

School Dropout as a Consequence of Sexual Relationship among Secondary School Students in Kinondoni Municipality, Tanzania

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Abstract

This article assessed the consequence of sexual relationships on school dropout among secondary school students in Kinondoni Municipality. The study adopted a cross-sectional design where a mixed-methods research approach was employed. A simple random sampling technique was used to obtain the students, whereas a purposeful sampling technique was used to obtain head teachers as well as discipline teachers of the selected schools. Data were collected from one hundred and eighty-one (181) respondents; of these, there were secondary students (n=168), heads of schools (n=4), discipline teachers (n=4), and parents (n=5). Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 to get inferential statistics, whereas qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings of the study revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between school dropouts and students' sexual relationships. The study recommends the following; firstly, to introduce sex education to students before reach adolescence phase. Last but not least, the community including the parents and guardians need to be sensitized and educated on sexual relationship matters so that they can help and lead the adolescents regarding sexual-related issues.

Keywords: School Dropout, Sexual Relationship, Secondary School Students

1.0 Introduction

Sexual relationship refers to both sexual intercourse and physical sexual activity that does not necessarily end in intercourse (Kennedy, 2012). It also refers to an interpersonal relationship that involves physical or emotional intimacy characterized by romantic love, sexual activities, or other passionate attachments (Derlega, 2013). In this study, the term sexual relationship refers to all forms of sexual activities which could or could not end in intercourse.

Sexual relationships among school adolescents in secondary schools have become a concern to many authorities in the world. The government of Tanzania, through the fifth phase of His Excellence the late Dr John Pombe Joseph Magufuli, has indicated that no pregnant student will proceed with the school. That was done to ensure that teenagers do not engage in sexual relationships. On the other hand, parents, religious leaders and society, in general, are concerned about the sexual relationships among adolescents due to its implications, especially in academics, the risk of students becoming pregnant, early childbearing and adverse reproductive and health outcomes for school adolescents and their children (Glynn et al., 2018).

A study by Kirby (2012) about the impact of sex education on the sexual behaviour of young people revealed that the adolescence period is one of confusion with adolescents facing an ongoing conflict and difficulty adapting to both physiological and psychological changes in their bodies. These changes, including the sudden increase of sexual and aggressive drives, cause disturbance and confusion in the teenagers' inner selves and in the way, they perceive the world. This concurs with the study findings of the study done by Bridges (2013) on the study about comprehensive sex education and academic success, which

revealed that the adolescent stage is the most difficult stage among students because this is the time when most students initiate sexual relationships and involvement consequently fall victims of the consequences associated with sexual relationships (Bridges, 2013).

Regrettably, in a state of confusion and without guidance, these teen students are unable to balance between sexual relationships and school. In most cases, the teenagers in the inquisitive and bold blankness prioritize sexual activities over academics (Holmstrom, 2015). The study done by Fekede (2015) about the assessment of student awareness towards the effects of unintended pregnancy concerning female students at Mettu College of Teachers Education revealed that students' sexual relationship is associated with many implications, including termination of pregnancies, which pose a multiplicity of problems on the academic achievements of female students as well as psychological impacts to both male and female students. Furthermore, the study findings revealed that sexual relationships can also result in the student experiencing post-abortion stress symptoms that force them to be absent from class or drop out from their education (Fekede, 2015).

Many countries in the world continue to experience high rates of sexual relationships among secondary school students which result in pregnancies despite the intervention strategies that have been put in place by the authorities and responsible organs (Maja, Oyedele & Wright, 2015). The question of sexual relationships among secondary school students affects different countries in different ways and extent, according to the culture and economic status of that particular country.

