

**PRIMARY SCHOOL DROPOUT: CASE OF
CHICUALACUALA, MOZAMBIQUE**

by

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DECLARATION

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PRIMARY SCHOOL DROPOUT: CASE OF CHICUALACUALA, MOZAMBIQUE

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

(Iceu Juliao Maluleque)

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SIGNATURE

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving family

Lídia César Matuassa (spouse)

Cornélio Iceu Maluleque (son)

Délio Iceu Maluleque (son)

Jéssica Iceu Maluleque (daughter)

and my late parents

Julião Chitlavangoma Maluleque (father)

Sara Baloi (mother)

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ABSTRACT

In 2004 Mozambique has made amazing efforts that opened up educational opportunities for many primary school children. According to Ministério da Educação (2012: 1), the number of children who enrolled in primary schools jumped from 1,5 million in 1992 to about 6 million in 2011. Despite these commendable efforts, many children drop out from primary schools after gaining initial access. As stated by the Ministério da Educação (2012: 57), the dropout rate in the country was over 10%. Thus, this study sought to delve into the reasons that lead primary school children to drop out from school and identify measures to curb the problem. To do so, a case study approach was used. Specifically, the study used in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation of behaviour in a single school in Chicualacuala. The study revealed that at least four categories of factors namely child-based-, household-based-, school-based- and community-based factors give rise to dropout. These factors were informed by the Bronfenbrenner ecological framework, which is the lens through which this study was conducted. Indeed, it was found that dropout was a process rather than a single event and almost always it had signs to predict its occurrence. In the light of these findings, the study gave a number of recommendations. These include enrolling children early, improving the performance of children, providing quality adult education, monitoring absenteeism appropriately, supporting orphans, convincing organisations that provide food for work support to tie this support to the

education of children, banning various activities that affect sustained schooling of children and improving the quality of school management.

KEY TERMS

Primary school dropout, primary school disruption, dropout case study, primary education, primary school, dropout factors, dropout predictors, dropout solution, Mozambique, Chicualacuala

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Signed

Marcel du Plessis

27 November 2017

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FPE	Free Primary Education
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDI	In-Depth Interview
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INAS	Instituto Nacional de Acção Social
INE	Instituto Nacional de Estatística
PROBE	Public Report on Basic Education
RTI International	Research Triangle Institute
UNDFW	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNISA	University of South Africa
WHO	World Health Organisation

CHAPTER ONE

1. RESEARCH PROBLEM, AIMS AND DESIGN

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to delve into the reasons that lead primary school children to drop out from school and identify measures to curb the problem. It was anticipated that understanding the causes that give rise to the problem of dropout, many children who enrol in primary education would successfully graduate this level in Chicualacuala. To conduct this study, a case study approach was used with purposively selected 12 dropouts, 12 guardians and 6 teachers.

This chapter starts with an outline of the background and the context of the study. After this, the chapter is followed by the presentation of the problem statement. Following the problem statement, the chapter presents the statement of purpose, the research objectives and the inherent research questions. After the statement of purpose, the research objectives and the research questions, the chapter gives an overview of the research design. Following this, the chapter discusses the rationale and significance of the study as well as the definition of key terms. In the end, the chapter provides an outline of how the dissertation is organised.

1.2. THE BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

Education access has been in the spotlight of the development agenda for the majority of developing nations (Dunne & Ananga 2013:195). However, sustained access is compromised for many of these low-income countries because of school dropout.

No, Taniguchi and Hirakawa (2016:215), Graeff-Martins, Oswald, Comassetto, Kieling, Gonçalves and Rohde (2006:443), Sabates, Hossain and Lewin (2013:225), and UNESCO

(2014:56), claim that primary school dropout in developing countries is excessively high. Most significantly, the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa are hit hard by this problem. In fact, UNESCO (2014:3) informs that the share of survival rates in Sub-Saharan Africa declined to 56% in 2010 down from 58% in 1999. This means that for every 100 primary school children who registered in grade one in 2010, only 56 were able to graduate. Thus, the number of children who drop out is extremely high to merit a serious concern for these nations.

Yet, some countries seem to be more concerned with the initial access of children to school while the problem of dropout is sidestepped. Indeed, in order to improve the access of primary school children to education, Mozambique has made amazing reforms in 2004, for which the country should be commended. As postulated by Fox, Santibañez, Nguyen and André (2012:5-6), under these reforms, school fees were lifted, textbooks were distributed free of charge, the funding to schools was increased, a new curriculum was put into place and children could progress on a semi-automatic basis. As a result, these reforms helped those children whose access was blocked to have access to education. Amazingly, as claimed by Ministério da Educação (2012:1) the number of enrolled children galloped to about 6 million in 2011 up from 1,5 million in 1992. Yet, apart from these gains in enrolment rates, the number of children who survive until the last grade is very low (Fox *et al* 2012:27). This means that although there is a great majority of children who enrol in primary school, many drop out before they graduate the primary level. In fact, as indicated by Ministério da Educação (2012:56), the rate of school disruption in Mozambique is still high and tends to increase in recent years. This clearly shows that attention now should shift from access to retention. Put differently, it is fundamentally necessary to investigate why primary school children drop out.

Unfortunately, Hunt (2008:1) argues that even though the problem of dropout is rampant, research conducted in this area is limited. Sadly, Ananga (2011:1) warns that if the process of dropout is not well understood to direct policy, scarce resources will be squandered. Even worse, Abuya, Oketch and Musyoka (2013:758) argue that the gains obtained from FPE can be reversed by dropout. Surely, research on dropout is warranted because failure to complete primary education leads to a series of serious problems to the person, the family and the nation at large. Thus, this study delves into the reasons that lead primary school children to drop out from school and identifies measures to curb the problem. The study on this subject is critical for Development Studies as it becomes clear below.

1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

As indicated above, education access is supported by many developing nations (Dunne & Ananga 2013:195). To illustrate, Fox *et al* (2012:2-3) state that in 2004, Mozambique has made a commendable job by ensuring access to primary education through continued investment in education. While access to primary education improved significantly, the problem is that many children who enrol in primary schools drop out prematurely. Indeed, UNESCO (2014:56) argues that despite the fact that the majority of children get initial access to schooling, many quit their education too early. Unfortunately, the problem of the primary school dropout will stretch over many years. According to UNESCO (2016:151), projections show that the completion rate of primary school in developing nations will be less than 70% in 2030. Thus, it becomes crucially fundamental to get an in-depth understanding of the causes that give rise to primary school dropout by examining the perceptions of dropout children, their guardians and teachers. Indeed, knowledge on why dropout occurs is limited.

