The Root Cause Factors and the Status of Students Drop-out in Public Primary Schools of Harari Regional State, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify root cause factors and examine the status of drop-out in primary schools of Harari Regional State of Ethiopia. Descriptive survey research design was employed to explain the existing conditions of the research problems understudy. 12 primary schools were taken as samples using simple random sampling technique. Regarding the sample size, 163 homeroom teachers, 324 students and 12 charity club head teachers, 12 principals and 5 Woreda supervisors were involved. Simple random sampling, purposive sampling and available sampling were used as sampling techniques. Documents and reports were reviewed which obtained from 2010/11 and 2012 academic years to see the drop-out trends of schools. The questionnaire consisted of 13 rank order items on the root cause factors and forwarded for teachers and students. Semi-structured interview questions were administered for school principals, charity club head teachers and Woreda supervisors on the cause factors of drop-out. The collected quantitative data were analyzed with frequency and percentage whereas the qualitative data were narrated in terms of words. Even though the enrolment rates were increased from year to year, the drop-out rate trends were also increased and large numbers of students were at risk of dropping out of education. Many students dropped their education and became street children and exposed to physical and mental chastisement. Low family income (poverty), parents' death due to HIV/AIDS and other problems, parents forcing children to work, and single parenting were the major cause factors of students' drop-out. Therefore, establishing family strengthening program, boarding schools and design prevention, protection and

intervention strategies would be the possible solutions to tackle the family's economic problems and retain students in their education.

Keywords

Primary School, Drop-Out, Root Cause Factors, Students, Risk of Drop-Out

Introduction

Among one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Universal access to primary education was planned by the United Nations, to be reached by 2015. Like other developing countries, Ethiopia has the lowest primary school enrolment rates in the world. Thus, the aspiration of attaining Universal primary education in the country requires greater efforts.

Zehle (2008) states that despite efforts on several levels have been made, the problem of drop-out in Primary schools in Ethiopia stays serious. "The progress made to reduce drop-out during the past two years has shown no improvement. Hunt (2008) in his study revealed that the total percentage values of the primary schools drop-out of Ethiopia was 26.7%. On the other hand, Zehle (2008) tried to present the analysis of drop-out of grade 1 by taking two year data from 1999 to 200l. Accordingly, ''*the drop-out rate in grade 1 which was 27.9% in 1999/2000 has increased to 28.7% in 2001/02. This was not an encouraging result which was the drop-out rate at primary stage was 17.7% in 1999/2000 and still persists around 17.2%/ in 2001/02.*

On the other hand, Welfare Monitoring Survey (2004) pointed out that the primary school drop-out rates increased from 13.3% in 1996 to 14.7% in 2000. Although these figures were declined to 12% and 13.5% respectively in 2004, they were still very high and above the targets set by the education policy of the country. In line with this, as Education Annual Statistical Abstract (MoE, 2012) depicts, the drop-out rate of primary education in 2009/10 academic year was 15.7% which had increased by 2.2% when it is compared with the drop-out rates of 2004 academic year. These figures show that the achievement of Universal access to primary education in 2015 will be a big question for Ethiopia.

This was supported by the report of UNESCO (http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/) which states that despite there have been progresses, *''Ethiopia's education indicators are still poor and below Sub-Saharan average. Ethiopia is ranked 126th out of 127 countries in the Education for All (EFA) development index and it is unlikely to meet the EFA Goals by 2015''*. This confirms that Ethiopia could not achieve Universal access to primary education by 2015. Even after 10 or 11 years of progress, the trends of drop-out in primary schools of Ethiopia have shown increment.

Policies to improve school progression and reduce the numbers of children dropping out of school are critical if Universal Primary Education (UPE) is to be achieved (Sabates, Akyeampong, Jo Westbrook & Hunt, 2010). Children are starting primary school in greater numbers than ever before but drop-out rates are significant and lead to low levels of primary school completion in many countries. The drop-out of students from schools over a given period reflects the impact of various socio-economic factors, originating from the community and homes/families of the students.

Interlocking socio-economic factors influence the drop-out of students directly by influencing the student's decision to drop-out from school, or that of the parent to withdraw the student from schooling. The factors also indirectly influence the drop-out of students by negatively affecting their education achievements in school (attendance, learning and academic performance in

examinations). This in turn influences to drop-out of students. School drop-out problem is not only the problem of the developing countries; but the developed countries like America schools also suffer from high drop-out rate. School drop-outs have been the problems of the world and many countries have taken aggressive measures to reduce drop-out rates. For instance, as Alliance for Excellent Education (2007, 2008) and Swanson (2009; cited in Mac Iver & Mac Iver, 2009) mentioned, the growing awareness of the economic costs of the high drop-out rate and the great value of education on individuals and societies lives, has moved the drop-out issue to the central point of many countries' education policy.