For example, the report from the World Health Organization (World Health Organization [WHO], 2011) about the evidence for gender-

responsive actions to prevent and manage adolescent pregnancy denotes that Europe, Italy in particular, has the least number of students in school dropout as the result of students' sexual relationship, which ended up getting pregnancies compared to other continents. Sabia and Rees (2009) as cited by Mlyakado and Timothy (2014) in their study about the effects of students' sexual relationships on academic performance among secondary school students in Tanzania revealed that in the United States, several studies have shown that, adolescents who abstain from sex are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college unlike their sexually active peers (Mlyakado & Timothy, 2014).

The World Health Organization (2011) report revealed that in South Asia the rate of pupils who engage in sexual relationships among students is decreasing except for Bangladesh and Indonesia, which have the same trend as India leading to high rates of school dropout in the particular countries. In India, the reported cases of student sexual relationships are increasing and contribute 26% to 37% of school dropout among female adolescents (WHO, 2011).

Sexual relationships among secondary school students lead to female students' pregnancy, which is a significant cause of diminished academic performance and finally students' school dropout in many parts of the African continent. Mlyakado and Timothy (2014) conducted a study on the effects of students' sexual relationships on academic performance among secondary school students in Tanzania and it was revealed that the dropout rate of girls is higher than the dropout rate of boys in secondary schools unlike in primary schools where boys school dropout is higher and the foremost cause for girls' school dropout is pregnancy (Mlyakado & Timothy, 2014).

A study done by Fekede (2015) about student awareness towards the effects of unintended pregnancy at Mettu College of Teachers Education reported that sexual relationship is the highest cause of female students dropping out of school in Ethiopia as it leads to students pregnancy. As a response to this serious problem, the government of Ethiopia decided to start special attention provision to female students' education to enable them to graduate so they can actively participate in the political, economic, cultural, and social development of the country (Fekede, 2015).

The study findings from the 2011 National Survey cross-sectional data on adolescents (aged 12–19 years) in Ghana, Burkina Faso, Malawi and Uganda by Wakgari and Teklu (2012) as cited by Frye (2017) show that girls who had experienced sexual debut were 2 to 5 times more likely to drop out of school before completing primary school, compared with those who had not initiated sex. Similar findings were observed in the study done by Frye (2017) about cultural meanings and the aggregation of actions: the case of sex and schooling in Malawi among secondary school students in southern Malawi where sexual activity among girls was found to be associated with school dropout (Frye, 2017).

On the same note, similar findings were observed among secondary school students in southern Malawi, where sexual activity among girls, and not boys, was found to be associated with school dropout (Frye, 2017). Analysis of longitudinal data from the Cape Area Panel Study (CAPS) in South Africa showed that students who engaged in early sexual relationships were less likely to complete secondary school unlike those who did not engage (Bengesai et al., 2017). Secondary school students' dropout is highly influenced by school physical facilities and the economic statuses of the parents or guardians of the students

(Timothy, 2010). However, this has not been the case in Tanzania as the government has made an effort to improve school physical facilities as well as provide fee free education so that even the students from low-income families as well as marginalized societies can afford the offered educational services.

Gwambombo (2013) studied the effect of teachers' workload on students' academic performance in community secondary schools in Tanzania and reported that the introduction of fee-free education in Tanzania has led to high enrolments and a diminishing of the gender gap in schools, but the remaining problems are mostly related with the retention of these students in schools until they graduate or complete the particular level of education they have enrolled as well as the quality of education provided.

The report provided by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (currently known as the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology) for five years, between 2014 and 2018, shows that a total of 11,599 secondary school students in the country dropped out from schools due to pregnancies. In 2014, almost 9,800 students dropped out of secondary and secondary school due to pregnancies. In 2016, more than 6,300 secondary school students dropped out due to pregnancies as a result of their sexual relationships (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2019). Moreover, adolescents' sexual relationship is associated with many other risks, including HIV infection and other STIs more often than not result in consequences such as absence from school, lack of morale for education, suspensions, dismissals and school dropout ending in teenagers' shattered dreams (Holmstrom, 2015).