1.4. THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to delve into the reasons that lead primary school children to drop out from school and identify measures to curb the problem. Thus, the study has three specific objectives. In the first place, it examines why children drop out from primary schools. Secondly, the study asks about the predictors of dropout. Finally, it asks about how the problem of dropout can be solved. In order to meet this purpose and its objectives, a case study tradition was used to investigate the perceptions of 12 dropouts, 12 guardians and 6 teachers in a primary school in Chicualacuala district. It was expected that knowledge of the factors that cause children to drop out from school and the identification of measures to curb the problem would ensure that a sizable majority of children who enrol in primary schools could graduate their last grade. To understand the perspectives of the participants, a focus was made on the following questions:

Why do learners drop out from primary schools in Chicualacuala district, in Mozambique?

What are the predictors of the primary school dropout in Chicualacuala district, in Mozambique?

How can the problem of primary school dropout be avoided in Chicualacuala district, in Mozambique?

1.5. OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Following the granting of ethical clearance by the departmental Research Ethics Review Committee, the researcher examined 12 dropouts, 12 guardians and 6 teachers who had been purposively selected to understand why children drop out from primary schools in

Chicualacuala. Indeed, the first group of participants comprised those participants of both sexes aged 18 years or older who had once experienced the problem of dropout in the study school. The second and the third groups were composed of those participants who had had dropout children aged 17 years or younger in 2015. These two latter groups were not related to the first group of participants. For ethical reasons, all the names of the participants were not revealed.

In fact, there were three ethical principles that guided this research. The first was voluntary participation. This means that the study participants were not forced to take part in the study. The second principle was the principle of doing no harming to the research participants. A possible harm here was a psychological one caused by a disclosure of personal information or by invoking a distressful incident that might have led a child to quit schooling. The last principle was the need to obtain an informed consent from the participants. For a detailed description of the ethical issues concerning this study see chapter three below.

The study was based on a case study approach. Case study was the best method for this study as it provides an opportunity for generating data that is richer and more in-depth. A detailed description of the methodology is offered in chapter three of this dissertation.

The study was conducted in Chicualacuala district. According to Jornal Notícias (2011), Chicualacuala is one of the four districts located in Gaza province with high rates of dropout. This district is in the northern part of Gaza province. Very few people inhabit this place although the area is very large. The levels of poverty in Chicualacuala are alarming.

Three methods of data collection formed part and parcel of the study. These instruments were reviewed by the supervisor and then field tested by the researcher before using them empirically. In the first place, the study used semi-structured interviews. The interviews were semi-structured

in the sense that they were based on an interview guide that had general topics to be addressed in an open fashion by each participant in the in-depth interviews. The in-depth interviews were used with the dropout children only. Secondly, the study used focus group discussions, and these were separately used with the guardians and the teachers. Just like the interviews, the focus group discussions were semi-structured. Both the interviews and the focus group discussions were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Finally, the study used the observation of behaviour. All the three methods of data collection produced masses of qualitative data that were analysed manually by the researcher. For a detailed description of these research instruments see appendices A, B, C and F.

To analyse these masses of qualitative data, the researcher used the Bronfenbrenner Ecological Framework as the observation lens given the fact that this framework offers a wider scope for observation. The framework proposes that development occurs as a result of interaction between various systems. In this study, these systems were conceptualised to mean child-based-, household-based-, school-based- and community-based factors. A full explanation of the origin, composition and adaptation of this framework is provided in chapter two.

Bearing in mind the framework just alluded to, the process of analysis followed a step by step approach. However, there was a forward and backward movement between the steps as qualitative research is not a straightforward undertaking. As a matter of fact, the step by step approach just referred to involves the organisation of data, identification of categories, the codification of the material, the assortment and placement of coded data into categories and finally, the interpretation of findings. The interpretation of findings was done using both deductive and inductive approaches.

1.6. THE RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study about school dropout was anchored in the researcher's personal and professional motivations. At the personal level, the researcher needed to find ways to ensure that primary school children would complete their primary education once they get enrolled. Sadly, many children in Mozambique drop out prematurely. According to Ministério da Educação (2012:57), the dropout rate in 2010 in the country was more than 10% on average. Also, the researcher's young brother is part of those people who were unable to complete their primary education in the study area. As expected, illiterate people have it tough to get by. This is because illiteracy is associated with poor employment chances.

At the professional level, the study on school dropout would allow the researcher to understand scientifically one of serious problems facing education in Mozambique nowadays. As postulated by UNESCO (2015:75), dropout is still a concern even though access has been improved. Also, this study would prepare the researcher to conduct other studies related to education and other important areas for development. Put differently, this study would improve the research skills of the researcher.

The foregoing discussion shows that the study on school dropout is highly significant. For instance, understanding the causes that give rise to dropout may allow the education policy makers to improve the education policy. As reported by Ananga (2011:1), if the process of dropout is not well understood to direct policy, resources will be squandered. Also, each actor in the education process will improve their actions in a way that school dropout is avoided. To illustrate, the teachers, by knowing the causes of dropout perpetrated by them, will avoid the actions that lead to such a problem. At the end of the day, the great majority of children who register in primary schools will be able to graduate. This will ensure that these children lead healthy lives and contribute to both personal and national development. Chi and Rao, and Hunter

and May (in Hunt 2008:22), Ministério da Educação (2012:9), and UNESCO (2016:40) state that education is a means to alleviate poverty through decent jobs and good incomes. Also, education empowers women, guarantees the realisation of human rights and allows good practices of environmental management. These are critical themes for Development Studies.

Also, the study about school dropout will contribute in augmenting the existing body of literature about this problem. This is discussed extensively in chapter 2 below. Indeed, literature on school dropout is scarce. According to Hunt (2008:1), despite the fact that dropout is rampant, this problem did not receive due attention.

1.7. CLARIFICATION OF KEY TERMS USED IN THE STUDY

Dropout- is a child who has stopped going to school after having enrolled in a school, but the same child may decide to reenrol in future.

Primary school children- in Mozambique, the primary education has 7 years of schooling. Thus, learners attending any of the grades of primary education are primary school children.

Chicualacuala- is a district located in the Northern part of Gaza province in Mozambique.