Specially, developing countries as to Alexander (2008) and Kassahun (2010), their brief schooling experience consists frequently of limited learning opportunities in overcrowded classrooms with insufficient learning materials and under-qualified teachers. Major cause factors of drop-out such as schooling circumstances, together with personal and family level factors (such as ill-health, malnutrition and poverty) jeopardise meaningful access to education for many children. Theoretically, school enrolment and drop-out are determined by household's demand for education and the supply of education service in line with household income.

Household income is found to be an important factor in determining access to education as schooling potentially incurs a range of costs, including school fees, uniforms, travel, equipment and the opportunity costs of sending a child to school. There are some research studies which look at how household income interacts with dropping out of school in particular. Vulnerable households can withdraw children from school as part of their coping strategy to deal with shocks to income, often in order to work, save on costs or to free other household members up to work (Sawada & Lokshin, 1999; cited in Ersado, 2005).

Almost all variables mentioned above are common factors influencing drop-out of students in Harari Regional State of Ethiopia. As far as the researchers experiences are concerned, poverty, low family education, family disintegration, HIV/AIDS, marginalization and ethnic problems are observing and experienced in Harari Regional State. In case of these factors, many students have been dropped their education and lived on and off the street by bargaining system and collecting food from garbage can. These variables influence the researchers to examine the trends of drop-out and identify the root cause factors of students drop-out in primary schools of Harari Regional State.

Objectives

- To examine the drop-out rate trends of primary schools
- To identify the percentage values of students who are at risk of drop-out of their education
- To identify the root cause factors which contribute to students drop-out
- To recommend possible ways of strategies for concerned bodies to tackle the drop-out problems

Research Design and Methodology

Research Design

Descriptive survey design was used to describe the existing phenomena pertaining to the root cause factors and status of students drop out in primary schools of Harari regional state of Ethiopia.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Through simple random sampling technique, 12 primary schools were selected as samples. Regarding respondents, 163 homeroom teachers, 12 charity club head teachers and 324 students were participated through purposive sampling. 12 School principals and 5 Woreda supervisors were included by using available sampling techniques. Snowball sampling was applied for students who were already dropped out of the school.

Data Collection Tools

Questionnaire, interview and document review were used to collect data. The questionnaires consisted of 13 ranking order item questions and distributed for teachers and students. Interview was conducted with primary school principals, charity club head teachers and Woreda supervisors. The semi-structured interview questions were prepared which related to the root cause problems of students drop-out. In line with this, informal conversational interview was conducted with young students with risk of dropping out of schools and already dropped out of schools. In line with these data collection tools, different types of documents such as minutes, school reports, memorandum and students' statistical evidences were diagnosed through document analysis to obtain holistic information about students with risk of dropping out of schools or have already dropped out of schools.

Method of Data Analysis

The data obtained from questionnaires, interview and documents, were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Percentage and frequency for quantitative data and narrative technique for qualitative data were used. Images and photos of the samples were presented as qualitative data evidences.

Results and Discussion

Drop-Out Trends

Table 1 shows the enrolment and drop-out rates of primary schools of Harari Regional State in 2010/11 and 2012 academic years as to the information extracted from the schools' statistics completed by the school principals. Enrolment rates were differing insignificantly in accordance with sex difference in all schools. As it is described in Table 1, the enrolment rates were decreased from 2002/2010 academic year to 2003/2012 year. This may be students moved to other schools or they might be dropped-out their education.