Also, the study by Yarro and Kafanabo (2016) on major causes and perpetrators of sexual activities among teenage students in Kinondoni District revealed that the major causes of sexual affairs among students were inner sexual urges, exposure to pornography and influence of peers. It was also discovered that the major seducers were fellow students, drivers, business men and teachers who offered free lifts, money and academic assistance to students.

The study by Mlyakado and Timothy (2014) on the effects of students' sexual relationships on academic performance among secondary school students in Tanzania revealed that students' involvement in sexual relationships puts them into lots of relational and social problems which adversely affect their social as well as their school lives in general. If the situation is not curbed immediately, in the long run, the country stands to suffer the risk of a semi-illiterate generation and an inadequate skilled workforce especially a female workforce to run its economy.

Therefore, following the explanations of the challenges caused by the engagement in sexual relationships among secondary school students in different places as described in the background, there was a need to conduct a study on the extent to which school dropout is the consequence of sexual relationship among secondary school students in Kinondoni Municipality, Tanzania.

2.0 Materials and Methods

The study used the pragmatic research paradigm to enable the researcher to explore the respondents' views and experiences. Also, a mixed-methods research approach was used to collect both numerical data to get factual information as well as comprehensive and elaborative in-depth information on the consequence of sexual relationships on

secondary school students' dropout. Moreover, a cross-sectional research design was considered a snapshot that gives a picture of what the researcher wants to study. It was also helpful to the researcher because it was quick and flexible.

The study was conducted in Kinondoni Municipality because studies reveal that students' sexual relationship is on the increase and common in most Tanzanian schools (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2014). The trend is gradually changing and the incidences of students engaging in a sexual relationship are high and may constitute problems including social, health and academic. Kinondoni Municipal was also reported to have about 13% of school teenagers who had heterosexual relationships among themselves (Kakoko, 2013). So, this does not exclude it from being affected by the ongoing influence of secondary school students' sexual relationships on school dropout. Moreover, a total sample of one hundred eighty-one (181) respondents; four (4) discipline teachers, four (4) heads of schools, five (5) parents and one hundred sixty eight (168) form three students. School heads, discipline teachers and parents were purposively regarded as the key implementers of students' issues (sexual relationship issues) obtained through Slovin's formula.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents among Schools

School	No. of F3 Students	Sample	Percentage (%)
1 st school	62	34	18.7
2 nd school	89	49	27.1
3 rd school	101	55	30.4
4 th school	79	43	23.8
Total	331	181	100

Form three students were chosen because they are in the prime adolescent stage, which is a critical development period when young

people experiment with sexual activities. Moreover, the data was collected through semi-structured individual interviews as well as questionnaires in the research process.

The data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively as the study involved the collection of qualitative and quantitative information through descriptive and inferential statistics respectively. Quantitative data were analyzed through inferential statistics (correlation and regression analysis) as well by using a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. On the other hand, qualitative data were analyzed thematically.

3.0 Results

The main objective of this paper was centred on assessing the influence of sexual relationships on school dropout among secondary school students. The findings of the study were collected through interviews and questionnaires as presented and they have been interpreted in light of the literature reviewed and data collected from the field as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The Extent to which School Dropout Resulted from the Effect of Sexual Relationships among Secondary School Students

	N = 181				
	Frequencies and Percentages				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Most school dropout I have come across is the result of sexual relationships.	42(23.2%)	21(11.6%)	9 (5%)	24(13.3%)	85(47%)
I know boy/girl students who dropped out of school as a result of sexual relationships.	53(29.3%)	11(6.1%)	3(1.7%)	13(7.2%)	101 (55.8%)
Not all unplanned pregnancies among students lead to school dropout	98 (54.1%)	27 (14.9%)	34(18.8%)	7(3.9%)	15 (8.3%)