Gaza- is a province of Mozambique

Mozambique- is a country in the Southern Africa region

1.8. OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

Following this introductory chapter comes the discussion of the literature review on the problem of primary school dropout. This chapter starts with the definition of the concept of dropout. After this, the causes giving rise to dropout are discussed sequentially starting with child-based factors, then coming household-based factors, following school-based factors and finally coming

community-based factors. This is followed by a brief discussion about the predictors of dropout. Finally, the chapter ends with the presentation of the theoretical framework that guided the study.

After the literature review chapter comes the description of the methodology. Here, the chapter begins with the explanation of the rationale for the research approach. This is followed by the description of the research sample. After this, the chapter describes the process that informed the design of the study. Following the description of the process of research design the chapter describes the data collection methods that were used in the study namely the interviews, the focus group discussions and the observation of behaviour. After this, the process of data analysis and synthesis is described. This is followed by the identification of ethical issues inherent to the study. Following this is the discussion of issues of validity and reliability. Finally, the chapter identifies the limitations of the study.

Following the description of the methodology is the chapter about data analysis and reporting of findings. In this chapter, the findings are reported in a sequence starting with the child-based factors, after that coming the household-based factors, then following the school-based factors and finally coming the community-based factors. In the end, the chapter reports about the predictors of dropout as generated empirically.

The chapter about data analysis and reporting of findings is followed by the chapter about the interpretation of findings, recommendations and research summary. In this chapter, the interpretation of factors leading to dropout is sequentially done at the level of the child, the household, the school and the community. After this, the chapter discusses the predictors of dropout. Finally, the chapter provides the recommendations meant to curb the problem of primary school dropout and the summary of the dissertation.

1.9. CONCLUSION

This chapter described the crucial elements that were used as the basis for the development of the study. The first of these elements, as outlined above, is the background and the context. This is followed by the problem statement. After the problem statement, the chapter presented the statement of purpose, the objectives of the study the accompanying research questions. Following this, the chapter discussed the rationale and significance of the study and the definition of key terms used in the study. Finally, the chapter presented an outline of how the dissertation is organised. In the next chapter the literature review about the problem of primary school dropout is extensively discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

2. THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ON PRIMARY SCHOOL DROPOUT

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to delve into the reasons that lead primary school children to drop out of school and to identify possible measures to curb the problem. The researcher endeavoured to uncover the reasons that prohibited school children from continuing their studies through the accounts given by teachers, parents and children. These same participants were asked to give suggestions to solve the problem of dropout. However, before the empirical component of the study was undertaken, it was necessary to critically review the literature.

To do so, the body of knowledge about primary school dropout was reviewed. Specific attention was paid to the causes of dropout and the appropriate interventions required to solve the problem. These two areas were chosen in line with the purpose of the study indicated above.

Many sources were consulted to complete this literature review. The researcher used peer-reviewed research articles, academic dissertations, monographs, official publications, books and other reference materials. The researcher used the resource-rich UNISA virtual library to access these resources. Additionally, the researcher visited the Ministry of Education and Human Development and the National Institute for Educational Development in Maputo.

The review of the sources revealed that dropout is caused by a range of factors. Overall, there are four clusters of factors that lead children to quit their schooling. These clusters are described below.

The literature review starts with the definition of dropout. This is followed by the discussion of the child-based factors. Next, the literature discusses the household-based factors. After the discussion of household-based factors, the discussion of the school-based factors follows. This is followed by the discussion of community-based factors and the predictors of primary school dropout. Finally, the chapter ends with the outline of the theoretical framework of the study.

2.2. DEFINITION OF DROPOUT

While the concept of dropout appears to be straightforward, there is no consensus among authors on its definition. Indeed, there are many definitions of dropout from various studies on this problem. The first definition is offered by Marrow (in Ananga 2011:375), saying that a dropout is a student who is not actively registered because of 15 days of continuous unexcused absences and such a child is not registered in another formal institution. Clearly, if this definition is used in a setting like Mozambique, many children may qualify as dropouts, particularly in the rural areas where it is normal for school children to be absent from school for many days without giving any excuse. The second operational definition of dropout is given by No *et al* (2016:217) and this considers dropout as a child who has been absent for a month without giving any reason. The third definition comes from the Oxford School Dictionary (2009:143), which says that “to drop out” is to stop participating in something. In other words, the person who has stopped taking part in something is a dropout.

Clearly, all the above definitions point to the complexities of defining dropout. In fact, as postulated by Ananga (2011:375) and Dunne and Ananga (2013:197), the concept of dropout is difficult to define because it depends on the time lapsed after the withdrawal and the likelihood

of coming back to school. Bearing these factors in mind, Akyeampong *et al* (in Dunne & Ananga 2013:197) “define a dropout as a child who has enrolled in school but is no longer currently attending even though such a child may re-enter the education system at some stage.” This is the definition that will be used for the purposes of this dissertation. The choice of this definition follows from the fact that in the study school, as well as in virtually all other primary schools around the country, there is no fixed withdrawal period used to justify dropout. This is further complicated by the fact that primary school dropouts are allowed to reregister.

2.3. THE CAUSES GIVING RISE TO SCHOOL DROPOUT

The literature review is an important step in research development. Authors agree that the key purpose of the literature review is to determine what has already been discovered on the topic under investigation (Burchinal 2008:567; Bloomberg & Volpe 2008:46-47).

Thus, after a careful review of the literature, a range of factors leading to school dropout have emerged. According to Hunt (2008:7), dropout is the result of the interplay between supply and demand factors. According to Fox *et al* (2012:10), a system is said to be supply-constrained if the available schools cannot meet the present demand. In other words, the number of available schools cannot accommodate the number of children that need to study. On the contrary, Fox *et al* (2012:10) claim that in a demand-constrained system, schools are available, but children do not attend due to issues such as high costs, travel distance, household need for the labour of the child, cultural views and other factors that prevent parents from enrolling them. As it will become clear below, both the supply and demand factors have the potential to drive children away from school.

In fact, the body of literature on primary school dropout identifies four clusters of factors that lead children to drop out. According to Sabates *et al* (2013:225), dropout can occur as a result of the personal characteristics of the individual child. Furthermore, as indicated by Ananga (2011:4) and Abuya *et al* (2013: 749), the causal factors of dropout are found within the family, the school and the community levels. In a nutshell, Zuilkowski (2013: 83) maintains that dropout is a multifaceted phenomenon concerning the child, the family, the school and the community at large. Special attention is given to each of these clusters of factors below.

