported by findings from Banda and Zulu (2019), who found that in rural Zambia, boys are more likely to drop out due to labour demands at home, especially during planting and harvesting seasons. Similar findings were reported in a study by Chimwala (2020) in Malawi, where economic responsibilities forced boys to leave school to support their families, further widening the education gap.

Another major socio-economic factor contributing to dropout in this study was food insecurity and hunger, which made it difficult for boys to concentrate in school. The findings revealed that

hunger directly affects school attendance, as some boys opt to stay home or seek work to afford food. This aligns with studies by Nyirenda and Chisenga (2017), who found that malnutrition and food insecurity are among the top reasons for school dropout in low-income households across Zambia and Malawi. The World Food Programme (2021) also emphasized that school feeding programs significantly reduce dropout rates by ensuring that students receive at least one meal per day, improving attendance and concentration.

The study findings further showed that families with unstable income sources, such as informal businesses or seasonal farming, had the highest dropout rates among boys. This supports the study by Mwansa and Jere (2019), who found that boys from families relying on irregular income sources were more likely to drop out due to inconsistent school attendance and late tuition payments. Additionally, the findings align with Kainja (2020), who reported that in low-income households, boys are often expected to become breadwinners at an early age, making school attendance secondary to financial survival.

Another important socio-economic factor identified in this study was lack of access to financial assistance or scholarships for boys. While government and non-governmental organizations provide bursary programs, teachers reported that these programs mostly target girls, leaving boys with fewer financial support opportunities. This finding is supported by Chisanga et al. (2018), who noted that most donor-funded scholarships in Zambia focus on keeping girls in school, often overlooking the financial struggles boys face. Similarly, UNICEF (2020) reported that while efforts to close the gender gap in education have increased school retention for girls, they have inadvertently created a gap where boys from low-income households struggle to remain in school without financial aid.

The study also revealed that transportation costs contribute to dropout rates, particularly for students who live far from school. Some boys reported that long distances and lack of transport money made it difficult for them to attend school regularly. This is consistent with findings from Hara and Chirwa (2019) in Malawi, who found that students walking long distances to school had higher dropout rates due to fatigue and financial constraints associated with transport costs. The same was observed by Kafue and Musonda (2021), who noted that in Zambia, lack of

affordable public transport in rural areas leads to high absenteeism and dropout rates among students from poor backgrounds.

5.4 Influence of School-Based Factors on School Dropout Among Boys in Public Day Secondary Schools in Kabwe District

The study findings indicate that school-based factors significantly contribute to boys' dropout rates, as demonstrated in the regression analysis where school-based factors had a Beta coefficient of 0.269 ($p = 0.006$). This suggests that elements within the school environment—such as lack of teacher support, harsh disciplinary measures, an unattractive curriculum, and peer influences—play a role in boys disengaging from education. These findings align with studies by Mwewa and Chisanga (2019), who found that in Zambia, students who perceived their school environment as unsupportive were more likely to drop out. Similarly, Nyirenda (2021) found that boys who experience negative interactions with teachers and peers tend to lose motivation to remain in school.

One of the most significant school-based factors identified in this study was lack of teacher support, where many boys reported feeling disengaged due to limited encouragement, lack of mentorship, and minimal academic guidance from teachers. The findings revealed that boys who struggle academically often receive little or no additional assistance, making it difficult for them to catch up with schoolwork. This aligns with the study by Banda and Mumba (2020), which found that teacher-student relationships play a crucial role in student retention, and students who feel unsupported are more likely to leave school. Similarly, research by Chirwa and Hara (2018) in Malawi emphasized that a positive teacher-student relationship significantly reduces the risk of school dropout by fostering a sense of belonging and motivation to learn.

Another major school-related issue was harsh disciplinary measures, where boys reported that punishments such as suspensions, corporal punishment, and expulsion for minor offenses contributed to their decision to leave school. The findings showed that boys who were frequently punished were more likely to develop negative attitudes toward school and eventually drop out. These findings are consistent with research by Jere and Mwale (2017), who found that in many African schools, zero-tolerance discipline policies disproportionately affect boys, leading to increased dropout rates. Similarly, Kainja (2020) argued that harsh discipline often pushes boys

further away from formal education, as many perceive school as an unwelcoming and punitive environment rather than a place of learning.