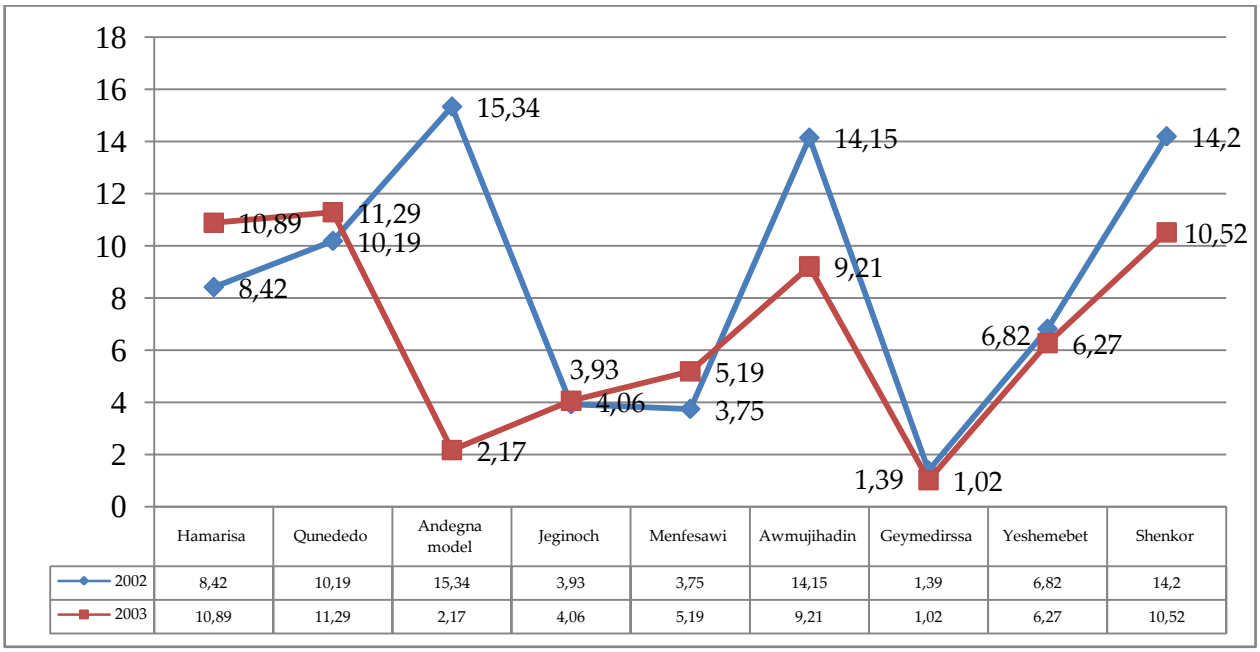
As Table 1 shows, drop-out rates were highest in Hamarisa (8.42%), Awmujihadin (14.15%), Andegna model (15.34%), Shenkor (14.20%) and Qunededo primary (10.19%) schools during 2002 E C (2010/11). To simplify the data and make more clear, Fig 1presents the sample schools drop-out trends of the two consecutive years. As it is described in Table 1 and Fig 1, the drop-out rates were increased in Hamarisa, Qunededo and Menfesawi primary schools by the rate of 1.87% and 1.10% and 1.44% respectively in 2003. On the other hand, as we can be observed in the same Table, Andegna model primary school brought extraordinary improvement in 2003 (2011/12). That is the school reduced its drop-out rate by 13.17% in 2003. Among the sample schools, Gey-Mediresa primary school was the only school which had very few students drop-out in both sample years. This school is dominantly serving for those students who came from ''Hadere ethnic'' family background and largely supported by the Regional State government than other public schools.

Table 1: Percentage values of drop-out in 2010/11 to 2012

No	Name of schools		In 2002/ 2010/11			In 2003/ 2011/12		
			Enrolled	Dropped out		Enrolled	Dropped out	
				N	%		N	%
1	Hamarissa primary	M	341	30	4.28	310	42	7.04
		F	361	29	4.14	287	23	3.85
		T	701	59	8.42	597	65	10.89
2	Qunedudo primary	M	234	30	5.94	201	28	6.32
		F	271	23	4.55	242	22	4.97
		T	505	53	10.19	443	58	11.29
3	Andegna Model	M	449	67	8.96	405	8	1.16
		F	299	41	5.48	286	7	1.01
		T	748	108	15.34	691	15	2.17
4	Jeginoch primary	M	262	7	1.25	301	10	1.63
		F	298	15	2.68	313	21	3.43
		T	560	22	3.93	613	31	4.06
5	Menfesawi primary	M	187	3	0.70	192	10	2.36
		F	239	13	3.05	232	12	2.83
		T	426	16	3.75	424	22	5.19
6	Awmijihadin primary	M	196	22	5.82	245	17	3.34
		F	182	33	8.73	198	26	5.87
		T	378	55	14.55	443	43	9.21
`7	Gey-Mediresa primary	M	157	1	0.35	152	1	0.34
		F	132	3	1.04	139	2	0.68
		T	289	4	1.39	291	3	1.02
9	Yeshemebet primary	M	333	25	3.55	342	31	4.63
		F	371	23	3.27	328	11	1.64
		T	704	48	6.82	670	42	6.27
10	Shenkor primary	M	266	19	9.96	159	21	6.14
		F	276	23	4.24	183	15	4.38
		T	542	42	14.20	342	36	10.5

Generally, as we can see from Table 1 the survival rates were affected by the degree of drop-out in most sample schools of Harari Regional State. This directly affects the achievement of one of the global goals of education for all in the Regional. The drop out trends of sample schools students in the study area is presented in the following line graph.