2.3.1. CHILD-BASED FACTORS

As indicated above, the personal characteristics of a child can lead to dropout (Sabates *et al* 2013:225). One of these characteristics is the age of the child. Indeed, a growing body of literature affirms that being over-age in a grade is a major contributing factor to dropout (Ananga 2011:10, Ersado in Dunne & Ananga 2013:198, Ministério da Educação 2012:56, Hunt 2008:25, Hunter & May 2011:6, No *et al* 2016:226, No, Sam & Hirakawa 2012:578, UNESCO 2014:3, Wils 2004:23, Yi, Zhang, Luo, Shi, Moc, Chen, Brinton, & Rozelle 2012:559, and Sekiya & Ashida 2017:70). Surprisingly, Jukes, Jere and Pridmore (2014:195) maintain that in their study in Malawi, there was a 57% increase in the likelihood of dropping out for each additional year of age.

There are two important reasons that may cause school children to be over-age in grade. As postulated by Ananga (2011:10), Sabates *et al* (2013:227), No *et al* (2016:222), a participant in Mohlouoa (2014:78), and UNESCO (2016:183), children become over-aged as a result of grade repetition and late enrolment. Sadly, Wils (2004:19) states that late enrolment is ubiquitous in developing nations. In fact, a recent study conducted by Instituto Nacional de Estatística (2015:67) has found that the net enrolment rate in Mozambique was slightly more than 50%,

meaning that many children enrolled in primary education are beyond their appropriate age. This is a serious concern for the country.

The fact that being over-age in grade leads to dropout is plausible due to a range of factors that may militate against the child's sustained attendance. Firstly, as children grow older, so do the opportunity costs of their schooling (Colclough *et al* in Hunt 2008:36, No *et al* 2016:221, Wils 2004:20, Yi *et al* 2012:561, Sekiya & Ashida 2017:70, and Lu, Cui, Shi, Chang, Mo, Rozelle & Johnson 2016: 245). In fact, Chimombo *et al* (in Abuya *et al* 2013:42) and Yi *et al* (2012:561) argue that dropout occurs as a result of rising opportunity costs. Two of these opportunity costs, as outlined by Lu *et al* (2016:237), are either dropping out in order to work on an income-generating activity, or dropping out in order to free up other members of the household to ensure that they work and earn money. In any case, children face a trade-off between schooling and economic activities. If the balance shifts against schooling, it will likely result in dropout.

Secondly, the syllabus is not designed to compensate for age difference (Ananga 2011:10, and Ministério da Educação 2012:56). Yet, in Mozambique, any child aged between 6 and 14 years may enrol in grade one. This means that older children may be mixed with younger ones. Under these circumstances, the curriculum may be less appealing to older children particularly when content appears easy for them. In other words, the older children may believe that they have grown past the requirements of the school work. Additionally, older children may feel embarrassed if they struggle to grasp the work and thus perform poorly. As put by Ananga (2011:10), older children may find their schooling discouraging due to inferiority complex towards their younger colleagues. This can surely drive these children away from school.

Thirdly, there are some cultural aspects at play that may discourage sustained schooling. In this instance it is important to note that the impact of cultural norms is gendered and slanted against

girls. One example of such a cultural aspect is the notion of the attainment of adulthood. As indicated by Colclough *et al* (in Hunt 2008:36), girls taking part in initiation rites may consider it shameful for them to continue with their education, as this may create an identity crisis. Nekatibeb (in Hunt 2008:36) states that, while communities in Ethiopia may consider girls who have participated in initiation ceremonies as grown-up, teachers may consider them children at school and this causes confusion. In fact, they may think that the teachers are not showing them due respect. Consequently, they may decide to drop out from school.

Conscious of the impact of age on dropout, No *et al* (2012:780) propose that any policy meant to fight school dropout in Cambodia should ensure that children are enrolled in school early. While this concerns Cambodia, it is universally applicable – including Mozambique. In Mozambique, the appropriate age for registration in grade one is six years. Thus, parents should be mobilised to register their children when they reach the correct age within the registration year.

Apart from age, gender is a prominent factor in dropout. As claimed by Hunt (2008:30), gender dominates various constraints that cause children to stop their schooling. Studies worldwide show that there are more girls than boys who drop out (UNDFW in Hunter & May 2011:3, Bandyopadhyay & Subrahmanian, and Hossain in Ananga 2011:226, Hunter & May 2011:6, Woldehanna & Hagos 2015:40, and Lu *et al* 2016:242).

A range of factors make girls more likely to dropout. For example, Kane (in Ananga 2011:7) and Lyon *et al* (in UNESCO 2016:98) say that girls do more domestic chores compared to boys, thus imposing a time constraint on their schooling time. Furthermore, Jukes *et al* (2014:192) argue that girls are expected to take care of their siblings and ailing parents. Essentially, this happens when parents are busy with economic activities like working in agriculture or when they are ill. Situations like these are likely to force girls to drop out.

Adding to this point, some cultural norms associated with the gender of the child has an impact on school dropout. As postulated by Hunt (2008:31), some parents see the education of a girl as a waste of resources since benefits will be channelled to her husband's family. This is especially true in patrilocal societies where the girl is absorbed into her husband's family upon marriage.

Furthermore, early marriages and pregnancies are incompatible with continued schooling. In support of this position, Dunne and Leach (in Hunt 2008:26), Adiguzel (in Şahin, Arseven & Kiliç 2016:2014), Cardoso and Verner, Dunne and Leach, and Grant and Hallman (in Sabates *et al* 2013:226) and May *et al* (in Hunter & May 2011:2) say that teenage pregnancy is a serious cause of discontinued schooling among girls. Indeed, as indicated by Fox *et al* (2012:10), early marriages and pregnancies have a negative effect on the schooling of girls in Mozambique. Thus, in order to curb the detrimental effect of early marriages in the country, the government is currently running a campaign against this practice. The campaign involves providing public awareness about the importance of education for women and girls. Indeed, Delprato, Akeampong, Sabates, and Hernandez-Fernandez (2015:54) claim that terminating early marriages is essential, particularly in countries with huge gender gaps in education.

However, Hunt (2008:31) says that the disadvantageous position faced by many girls is not the same everywhere. In fact, there are areas where more boys than girls drop out (StatsSA in Hunter & May 2011:3 and Sabates *et al* 2013:226). This shift may be the result of various campaigns aimed at reducing gender inequality that dominate development agenda in recent times – as mentioned above.