The study also highlighted that an unattractive and rigid curriculum contributes to school dropout among boys, as many students feel that what they learn in school is not relevant to their future aspirations. Some boys expressed that they find the curriculum too theoretical, with little focus on practical skills that could help them earn a living. This finding aligns with Mwansa and Jere (2019), who reported that many boys in Zambia drop out of school due to a lack of vocational training opportunities that would provide them with hands-on skills. Similarly, a study by Hara and Chimwala (2021) in Malawi found that boys who do not see the practical value of education are more likely to disengage, particularly if they come from low-income households where immediate income-generation is a priority.

Peer influence and bullying within schools were also identified as significant school-based factors contributing to dropout. The findings revealed that many boys experience peer pressure to engage in activities outside school, such as informal work or substance abuse, which increases their likelihood of leaving school permanently. Additionally, bullying was reported as a serious problem, with some boys stating that they felt unsafe or unwelcome in school environments. This supports the study by Chisanga et al. (2018), which found that bullying and negative peer influence contribute to school dropout, particularly among boys who struggle with self-esteem and academic performance. Similarly, UNICEF (2020) reported that boys who experience bullying are more likely to skip school, leading to absenteeism and eventual dropout.

The study further revealed that inadequate school infrastructure and lack of learning resources create additional barriers to education, particularly for boys from underprivileged backgrounds. Many schools lack functional libraries, science laboratories, and recreational facilities, making the learning experience unappealing. These findings align with research by Nyirenda and Mweemba (2019), who found that in Zambia, schools with poor infrastructure and limited learning materials had significantly higher dropout rates compared to well-equipped schools. Similarly, Hara and Banda (2020) reported that boys are less likely to stay in school when they perceive the school environment as lacking essential facilities necessary for effective learning.

5.5 Influence of Family-Based Factors on School Dropout Among Boys in Public Day Secondary Schools in Kabwe District

The study findings indicate that family-based factors significantly contribute to boys' dropout rates, as demonstrated in the regression analysis where family-based factors had a Beta coefficient of 0.241 ($p = 0.013$). This suggests that elements within the family environment—such as lack of parental supervision, household responsibilities, family conflicts, and financial instability—directly affect boys' ability to remain in school. These findings align with studies by Mwewa and Chisanga (2019), who found that in Zambia, students from unstable family backgrounds were more likely to drop out due to a lack of guidance and emotional support. Similarly, Nyirenda (2021) reported that boys who experience family-related stress tend to disengage from school, often seeking alternative ways to survive, such as informal labour.

One of the key family-based factors identified in this study was lack of parental supervision and involvement, where boys reported receiving minimal support or encouragement from their parents regarding their education. The findings showed that many parents were either too busy with work or unaware of their children's academic progress, leading to poor school attendance and increased likelihood of dropout. This aligns with the study by Banda and Mumba (2020), which found that students with actively involved parents had higher retention rates compared to those from households where education was not prioritized. Similarly, research by Chirwa and Hara (2018) in Malawi emphasized that parental engagement plays a crucial role in keeping students in school, as it provides motivation and a sense of accountability.

Another major family-related issue was the burden of household responsibilities, where boys were often expected to contribute to family duties at the expense of their education. The findings revealed that some boys were required to engage in farming, household chores, or income-generating activities, making it difficult for them to attend school regularly. These findings are consistent with research by Jere and Mwale (2017), who found that in many African households, boys are viewed as contributors to the family economy, leading to increased dropout rates when school interferes with their work responsibilities. Similarly, Kainja (2020) argued that cultural expectations often place a heavier burden on boys to provide financial support to their families, making school a lower priority.