Fig 1. Primary schools drop-out trends in 2010/11-2012

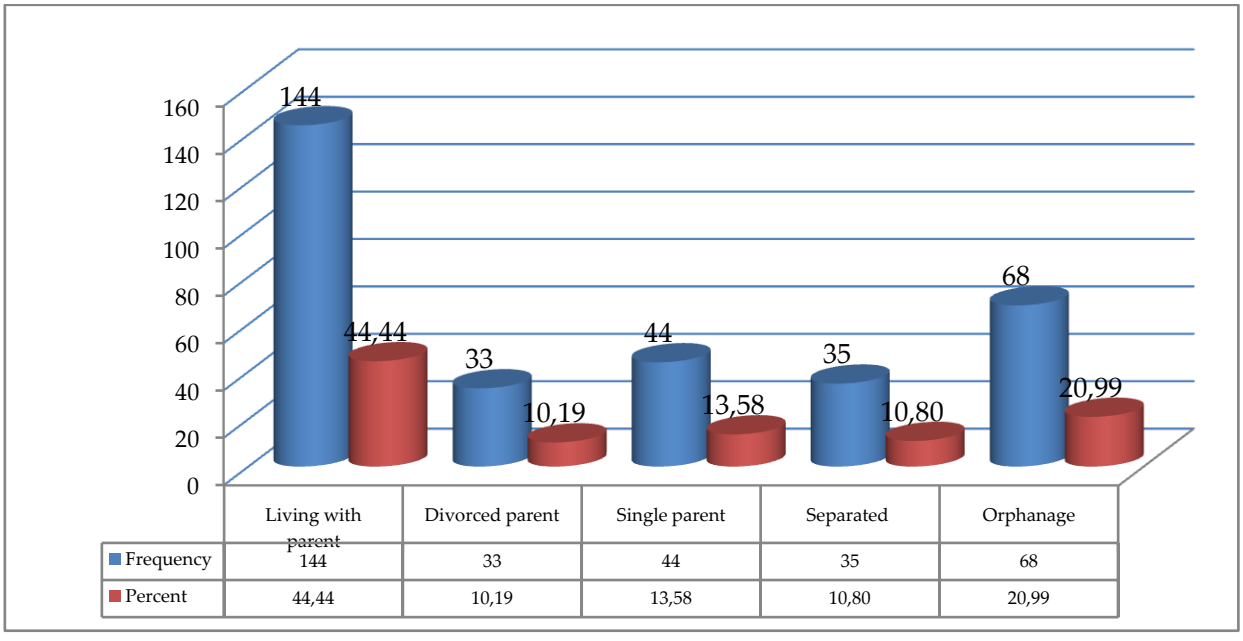


	Hamarisa	Qunededo	Andegna model	Jeginoch	Menfesawi	Awmujihadin	Geymedirssa	Yeshemebet	Shenkor
2002	8,42	10,19	15,34	3,93	3,75	14,15	1,39	6,82	14,2
2003	10,89	11,29	2,17	4,06	5,19	9,21	1,02	6,27	10,52

Root Cause Factors of Drop-out

Family background (marital status, education level, economic status) in any circumstance is the major factor for students' achievement. As the data in Figure 2 show, less than half percent (44.44%) of students had both parents, however; significant number (20.99%) of students was orphanage, 10.19% had divorced family, 13.58% had single (either mother or father) family, and 10.80% had separated family. As we can understand from the findings of the study, over 55.66% of students might not get proper child care from their families and in case of family disintegration, many students became street children and quitted their education.