Unfortunately, UNESCO (2016:264) states that schools can perpetuate gender inequality in a number of ways including teacher behaviour, pupil interaction, the curriculum and the distribution of school resources. Indeed, UNESCO (2016:265) found that, in Malawi, observed

teachers were not using appropriate gender sensitive language. In a similar vein, RTI International (in UNESCO 2016:265) argues that in Northern Nigeria, teachers gave boys and girls unequal opportunities to speak in the classroom.

Aside from gender, dropout is linked to poor academic performance on the part of the child. Indeed, many authors on the subject of dropout have come to the conclusion that poor academic performance and grade failure have the potential to cause children to terminate their schooling (Barnes in Sekiya & Ashida 2017:65, Lu *et al* 2016:242, Sabates *et al* 2013:230, Yi *et al* 2012:561, No *et al* 2016:221, UNESCO 2014:199, Şahin *et al* 2016:205, Mohlouoa 2014:7, and Colclough *et al* in Ananga 2011:9).

The fact that poor academic performance leads to dropout is plausible. According to Krige *et al* (in Hunter & May 2011:1), failing a grade is an unpleasant experience for a child. In support of this argument, Zuilkowski (2013:61) states that underperformers in a class experience verbal or corporal punishment from both their teachers and parents as well as jokes from their peers. Also, Liu (in Sabates *et al* 2013:10) says that teachers tend to favour best performers so that they can continue to excel in their academic life while the underperformers are clearly shown that their chances of succeeding are low. According to Liu (in Hunt 2008:43), this practice has a disheartening effect on those that are sidestepped. As a result, they are likely to drop out.

In Mozambique, the rate of failure is of great concern. According to Ministério da Educação e Desenvolvimento Humano (2017:94-96), the failure rate in Mozambique was about 13% at lower primary level while that of the upper primary level was about 19%. These average percentages may conceal the severity of the problem among subjects, schools, districts and provinces. In fact, the province of Maputo was the worst performer in both levels in 2015, having roughly a 17% failure rate at lower primary level and about 22% at upper primary level

(Ministério da Educação e Desenvolvimento Humano 2017:94-96). This situation leaves the country in a desperate situation because, as proclaimed by UNESCO 2015:256), grade repetition means that the state should pay as much as twice than it normally would pay.

Therefore, some authors have advocated for the introduction of automatic promotion in order to cancel the effect of grade repetition. As stated by Colclough and Lewin (in Hunt 2008:47), under certain contexts, promotion reduces dropout. However, this solution is opposed by Itthida (2015:2360) saying that progressive promotion policy is unable to help students and ruins the credibility of the schooling system. In addition, Itthida (2015:2360) further states that this system only produces less dedicated students since they know that they will be promoted and also that parents may be less hesitant to take their children in and out of school, which in turn results in poor attendance and dropout.

Besides poor academic performance, the health status of the child is noted as being associated with dropout. In a study conducted by Zuilkowski (2013:55) in Kenya, the author found that, among several dropouts in her study, the main reason that contributed to their decision to quit their schooling was linked to health.

Nevertheless, it is not only the health of the child that matters. In fact, the deterioration of health of a child's family members are also associated with discontinued schooling. As reported by Sabates *et al* (2013:227) and Abuya *et al* (2013:752), children stop their schooling if their parents or siblings get ill. As indicated by Ananga (2011:6), the child may be asked to look after the ailing family member or members. This puts the child in a difficult situation, as this may prevent them from having the time or means to go to school. The resulting irregular attendance may cause the child to be left behind in terms of school work and make it challenging for them to

catch up. This is especially true if the absence was extensive. As a result, the child may be forced to drop out.

Thus, to curb the effects of health on dropout, many authors propose some workable interventions. One intervention that may ensure continued school attendance as maintained by Edward *et al* (in No *et al* 2016:216), is the improvement of health services. According to Jukes *et al* (in Jukes *et al* 2014:199), in Gambia, early childhood malaria prevention programme allowed children to continue studying for an average of one year longer. However, as claimed by Guyatt (2003), Krishnaratne *et al* (2013), UNESCO (2002), UNESCO (2015a), UNESCO *et al* (2013), World Food Programme (2009), and World Food Programme (2013) (in UNESCO 2016:140), health services such as deworming and sexual health education are efficient when provided by the school. As postulated by UNESCO (2016:140), in developing nations, the number of teachers is greater than that of nurses and so is the number of schools compared to the number of clinics. Therefore, employing teachers to provide simple interventions such as medication and micronutrient supplements may be relatively cheap as compared to conventional mobile health teams (Guyatt *et al* in UNESCO 2016:140). In such a case, however, considerations should be made for teacher training.

Furthermore, Graeff-Martins *et al* (2006:448) urges that research concerning school dropout should take child mental health issues into account as mental disturbances and illnesses is a significant factor. In other words, child mental health professionals should be approached to take part in the solution to the problem of school dropout. Evidently, this seems to be a serious challenge for Mozambique, as there are simply not enough of these professionals available.

Added to the problem of health, school dropout is affected by school attendance. According to Sabates *et al* (2013:230), Sekiya and Ashida (2017:70) and Abuya *et al* (2013:755), irregular

attendance is a crucial contributing factor to dropout. This is due to the fact that, as postulated by Hunt (2008:46) children may be unable to readjust when they return to school after an absence. As stressed above, irregular attendance may lead to poor performance and this, in turn may lead to dropout. For that reason, it is necessary to monitor the attendance of children. Indeed, Şahin *et al* (2016:206) say that the school counselling service should monitor absenteeism on a daily, weekly and monthly basis.

However, besides irregular attendance by children, teacher's attendance also factors into dropout. According to Ministério da Educação (2012:35), frequent teacher absenteeism is the cause for deficient participation in schooling. This is because children may lose the value attached to schooling if teachers attend school irregularly.

The problem of teacher absenteeism is a great concern in Mozambique. In a study conducted in some Sub-Saharan African countries, Filmer (in UNESCO 2016:191) states that teacher absenteeism in Mozambique was as high as 55%. It is the highest percentage among the countries surveyed and is thus a great cause for concern. As reported by UNESCO (2016:85), ill health of family members appears to be the main cause for the absence of many teachers.

Another factor at play with dropout is orphanhood. However, authors disagree on the impact of orphanhood on dropout. On the one hand, some authors say that orphaned children are likely to interrupt their schooling (Hunt 2008:20, No *et al* 2012:578, Fox *et al* 2012:26 and Glick *et al*, and Gingoux & Mendez in Woldehanna & Hagos 2015:31). For some authors supporting this position, one of the concerns about orphans is a lack of encouragement that may guarantee sustained schooling in child-headed families (Pridmore & Jere 2011:521).