The study also highlighted the impact of family conflicts and instability, which contributed to school dropout among boys. The findings revealed that boys from homes experiencing domestic violence, parental separation, or frequent disputes were more likely to disengage from school. Some boys reported that stress from family problems made it difficult to concentrate in class, while others mentioned that conflicts at home forced them to leave school and seek employment elsewhere. This finding aligns with Mwansa and Jere (2019), who reported that students from unstable homes often struggle with emotional distress, leading to poor academic performance and eventual dropout. Additionally, a study by Hara and Chimwala (2021) in Malawi found that boys exposed to family violence or neglect were more likely to seek independence early, often by dropping out of school to pursue work opportunities.

Another critical family-related factor identified in this study was the inability of parents to afford extra school-related expenses, even beyond tuition fees. The findings showed that boys often struggled with the costs of examination fees, transport, school supplies, and uniforms, leading to irregular attendance and eventual dropout. This is supported by Chisanga et al. (2018), who found that in Zambia, many boys drop out not because of tuition fees alone, but due to the accumulated costs of staying in school. Similarly, UNESCO (2021) reported that hidden education costs, such as exam fees and uniforms, contribute significantly to school dropout in low-income families across sub-Saharan Africa.

The study further revealed that lack of parental emphasis on education influenced dropout rates, with many boys stating that their parents did not actively encourage them to complete school. Some parents prioritized other aspects of life, such as vocational training, farming, or informal work, over formal education. This finding aligns with Nyirenda and Mweemba (2019), who found that in Zambia, boys from families that do not value education are more likely to drop out, as they receive little motivation to persevere through academic challenges. Similarly, Hara and Banda (2020) reported that cultural beliefs in some communities place greater emphasis on practical work than on formal education, leading to higher dropout rates among boys.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the study findings and provides recommendations based on the key research objectives. The conclusions summarize the major insights regarding the prevalence and factors influencing school dropout among boys in public day secondary schools in Kabwe District. The chapter also outlines practical recommendations for mitigating dropout rates, as well as suggestions for future research and study limitations.

6.2 Conclusions

6.2.1 Prevalence of Boys' Dropout Rates in Public Day Secondary Schools

The study findings confirm that the dropout rate among boys in public day secondary schools in Kabwe District is increasing, affecting multiple grade levels. Teachers and students reported that dropout is no longer limited to higher grades but is now common even in Grade 8 and 9. The dropout process is often gradual, beginning with increased absenteeism before leading to permanent withdrawal. The study also found that seasonal dropout patterns exist, with some boys leaving school temporarily during farming or peak business seasons but failing to return. Additionally, hidden dropout was identified as a challenge, where some boys remain officially enrolled in school but stop attending classes regularly. These findings suggest that dropout is not an isolated event but a process influenced by multiple interrelated factors.

6.2.2 Influence of Socio-Economic Factors on School Dropout

Socio-economic factors emerged as the strongest predictor of school dropout, with financial constraints being the primary challenge faced by boys. The study found that inability to afford school fees, uniforms, and other learning materials led to irregular attendance and eventual dropout. Many boys were also expected to contribute to household income, engaging in informal work that conflicted with their education. Food insecurity was another significant issue, with some boys opting to leave school in search of ways to earn money for food. Furthermore, lack of access to bursaries and financial aid programs for boys contributed to the dropout crisis. The findings highlight that economic hardship remains the most pressing barrier to educational retention among boys in Kabwe District.

6.2.3 Influence of School-Based Factors on School Dropout

School-based factors also played a critical role in dropout rates among boys. Lack of teacher support, particularly for struggling students, led to academic disengagement and reduced motivation to remain in school. Additionally, harsh disciplinary measures—such as suspensions, corporal punishment, and expulsions—pushed boys further away from the education system. The study also found that the current school curriculum does not sufficiently engage boys, as it is perceived as overly theoretical and lacking practical skills development. Peer influence and bullying within schools further contributed to dropout, as some boys experienced social exclusion or felt pressured to leave school. These findings suggest that a more inclusive, supportive, and engaging school environment is necessary to retain boys in education.

6.2.4 Influence of Family-Based Factors on School Dropout

Family-related challenges significantly influenced dropout rates. The study found that lack of parental supervision and involvement led to irregular school attendance and disengagement from learning. Some boys were given household responsibilities that interfered with their education, while others dropped out due to family conflicts and instability. Additionally, many families lacked the financial means to cover hidden education costs, such as exam fees, transport, and uniforms, which further contributed to dropout decisions. The study also revealed that in some households, education was not prioritized for boys, with parents encouraging them to pursue income-generating activities instead of formal education. These findings indicate that family support and stability are crucial in preventing school dropout.