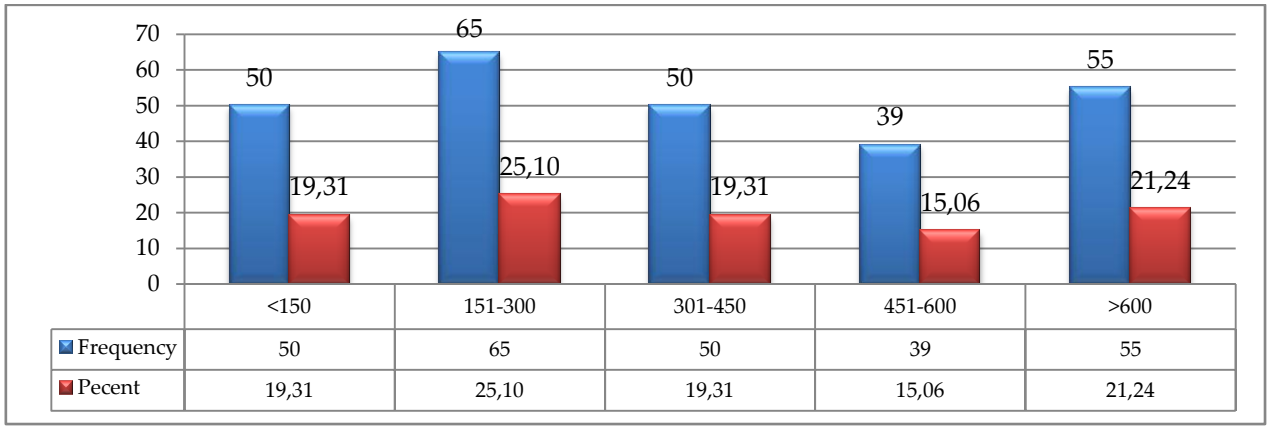
Fig 2. Family marital status



	Living with parent	Divorced parent	Single parent	Separated	Orphanage
Frequency	144	33	44	35	68
Percent	44,44	10,19	13,58	10,80	20,99

Family income is found to be an important factor in determining access to education as schooling potentially incurs a range of costs, both upfront and hidden. Regarding income levels, as perceived by respondents, the majority of the poor had monthly income of Birr 301-450 while most of the very poor were earning below 300 Birr.

Fig 3: Family income status

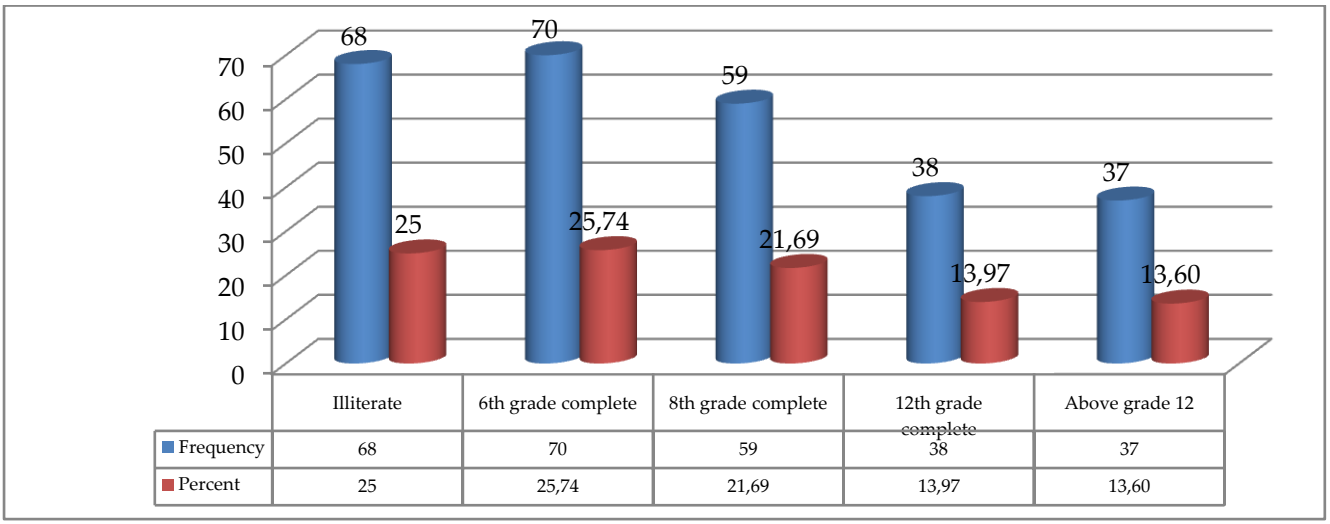


	<150	151-300	301-450	451-600	>600
Frequency	50	65	50	39	55
Pecent	19,31	25,10	19,31	15,06	21,24

The majority of 'slightly better-off' families were earning Birr 451-600 monthly. The majority of 'better-off' households were earning more than 600 Birr per month. The information further indicated that 'very poor' people constituted about 44.41%, the poor about 19.31%, the slightly better off about 15.06% and the remaining 21.24 were considered as better off. As we were the eyewitness of the facts on the ground, the sources of the majority of families were extracting ground nut. As we can see from these results, the majority of the sample population were receiving less than US $1.00 per day (the international datum line of absolute income poverty). This finding generally is more or less similar with other research findings done by World Bank (2000; 2003), Eshetu (2003) and World Food Programme-Ethiopian (2009).