Avoiding having sex before marriage will enable students to complete their studies with excellent academic achievement	13(7.2%)	9(5%)	54(29.8%)	33(18.2%)	72(39.8%)
Unskilled individuals in the community are the result of school dropouts caused by students' sexual relationships.	62(34.3%)	28(15.5%)	47(26%)	21(11.6%)	23(12.7%)
Frequent absence in class is the result of sexual relationship among students which lead to poor academic achievement and later school drop out	43(23.8%)	20(11%)	36(19.9%)	40(22.1%)	42(23.2%)

Table 3: Statistics of School Dropout

		Most school dropouts I have come across are the results of sexual relationships.	I know boy/girl students who dropped out of school as a result of sexual relationships.	Not all unplanned pregnancies among students lead to school dropout	Avoiding having sex before marriage will enable students to complete their studies with excellent academic achievement.	Unskilled individuals in the community as the result of school dropouts caused by students' sexual relationships.	Frequent absence in class is the result of sexual relationships among students which lead to poor academic achievement.	Sexual relationship among students leads to frequent transfers and affect students' academic achievement.
N	Valid	181	181	181	181	181	181	181
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.492	3.5414	1.9724	3.7845	2.5304	3.0994	3.8287

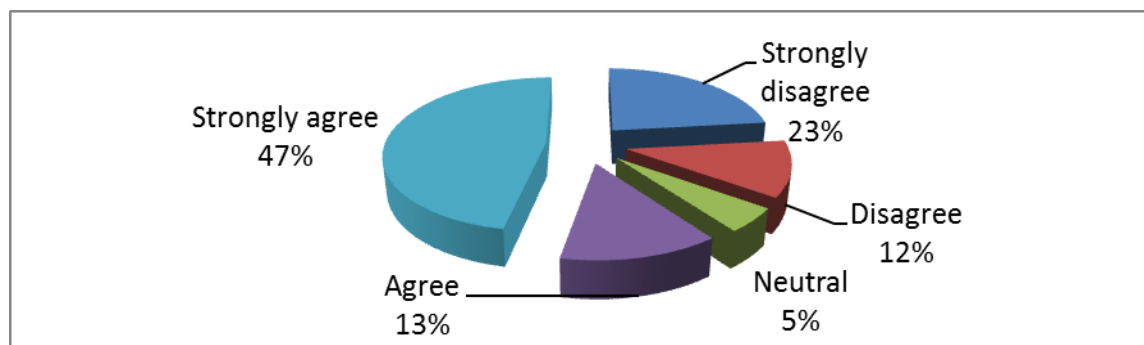
Table 4: Summary Item Statistics of School Dropout							
	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.178	1.972	3.829	1.856	1.941	.483	7

This indicates that the variance between minimum and maximum was not large, i.e., 483 when the maximum was 3.8 out of 5, and the minimum was 1.97 out of 5. The mean of 3.2 is above neutral towards agreeing that sexual relationship has a significant effect on school dropout among students.

3.1 Most School Dropout as a Result of Sexual Relationships

The researchers intended to understand students' perception of whether school dropout is mostly caused by sexual relationships. The findings, as presented in Table 2, indicate that 109(60.3%) students were in favour of the statement that most school dropouts were the result of sexual relationships, 63(34.8%) students disagreed with the statement and only 9(5%) students rated neutral to mean that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Therefore, this indicates that most school dropouts in secondary schools as the result of sexual relationships among students. The findings are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Students Responses Whether Most School Dropout has Resulted from Sexual Relationships



During an interview with teachers, it was revealed that most of the students' dropout is connected to a sexual relationship. One of the teachers from School A said:

There indeed are many reasons related to school dropout among secondary school students but recently most of the dropouts I can say are due to sexual relationships because most of the cases we have encountered are pregnancies among students which make them dropout of school (Interview with Discipline Teacher, School A, 24th August 2022).