6.3 Recommendations

Practical Recommendations

1. Expansion of Financial Assistance for Boys

Government and private stakeholders should increase bursary and scholarship programs specifically for boys to address financial constraints. Existing financial aid initiatives focus largely on girls, leaving many boys without support.

2. Implementation of School Feeding Programs

Hunger is a significant factor in school dropout. Implementing school feeding programs can help improve attendance and retention by ensuring that boys receive at least one meal per day. This has been successful in other sub-Saharan African countries in reducing dropout rates.

3. Introduction of Alternative Discipline and Counselling Programs

Schools should replace harsh disciplinary measures with corrective approaches such as counselling, mentorship programs, and behaviour management strategies. Providing boys with emotional and academic support can prevent them from disengaging.

4. Vocational and Practical Skills Integration in School Curriculum

The Ministry of Education should reform the school curriculum to include vocational training, entrepreneurship, and technical skills development. Many boys perceive formal education as irrelevant to their future; integrating practical learning components can keep them engaged.

6.4 Future Research

While this study provided valuable insights into school dropout among boys in Kabwe District, further research is necessary in the following areas:

1. Longitudinal studies on school dropout trends to track how dropout rates evolve and the effectiveness of intervention strategies.
2. Comparative studies on dropout rates between boys and girls to better understand gender differences in education retention.
3. Exploring the impact of mental health and social factors on dropout rates, particularly the role of stress, depression, and substance abuse among boys.
4. Evaluating the effectiveness of alternative education programs, such as night schools or community-based learning centres, in reducing dropout rates.

Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study had several limitations:

1. **Sample Size Constraints**

The study focused on a specific number of respondents within Kabwe District, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions.

2. **Self-Reported Data**

The study relied on self-reported responses from students, parents, and teachers, which may have introduced bias due to personal perceptions or social desirability.

3. Limited Scope of Socio-Cultural Influences

While family and economic factors were examined, cultural beliefs and traditions influencing boys' education were not extensively explored. Future studies should investigate how cultural norms affect boys' decisions to drop out.

6.5 Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive analysis of the prevalence and causes of school dropout among boys in public day secondary schools in Kabwe District. The findings confirm that socio-economic, school-based, and family-based factors all contribute to dropout rates, with financial hardship being the most significant determinant. Addressing these challenges will require a multi-sectoral approach involving government policies, school reforms, community engagement, and parental involvement.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Study Title: Factors Contributing to Boy Child Dropout Rate in Selected Public Day
Secondary Schools in Kabwe District, Zambia

Section A: Demographic Information

This section collects basic demographic information about the respondents. Please provide accurate responses.

1. What is your age?
 - Below 14
 - 14-16
 - 17-19
 - 20 and above
2. What was your current school grade?
 - Grade 8
 - Grade 9
 - Grade 10
 - Grade 11
 - Grade 12
3. Who is your primary guardian?
 - Both parents
 - Mother only
 - Father only
 - Other (Specify) _____
4. What is your family's main source of income?
 - Formal employment
 - Informal business
 - Farming
 - No stable income
5. How many siblings do you have in school?
 - None
 - 1-2

- 3-4
- More than 4

Section B: Influence of Socio-Economic Factors on School Dropout

This section explores how socio-economic factors affect school dropout among boys. Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement by ticking the appropriate box.

Variable Code	Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
SEF1	Lack of financial support from parents/guardians influences my likelihood of dropping out of school.					
SEF2	I sometimes miss school because I need to help my family earn an income.					
SEF3	The cost of school materials (books, uniforms, etc.) is too high for my family to afford.					
SEF4	Hunger and lack of food at home affect my ability to attend school regularly.					

SEF5	My family's financial situation has forced my siblings or relatives to drop out of school.					
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Section C: Influence of School-Based Factors on School Dropout

This section assesses how school-related factors influence school dropout among boys. Kindly select the response that best reflects your experience.