As many researches indicated (for instance, Kassahun, 2010; Zehle, 2009 and Little, 2008), the drop-out of students from school over a given period reflects the impact of various socio-economic factors, originating from the community and homes/families. Economic variables influence the drop-out of students directly by influencing the pupil's decision to drop from school, or that of the parent to withdraw the pupil from schooling. The study reveals the facts behind the students drop-out in the sample schools.

Fig 4: Family education background



As the data obtained from respondents portray, majority (25%) of students' families were illiterate who might not able to write and read by their mother tongue or any other language. Since one can be seen from Fig. 4, majority of students' family did complete certain grade levels but this might help them to read and write other than employing and getting better salary. Literacy has a direct effect on personal income, family planning, child care and the general wellbeing of individuals. Therefore, as we infer from the findings, family education background contributes students' drop-out due to inability to predict the long term effects of investment on human capital.

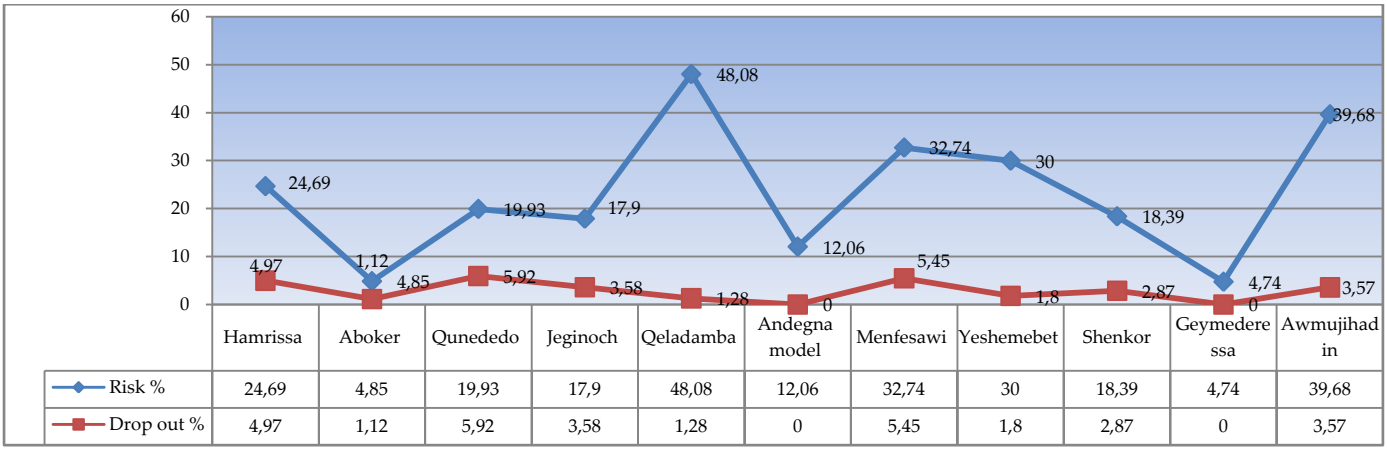
Table 2: Percentage values of students, enrolment, attendance, drop-out and risk

Schools	Enrolled	Dropped out %	Attended %	Risk %
Qeladaba Primary	391	1.28	98.72	48.08
Andegna Modle Primary	702	0	100	12.06
Menfsawi Primary	440	5.45	94.55	32.73
Jeginoch Primary	490	3.58	95.44	17.9
Hamarisa Primary	511	4.97	95.49	24.69
Aboker Primary	625	1.12	98.88	4.85
Qunedudo Primary	482	5.92	94.08	19.93
Yeshemebet Primary	611	5.6	98.2	30.93
Shenkor Primary	348	2.87	97.12	18.39
Gey-Mediresa Primary	274	0	100	4.74
Awmujahidin Primary	504	3.57	96.43	39.68

Sources: First semester schools report (September 2012- January 2013)

Table 2 shows the actual school attendance during the study time. The broad-spectrum of enrolment in the sample schools were decreasing from 2002 (2010/11) to 2003 (2012) through 2004 (2013). The percentage values of drop-out rate, attendance and risk presented in Table 2 were only one semester data. Nevertheless, within a semester, large number of students from Menfsawi (5.45%), Hamarisa (4.97%), Qunedudo (5.92%) and Yeshemebet (5.6%) primary schools dropped out their education.