On the other hand, some authors contend that orphanhood does not have any impact on decreased schooling for children (Chipfakacha in Ananga 2011:6, and Hunt 2008:20). It is fundamentally important to understand what might suppress the impact of orphanhood on dropout. One explanation for this is the way orphanhood is defined. As reported by Case and Ardington (in Hunt 2008:20), double orphans and maternal orphans do not have a significant difference in school access. In a similar vein, Fox *et al* (2012:26) say that orphans, especially maternal and double orphans were more prone to dropout than non-orphans. This suggests that paternal orphans may not face the severity of orphanhood as maternal and double orphans do. Thus, if a study has heavily depended on paternal orphans and found that their rate of dropout is low, it is because paternal orphanhood is distinct from other types of orphanhood as it appears to be less severe.

The problem of orphanhood is widespread in Mozambique. According to Ministério da Educação (2014:41), in 2014 roughly 10% of child population in the country were orphans. A short time before, Fox *et al* (2012:24) had observed that the number of orphans in Mozambican schools was unprecedented.

Therefore, the orphanhood-induced dropout should be solved. For instance, as stated by Hunt (2008:19), Botswana provides food rations and other types of support to the most vulnerable orphans and South Africa provides foster care grant. In a similar vein, UNESCO (2015:99) claims that in order to ensure sustained schooling in the state of Tamil Nadu in India, welfare programmes meant to reduce the difference between orphans and non-orphans are employed. These consist of the provision of textbooks, school uniforms, bus fares and money to those children who have lost a breadwinning parent (UNESCO 2015:99).

In addition to orphanhood, dropout is associated with the disability of a child. The incidence of disability worldwide is high. According to the WHO and the World Bank (in UNESCO 2015:100-101), recent figures on disability range from 93 million to 150 million children globally. Nevertheless, authors are divided over the effects of disability on dropout. On the one hand, some say that disabled children are more likely to be excluded from schooling and hence, since it is only a tiny fraction of children who are enrolled, there is a limited possibility for them to drop out (Peters in Hunt 2008:28, and Filmer in UNESCO 2015:101). This position is backed by UNESCO (in Hunt 2008:28), who state that in developing nations more than 90% of disabled children do not attend school.

On the other hand, other authors argue that disability is one of the most important factors leading to dropout (Sabates *et al* 2013:226). Indeed, Peters (in Sabates *et al* 2013:226) says that when disabled children are enrolled, their chances of graduating are slim due to factors such as the lack of resources like trained teachers and school guidelines to regulate disability. In a similar vein, Rousso (in Ananga 2011:11) says that the disabled children drop out after registration as a result of a lack of wheelchair-or-disabled-friendly facilities and unappealing school environments.

For that reason, it is necessary to curb the dropout induced by disability. One way to do this, as suggested by Mohlouoa (2014:480) in her study in Lesotho, is that the state should embark on teacher training initiatives on inclusive education. While this study is situated in Lesotho, it is applicable to other nations like Mozambique. In addition to inclusive education policies, the school facilities should be sensitive to children with disabilities. Put differently, they should be accessible to the disabled and provide a safe environment for them.

Aside from disability, child labour is seen as having an influence on dropout. In developing nations child labour is widespread and in 2012, 23% of children in these nations were child labourers compared to only 6% in upper middle-income countries (ILO in UNESCO 2015:97).

Unfortunately, there is no consensus among authors on the influence of child labour on dropout. Some authors proclaim that dropout is the direct result of child labour (Dachi & Garrett in Ananga 2011:6, Colclough *et al* in Hunt 2008:12, Itthida 2015:2359, and Woldehanna & Hagos 2015:35). The supporters of this stance claim that activities like taking care of younger members in the household and working in agriculture when the demand for work is high – which consumes a considerable amount of time – are labour intensive and incompatible with schooling (Dar *et al* in Sabates *et al* 2013:226). Obviously, these factors have the potential to lead to frequent absenteeism, poor performance and dropout.

On the contrary, other authors contend that the influence of child labour on dropout is insignificant (No *et al* 2012:579 and No *et al* 2016:222). Still others believe that children perform child labour in order to raise more financial resources to support their schooling (GSS in Ananga 2011:5 and Hunt 2008:12). Similar to the problem of orphanhood, this divide among authors might be caused by the lack of a precise definition of child labour. As clearly reported by Hunt (2008:11), the way child labour is defined is fundamental. Indeed, in a study conducted by No *et al* (2012:579) in Cambodia, the authors were regretful for not having been able to examine the relationship between dropout and the types of activities that the children performed.

Thus, it becomes fundamentally necessary to offset the impact of child labour on dropout. To do so, Mohlouoa (2014:50) proposes the introduction of legislation that prevents child labour. However, it is necessary to note that this proposal appears to refer to income-based child labour. Yet, as it has been indicated above, domestic chores and agricultural activities interfere with

schooling. Indeed, Dar *et al* (in Sabates *et al* 2013:226) argue that activities like care for younger family members and working in agriculture are labour intensive and incompatible with schooling. Therefore, parents should free their children from these activities or involve them sparingly to allow them to go to school.

Apart from child labour, child migration is seen in the literature as another factor leading to dropout. The effect of child migration on dropout is two-pronged. According to Hashim (in Hunt 2008:15), child migration may lead either to increased or decreased educational chances. In one way, child migration might lead to increased educational chances if a child abandons the school in the rural area with the aim of registering with a school in the new area, such as a resource-rich city.

Conversely, child migration is seen as detrimental for the schooling of children. In support of this position, Dunne and Ananga (2013:376) and Hashim (in Hunt 2008:15) claim that child migration leads to school disruption. This is especially true when a child quits their schooling in the rural area and goes to the city to work. However, the abolition of child labour suggested above may act as a deterrent to this rural migration.

Moreover, dropout is regarded as being connected with a child's enthusiasm for, or motivation to study. According to Instituto Nacional de Estatística (2015:79), about 30% of children in Mozambique are not attending school due to lack of interest. Also, in a study conducted in Kenya, the World Bank (in Zuilkowski 2013:67) reports that while it can be easier for a parent to register a child in school, that same child is unlikely to want to study, resulting in irregular attendance and poor academic performance. It is important to note that study interest or motivation is influenced by a variety of factors. To illustrate, in a study conducted in China, Chung and Mason (2012:542) report that 90% of children in their study did not have any interest

in school due to a dislike of certain subjects. It may be inferred that the relevance of the school curriculum was a likely cause of the deterioration of interest among these children. Therefore, it is crucial to identify issues that may ruin the interest in schooling among children and act in a way that will boost the children's interest so that they may stay in school.