Variable Code	Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
SBF1	I feel unsupported by teachers, which affects my motivation to stay in school.					
SBF2	The school environment (e.g., lack of resources, poor infrastructure) contributes to school dropout.					
SBF3	The disciplinary measures in my school make it difficult for some boys to continue with education.					
SBF4	The school curriculum does not					

	prepare boys for employment or vocational skills, making school unattractive.					
SBF5	I have considered dropping out due to bullying or peer pressure in school.					

Section D: Influence of Family-Based Factors on School Dropout

This section examines how family circumstances contribute to school dropout among boys. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

Variable Code	Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
FBF1	My parents/guardians do not emphasize the importance of education.					
FBF2	Household responsibilities assigned to me interfere with my schooling.					
FBF3	Family conflicts (e.g., divorce, parental neglect) have made it difficult for me to					

	concentrate in school.					
FBF4	My parents/guardians cannot afford to pay for extra school-related expenses.					
FBF5	Lack of parental supervision or guidance has negatively affected my academic performance.					

Section E: School Dropout as the Dependent Variable

This section seeks to determine the extent to which respondents have considered or been affected by school dropout.

Variable Code	Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
SD1	I have thought about dropping out of school due to the challenges I face.					
SD2	Some of my classmates have dropped out of school for similar reasons as me.					
SD3	I believe dropping					

	out of school is a realistic option for boys facing hardship.					
SD4	If my family's financial situation improved, I would be more motivated to stay in school.					
SD5	The school system does not adequately support boys at risk of dropping out.					

Interview Guide for Parents and Teachers

The following interview questions aim to gather qualitative insights on the factors influencing school dropout among boys in public day secondary schools in Kabwe District.

Interview Questions for Parents

Influence of Socio-Economic Factors

1. How does your family's financial situation affect your child's ability to continue schooling?
2. Have financial constraints ever forced your child to miss school or consider dropping out? Please explain.
3. What support mechanisms, if any, do you think would help reduce school dropout among boys from low-income households?

Influence of School-Based Factors

1. In your opinion, how does the school environment (e.g., infrastructure, resources, or discipline policies) impact boys' education?
2. Do you believe teachers and school administrators provide adequate support to boys at risk of dropping out? Why or why not?
3. What changes would you suggest in schools to help reduce dropout rates among boys?

Influence of Family-Based Factors

1. How does the structure of your household (e.g., parental presence, family responsibilities) influence your child's education?
2. What role do you think family conflicts or challenges play in boys dropping out of school?
3. How do you ensure that your child remains motivated to continue their education despite challenges at home?

Interview Guide for Teachers

Introduction for Teachers

This section of the study seeks to understand how teachers perceive and respond to the issue of school dropout among boys in public day secondary schools. Your responses will help identify key challenges and potential solutions to improve retention rates. The questions focus on school-based, socio-economic, and family-related factors influencing boys' education.

Influence of Socio-Economic Factors

1. How often do you observe boys dropping out of school due to financial challenges?
2. In what ways do economic hardships affect boys' participation and performance in school?
3. What interventions do you think the school or government can implement to support boys from low-income families?

Influence of School-Based Factors

1. What school-related factors do you think contribute most to boys dropping out?
2. How do school disciplinary measures affect students' likelihood of staying in school?
3. What strategies do you think teachers and school administrators can implement to improve boys' retention in school?

Influence of Family-Based Factors

1. How does parental involvement (or lack thereof) influence a boy's likelihood of dropping out?
2. Have you noticed cases where family conflicts or responsibilities negatively impact boys' education? Please elaborate.
3. What role do you think schools can play in working with families to prevent school dropout among boys?

End of Questionnaire

APPENDIX V: PLAGIARISM REPORT



1.46% SIMILARITY OVERALL **5.11%** POTENTIALLY AI

Similarity report

Your text is highlighted according to the matched content in the results above.

● CHANGED TEXT
1.46%

AI Detector Results

Highlighted sentences with the lowest perplexity, most generated by AI.

Report #24400425

LIST OF TABLES Table 4.1: Return rate
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