Fig 5: Drop-out and risks of drop-out of students in 2013



	Hamrissa	Aboker	Qunededo	Jeginoch	Qeladamba	Andegna model	Menfesawi	Yeshemebet	Shenkor	Geymedere ssa	Awmujihad in
Risk %	24,69	4,85	19,93	17,9	48,08	12,06	32,74	30	18,39	4,74	39,68
Drop out %	4,97	1,12	5,92	3,58	1,28	0	5,45	1,8	2,87	0	3,57

As Fig 5 depicts, nearly 50% of Qeladmba, 39.68% of Awmujihadin, 24.69% of Hamarisa, 32.74% of Menfesawi primary schools students were at risk who might quit their education unless they could not get support. Since it is discussed so far in this research, most of the students' families of these schools were the military relatives of the Derg regime that they did not have support from the government because most military families were not the tribes of the ruling class in the Region. Hence, most families were very poor and patients who did not have ability to look after their children. On top of this, even though children have gotten education opportunity, they did not complete even an academic year.

In any case, many interweave factors affect the students learning in the sample schools. The problems are interdependence and deep rooted which resulted from within the home and outside the home. Researches were identified several causes of factors that aggravate students drop-out. Underwood (2008) for instance argues that the students drop-out in most cases have been associated with real causes such as lack of parental guidance and support, lack of social skills, lack of academic skills, merit curriculum, drugs and alcohol, exponential factors lacks relevance (students who drop-out see no relevance in what they are learning), parent expectation, the bigger picture kids who drop-out do not see the value in their diploma and others. Among root cause factors which contribute to students drop-out, the researcher identified the following root causes and forwarded to sample students and teachers to put in rank order as to their high contribution to students drop-out.

Table 3: Rank order of root cause factors of students drop-out

Variables	Teachers' Response			Students' Response		
	Rank Order	Frequency	Percent	Rank Order	Frequency	Percent
Low family income	1	150	92.02	1	283	93.71
Parents' lack of interest towards education	2	148	90.80	7	184	61.92
Parents' inability to raise children	3	140	85.89	2	265	87.75
Single parenting	4	138	84.66	4	233	77.15
Parents' death	5	136	83.44	3	257	85.01
Excessive consumption of alcohol	6	135	82.82	13	102	33.77
Separation	7	132	80.98	5	213	70.53
Chronic illness within the family	8	130	79.75	9	143	47.35
Conflicts, hostile environment	10	127	77.91	6	191	63.24
Parents forcing children to work	9	127	77.91	8	162	53.64
Marginalization	12	110	67.45	10	159	52.65
Poor support of government	11	123	75.46	11	148	49.00
Lacks relevance (relevance of education)	13	92	56.44	12	123	40.73

As it can be seen in Table 3, 92.02% of teachers and 93.71% of students identified low family income was the first root cause factor for students' drop-out in the sample schools of Harari Regional State. As we inferred from the views of school principals during interview, they reported that most students were coming from low family income background, therefore; they were self- employed and even some were family headed children. To strengthen this point, Hamarisa primary school principal replied that:

> Most students' family are living under poverty threshold that they have no money to purchase uniform, educational materials and even are unable to feed their children. On the whole, students are coming to school without taking any food and they lay down to the ground during instruction. In case of such factors, teachers have bought bread and tea for their students' survival. In line with this, most children are double orphans in case of HIV/AIDS. Some students and their families are living on selling ice cream, rested cereals and other things within the school compound.

Figure 6. Students and their families who sold ice cream and rested cereals in the school compound



This is true in other schools. For example in Qundido primary school as the response of the school principal and charity club head, ''the number of students who are coming with having their breakfast is less than the number of students who do not eat in their school. In case of poverty, significant numbers of students have dropped out of schools and highest numbers of students are at risk''. 87.75% of students and 85.89% of teachers reported that in inability of parents to look after their children was second root cause factor for students' drop-out due to other interrelated problems. The third factor which mentioned by 85.01% of students and the fifth factor according to 83.44% of teachers was parents' death. Especially, most students of Hamarisa, Qelad-Amba, Awemujihadin and Menfesaw primary schools were coming from military family members and lost their parents by HIV/AIDS and War.