Self-esteem is also related to school dropout. As indicated by No *et al* (2016:222), the dropout rate of children with high self-esteem was lower than those with low self-esteem. Put differently, children with low self-esteem dropped out in greater numbers than those with high self-esteem. As substantiated by No *et al* (2012:576), children with low self-esteem tended to perform poorly, which was the primary cause for their decision to drop out.

In addition, dropout is associated with a child's relationships with school peers. In a study conducted in Kenya, Abuya *et al* (2013:748) affirms that peer influence compromised successful school completion. In a similar vein, in a study conducted in Cambodia, No *et al* (2016:222) say that in one cohort of their study bad relationships with colleagues was one of the reasons for dropout. More significantly, bad relationship with friends may highly affect the first graders. As postulated by No *et al* (2012:576), for the first graders, schools are new places of socialisation aside from their homes.

Finally, drug use is connected with school dropout. According to Abuya *et al* (2013:749), drug taking and alcohol consumption by children was one of the reasons that gave rise to school dropout in Kenya. Similarly, the Centre for Disease Control (in Graeff-Martins *et al* 2006:443) claims that drug taking is a strong predictor of dropout. This is conceivable due to the addictive and behaviour change-factors associated with drug abuse – not to mention the negative effects certain substances can have on the learning capacity and social skills of pupils. This may undoubtedly lead to dropout. Consequently, there is a need for the teachers to spot behaviour

related to drug and alcohol abuse in order to work with other actors to provide counselling and support.

2.3.2. HOUSEHOLD-BASED FACTORS

Just like the child, the family has a number of factors that may lead school children to drop out. The first of the household-based factors conducive to dropout is the socio-economic characteristics of the family.

While this seems to be a prominent factor for dropout, authors are divided over the impact of poverty on dropout. On the one hand, authors like Yi *et al* (2012:561), Ananga (2011:5), Hunt (2008:7), UNESCO (2011:48), Şahin *et al* (2016:199), and Ministério da Educação (2012:56) state that children quit their schooling in response to their disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. This position is plausible in the sense that schooling incurs many costs. Therefore, when children with disadvantaged backgrounds cannot support the costs, they can simply drop out. Indeed, in a study conducted by Abuya *et al* (2013:753) in Kenya, the girls were more likely to drop out as a result of a lack of sanitary towels.

The incidence of poverty is extremely high in Mozambique. As stated by Ministério da Educação (2012:12), more than 50% of Mozambicans live below the poverty line. Additionally, roughly a million children in Mozambique live in places which are plagued by food insecurity (Ministério da Educação 2012:45). This is not a surprise because Mozambique, as claimed by UNICEF (in Luz & Agadjanian 2015:779-780) is economically one of the least successful nations in the world with an average per capita annual income of no more than \$440.

On the other hand, there are authors who disagree with the view that poverty leads to drop out. In fact, in some studies conducted in Cambodia in recent years, poverty and child labour were not

found as causes of dropout in spite of the fact that these phenomena are portrayed as leading to dropout in Cambodia and other developing nations (No *et al* 2016:222 and No *et al* 2012:579). In a similar vein, Hunter and May (2011:4) and Lu *et al* (2016:246) found that families tend to keep their children studying in the face of economic calamities. Put differently, families do not withdraw their children from school due to poverty.

Although these authors believe that poverty does not lead to dropout, Li (in Yanqing 2012:20) warns that care should be taken when coming to the conclusion that poverty is no longer influential because, while it is not as powerful as it used to be in the past, it still has an effect on dropout. As a matter of fact, the Ministério da Educação (2012:56) says that poverty is a factor to consider in the dropout of children throughout the year.

Most importantly, the effect of poverty on dropout may depend on the age of the child. In a study conducted by Zuilkowski (2013:21) in Kenya, she found that while poverty did not have any effect on the schooling of first graders, it 'was substantially significant in the schooling of fifth graders. Possibly, this is because older children may become more affected than young ones when they lack school essentials such as shoes, lunch money and the like.

Given the fact that the above discussion shows that poverty is detrimental to sustained schooling, it is necessary to do something in order to neutralise the impact of poverty on dropout. One of the suggestions, as pointed out by Ministério da Educação (2012:62), is the introduction of a safety net through increased funding to schools and the introduction of school feeding programme. By the same token, Yi *et al* (2012:561), Abuya *et al* (2013:757) and Glennerster and Takavarasha (in Delprato *et al* 2015:54) propose the use of conditional cash transfers or scholarships. Conditional cash transfer is a type of monetary support given to the household on the condition that the child is enrolled in school (Lu *et al* 2016:248). According to Janvry (in

Hunt 2008:48), this conditionality is more effective on schooling than unconditional transfers. Indeed, Attanasio *et al*, Rawlings, and Rawlings and Rubio (in Yi *et al* 2012:561) say that in Latin American countries, by and large, the conditional cash transfers were used with success. In addition, Benhassine *et al* (in Jukes *et al* 2014:199) state that in Morocco, the conditional cash transfer programme reduced dropout from 10% to 3%.

Nevertheless, the conditional cash transfers may not always be successful in reducing dropout. In fact, UNESCO (2015:89) argues that the education outcomes of the disadvantaged groups do not improve due to possible implementation failures of the cash transfer programmes. For instance, in Indonesia, the periodical cash transfers that were too little and delivered too late were regarded as the cause for the failure of the programme that was meant to attract children into the schooling system and keep them studying (World Bank in UNESCO 2015:89).

Parental education level is another factor in school dropout. According to Ersado (in Ananga 2011:6) and Ministério da Educação (2012:4), children whose parents are educated are more likely to successfully participate in their schooling. Naturally, parents with a low level of education may engender a potential for absenteeism and dropout in their children (Şahin *et al* 2016:199).

The fact that parental education leads to school completion while parental lack of education causes dropout is conceivable. As reported by Luz and Agadjanian (2015:782), educated mothers tend to see the importance of education and motivate their children to study. Conversely, illiterate mothers neither support the schooling of their children nor see the benefits of education (Juneja, and Pryor & Ampiah in Hunt 2008:21).