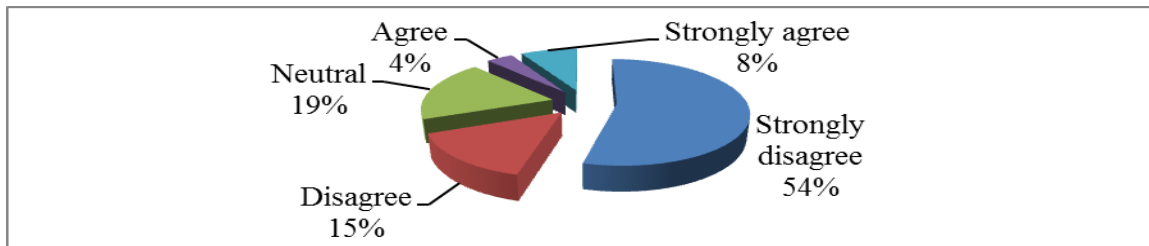
This implies that apart from many other reasons, sexual relationship among secondary school students leads to pregnancies which were found to be the source of most school dropout caused by engagement in sexual relationships.

3.2 Not All Pregnancies among Students Lead to School Dropout

The researchers intended to understand students' understanding of whether all the students' pregnancies among students can lead to school dropout or not. The findings as presented in Table 2 imply that 125(69%) students were not in agreement with the statement that not all students' pregnancies among students lead to school dropout, 34(18.8%)

students rated neutral to mean they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, while only 15(8.3%) agreed with the statement. Therefore, the majority of students in secondary schools understand that students' pregnancies among students lead to school dropout. The findings are summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Students' Responses on Whether or Not All Unplanned Pregnancies among Students Lead to School Dropout



Similarly, during an interview with teachers, the findings showed that students' pregnancies have a negative impact on students as they lead to school dropout one of the teachers had this to say:

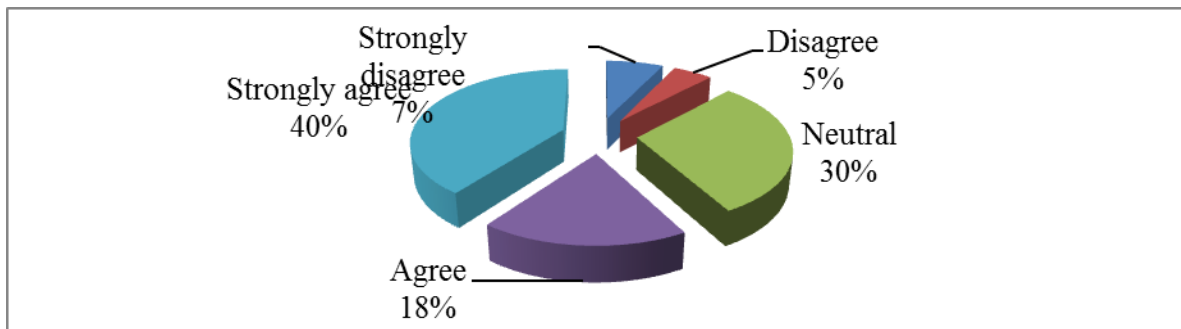
It is obvious that students' pregnancies lead to and will continue leading to school dropout among secondary school students. In the time I have been teaching, I have never seen a pregnant student with courage to continue with studies once they are pregnant even if the law allows them to continue but most of them opt not to continue coming to school (Interview with Discipline Teacher, School C, 28th August 2022).

This implies that even though the current president of the United republic of Tanzania, her Excellency Samia Suluhu Hassan allowed to go back to school two years after pregnancy, most female students do not dare to go back to school as most of them face psychological problems such as low self-esteem.