According to the information given by principals and charity club head teachers, these primary schools were severely impoverished while comparing other sample schools. One of the principal strictly said that:

> …. over 90% of students' family are deprived. Most families are affected by leprosy and HIV/AIDS so that they live on beggaring system. Most students are double orphans. On top of this, students forced to work different activities to get food to be alive. The schools looked like the refugee camp where aids distribute to children because the students have not uniform, educational materials, and they came without taking food. Relatively at this time the pressure is declining for the reason that SCOPSO has established school feeding program and provided money for health problems in the school. And we have also opened bank book for 50 students who are working different activities so that students have saved some amount of money per week. Now somehow, the school act as a normal school environment where a teaching learning is taking place minimally.

Single parenting was pin pointed out by 84.66% of teachers and 77.17% of students as the fourth root cause factor in Harari Regional State. Some students were double orphans and they became street children. Some others were family headed which implies child labour was a major contributors to students drop-out in the study area. Especially, those students who came from disadvantaged family substitute their family or guardian in dally work for their basic needs. To show the extents of the awesome of the problem, Qelad-Amba primary school principal further stated that:

…. this school is serving as a home and school for most students. As most people know, Qelad-Amba (kebele 12) is the most awful kebele among other kebeles in Harari Regional State. Factors such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, marginalization and parents' death are common. I do not have words to express the depth of poverty and other related problems of the students and their families. Here we have many students who are living with HIV/AIDS virus. Not merely these factors that affect students but also there are other factors affecting girl students.

Figure 7: Students who are making boxes for shoe shine purpose



In this school, the researchers discussed two students who already stopped their education. They said that their parents (father and mother) were passed away since years ago. They were lived on their uncle and grandmother. However, their support was discontinued due to the students grandmother also died and the uncle became unhealthy. Such types of problems are also affecting other schools unless the degrees of the problems are varied. Separation due to different factors was another chronic problem which mentioned by 80.98% and 70.53% of teachers and students in that order. In line with this, conflicts and hostile environment were accelerating factors of students drop-out.

Generally, all the above mentioned factors played great effect on students' drop-out. In the sample schools, many of the students did not have parents or guardians, or caregivers who looked after them. In case of this, they became street children and lived on the street. The following students were street children who were identified from different grades of Qundido primary school. As one can easily observed from the students' image below, the students did not have uniform, shoes, and their educational materials. Even when the materials were available, they were affected by rain and sunny factors because they lived on the street.

Figure 8: Vulnerable students from qundido primary school



Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Generally, absenteeism and school drop-out rates were increased, as students could not go to school in a situation where there was no food at home. Instead, students were forced to find ways of getting something to eat and family members encouraged them to do so than to go to school. Some families sent their children to better-off relatives until things would be improved. As the study reveals, the trends of students drop-out rates were increased year by year and great percent of students dropped out and very great percent of students were at risk of dropping out of their education. There were no significant differences between respondents and schools about the causes of drop-out. In view of the fact that findings indicate low family income, parents' inability to look for children, parents forcing children to work, parents death and single parent had got great values by classroom teachers, students and charity club head teachers as critical contributors to students drop-out. Students also stressed on such variables, which aggravated the students drop-out in their schools and most became street children. Even schools did not get sufficient support and attention from the regional government. The study reveals that almost all schools without significant difference were affected by aforementioned problems in primary schools of the sample Region. Such socio-economic variables and other family background related problems cause the drop-out of students directly by influencing the pupil's decision to drop from school, or that of the parent to withdraw the pupil from schooling. The variables also indirectly influence the drop-out of students by negatively affecting their education achievements in school.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made. Education for all is one of the millennium development goals which the Ethiopian government signed to achieve in 2015. However, this will be true if and only if schools maintained the enrolled students and increased the promotion rates from grade to grade levels. Therefore;

- Harari Regional State in collaboration with other humanitarian organizations should work on family strengthening program to tackle the family's economic problems which enable them to rear their children.

- Harari Regional State together with other religious organizations ought to establish boarding schools that serve for children who do not have parents or guardians or caregivers in the region.
- Schools should have to develop strategies on prevention, protection and intervention of students who are at risk of dropping out of their education and identify the number of students who are at risk and already dropped out and design projects and communicate to concerned organization or individuals or government to maintain students on their education.
- The regional government of Harari must support and treat all schools equally regardless of religion, ethnicity, ideology and cultural practices.

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