3.3 Sex Avoidance while in School Improves School Completion Rates

The researchers sought to explore students' views on whether avoiding sexual relationships during school improves their completion rate. The findings as presented in Table 2 show that 105(57%) students agreed with the statement only 54(29.8%) students rated neutral to mean they neither favored nor rejected the statement, while 22(12.2%) students disagreed with the statement. Therefore, the majority of students in secondary schools believe that pre-marriage sex avoidance improves the completion rate with excellent academic achievement in secondary schools. The findings are summarized in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Students' Responses on Whether Avoiding Sex while in School Enables Students to Complete Their Studies with Excellent Academic Achievement



On top of that, during interview sessions with teachers, the findings showed that avoiding sex while in school enables students to complete their studies with excellent achievement. One of the heads of schools from school C had this to say:

Secondary school students need to avoid sexual relationships because engaging in sexual relationships will make them end up becoming pregnant which will interfere with their studies in many ways such as being affected

psychologically. Such problems can make them feel isolated and depressed which in turn will lead to many problems at school before they finally drop out of school (Interview with Head of School C, 25th August, 2022).

Similarly, during interview sessions with parents, one of the parents had this to say:

I have seen several students who only focus on their studies without engaging in sexual relationships and avoiding ending up getting pregnancies. Most of those students finished their secondary education, passed their exams finally joined higher education. So, for me, I agree that avoiding pregnancy among students will enable a student to complete their studies and even achieve in their academics (Interview with Parent₄, 28th August, 2022).

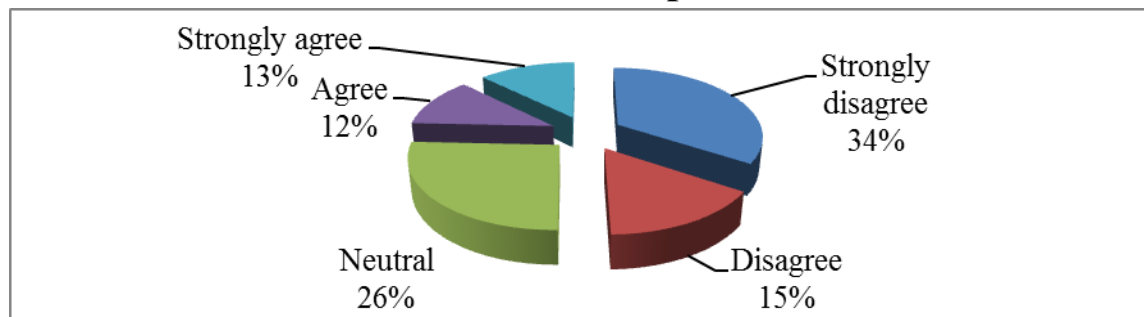
This implies that sexual relationships among secondary school students cause not only school dropout among students but also many other problems such as academic-related problems therefore there is a need to carefully address the issue.

3.4 Unskilled Individuals in the Community as a Result of School Dropout Caused by Students' Sexual Relationships

The researchers sought to explore students understanding of whether unskilled individuals in the community result from school dropouts caused by students' sexual relationships. As presented in Table 2, the findings show that 90(49.8%) students were not in favour of the statement that unskilled individuals in the community are the result of school dropout caused by students' sexual relationships, 47(26%) students rated neutral to mean they neither favoured nor agreed with the statement, whereas only 44(24.7%) students disagreed with the statement. Therefore, this means that the majority of the students in

secondary schools do not believe that unskilled individuals in the community are the result of school dropout caused by students' sexual relationships. The findings are summarized in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Students Responses on Whether Unskilled Individuals in the Community are the Result of School Dropout Caused by Students' Sexual Relationships



Similarly, during an interview with parents, it was noted that not all unskilled individuals in the community are results of school dropout caused by students' sexual relationships as it was commended by one of the parents:

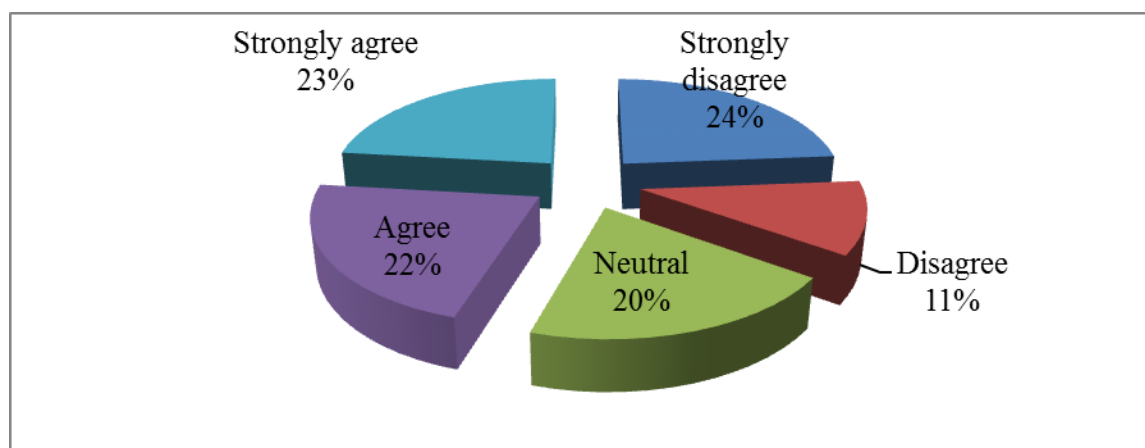
In previous years, it was not common to see people dropping out of school due to sexual relationship issues currently rather due to other many reasons such as financial difficulties, ignorance of the importance of education as well as lack of enough facilities (Interview with Parents₃, 28th August 2022).

This implies that, in the previous year, people dropped out due to many other reasons such as lack of facilities, poverty lack of awareness regarding the importance of education but these days the education facilities are provided, schools are everywhere, education is free still the dropout problem exist and sexual relationship among students being one of those other reasons.

3.5 Frequent Absence in Class as a Result of Sexual Relationship that Leads to School Dropout

The researchers were required to explore students understanding of whether frequent absence in class is a result of the sexual relationships among students and lead to school dropout. The findings as presented in Table 2, shows that 82(45.3%) students were in favour of the statement, 36(11%) students rated neutral meaning they neither favoured nor rejected the statement, while 43(12.2%) students disagreed with the statement. Therefore, the majority of students in secondary schools view frequent absence in class as a result of sexual relationships among students which in turn leads to school dropout. The findings are summarized in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Students' Responses on Whether Frequent Absence in Class Is the Result of Sexual Relationships among Students Which Lead to Poor Academic Achievement



Similarly, the interview with parents showed that frequent absence in class is a result of sexual relationships among students which in turn causes school dropout. This was proven by one of the parents who was quoted saying:

I was pregnant while I had already been registered for Form Two National Examinations; my attendance was not pleasing. My attendance was almost two to three days per week, then I stopped going to school and missed many periods and lessons, I did not pass my form two exam. I dropped out of school when the pregnancy started to show up and I am now married (Interview with Parent₁, 28th August, 2022).

This implies that if a female student becomes pregnant it is very hard for them to stay home for two years before they return and continue with their studies. The truth is most of them will prefer getting married rather than continuing with their studies after giving birth as the new policy requires.

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

In general, sexual relationships among secondary school students have negative consequences on students' school dropout as revealed in this study. Absenteeism and low concentration among students appeared to be among the reasons that contribute to poor academic achievement for the pregnant students because they fail to revise their subjects on time. On top of that when schoolgirls are in sexual relationships spend much time thinking about their lovers instead of concentrating on their studies. Similarly, schoolboys are psychologically affected when they fall in love and get involved in sexual relationships, which may end up in school dropouts. Moreover, they are sometimes worried about impregnating their partners or breaking up with their partners.

Therefore, this study recommends that policy makers should formulate better practical policies that will reduce/eliminate students' pregnancies. On top of that, the Government should ensure the effective

implementation of the sex education policy in all learning institutions to enable learners to cope with their reproductive health issues effectively without compromising their academic performance. Lastly, the study recommends that the community including the parents and guardians should be sensitized and educated on sexual education so that they can help and lead the adolescents regarding sexual related matters in the right way.

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