There is also a gender dimension to parental education. As postulated by Al Samarrai and Peasgood (in Hunt 2008:21), educated fathers tend to favour the schooling of the boys while educated mothers favour that of the girls.

Illiteracy in Mozambique is rampant. As stated by Instituto Nacional de Estatística (2015:62), about 45% of Mozambicans in 2015 were illiterate, down from about 50% in 2008. It is important to note that illiteracy is geographically biased. According to Instituto Nacional de Estatística (2015:63), in rural settings the illiteracy rate in 2015 was 63% compared with 23% in urban areas. This is a serious concern for the country as the majority of people in Mozambique are rural dwellers.

Conscious of the impact of parental education on dropout, it is a must to provide adult education. Indeed, Birdsall *et al* (in Hunt 2008:49) maintains that the provision of literacy programmes to the uneducated mothers may ensure school participation of their children.

Furthermore, household composition is another factor that is associated with school dropout. Three aspects related to the household composition are discussed below and the first is the household size. Authors are divided on the impact of household size on dropout. According to Hunt (2008:17), some studies propose that a larger household sizes mean that children can either attend school irregularly or dropout prematurely due to financial constraints or excessive workload. In contrast, other studies oppose the above position saying that larger household sizes mean that jobs can be spread among household members and hence, children can attend school (Colclough *et al* in Hunt 2008:17). In any case, as already exposed above, parents should free their children from household activities or involve them in these activities sparingly to allow them to go to school.

Secondly, the presence or absence of mother in the household is critical to dropout. Indeed, a study conducted in South Africa found that children who lived with their biological mothers were less likely to quit school than those whose mothers were deceased or living elsewhere (Grant & Hallman in Ananga 2011:6). Sadly, due to the HIV epidemic, it is more likely that many children in Mozambique are not living with their biological mothers. The continued schooling of these children may be compromised as a result.

Thus, to offset the effect of living in a foster care environment, children living in such settings should be supported. As indicated above, this can be in the form of providing food rations and other types of support to vulnerable orphans (as occurs in Botswana) or the provision of foster care grants such as those in South Africa (Hunt 2008:19).

The impact of a household head on dropout is significant. As reported by Abuya *et al* (2013:751), children took up the responsibilities of adults after the death of their parents and this caused them to halt their schooling. The problem of child-headed households is of serious concern in Mozambique given the impact of HIV and AIDS in the country. From the available data of 2007, the HIV prevalence rate was estimated at between 14% and 17% in the country (Ministério da Educação e Desenvolvimento Humano 2017:72). These percentages may have increased in recent years. Therefore, to emulate the Indian experience in the state of Tamil Nadu of improving education for orphans, as indicated elsewhere in this study, it is necessary to provide welfare programmes such as granting textbooks, school uniforms, bus fares and money to those children who have lost a breadwinning parent (UNESCO 2015:99).

Furthermore, family violence is regarded as giving rise to primary school dropout. As postulated by Şahin *et al* (2016:203), children who were exposed to parental abuse were 45% more likely to drop out. By the same token, in a study conducted by Abuya *et al* (2013:750) in Kenya, children

described the way they were maltreated by their fathers and named this as a reason for quitting school.

The incidence of family violence is prevalent. According to a report published recently, UNICEF (in UNESCO 2016:108) reveals that the household has the highest share of violence inflicted on children. In addition, UNICEF (in UNESCO 2016:108) further states that about 6 in 10 children aged between 2 and 14 are exposed to physical punishment by their guardians. This is a concern given the effect of family violence on dropout.

Some actions may be taken to reverse the incidence of family violence. To illustrate, UNESCO (2016:108) proposes that school-led parental training programmes on issues related to early childhood development and child protection may lead to changes in the behaviour of parents. Indeed, Delprato *et al* (2015:54) say that the absence of domestic violence is linked to increased school achievement.

2.3.3. SCHOOL-BASED FACTORS

As reported by Ananga (2011:7), the school is a powerful factor in the success of children and its features can influence dropout. Education quality is one of the most widely cited school-based factors leading to dropout. As postulated by Palme (in Porteus, Clacherty, Mdiya, Pelo, Matsai, Qwabe and Donald 2000:8), Colclough *et al* (in Hunt 2008:42) and Zuilkowski (2013:75) education quality is linked to dropout. However, the PROBE Team, and UNESCO (in Hunt 2008:37) argue that the meaning of quality is subjective.

While a single definition of quality is hard to come by, it is fundamental to identify some of its proxies. Firstly, Boyle *et al* (in Ananga 2011:8) state that the rapid expansion of schools and increased access to schools have undermined education quality. On this point, No *et al*

(2012:579), reporting on their study conducted in Cambodia, state that in some schools the pupil-teacher ratios reached about 140 and 150 children to every teacher at primary level. This is far more than the world average, which is claimed by UNESCO (2016:326) to be 24 children per teacher. Obviously, in conditions of high pupil-teacher ratios, it is difficult to guarantee meaningful schooling and dropout becomes likely.

The second proxy for quality is the learners' literacy and numeracy abilities. As stated by Ministério da Educação (2012:30), many children in Mozambique reach the first cycle of primary school (grade 2) with no ability to read or write. These children are potential dropouts because they lack these critical skills that are essential for knowledge acquisition.

The third proxy for quality is the relevance of the contents of the curriculum. In a study conducted by Chung and Mason (2012:541), in China, one teacher affirmed that it was difficult for him to give meaningful education to his students due to the content of the textbooks being too alien and abstract for the village children to successfully grasp. In another study conducted in China, Wang, and Ren (in Lu *et al* 2016:238) found that some ethnic minority groups place more value on the skills that will ensure the marriageability of their daughters like sewing and cooking. According to Lu *et al* (2016:238), parents in these settings may prefer to withdraw their girls from school to teach them these valued skills. In fact, in a recent report by UNESCO (2016:29), it is observed that indigenous knowledge is hardly part of the formal education system because of strong emphasis of the Western culture. As a consequence, dropout becomes an unavoidable alternative.

The state of the quality of education in Mozambique is disheartening. As reported above, children reach grade 2 without the reading or writing abilities (Ministério da Educação 2012:30). In fact, this issue of poor quality of education crops up in many countries across the globe.

UNESCO (2014:19) describes this low education quality as a widespread learning crisis. This has led to education quality becoming the focus of current development thinking. Indeed, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which is related to education, advocates a type of education that is “inclusive, equitable and of good quality” (UNESCO 2016:9).

Some authors have proposed measures to enhance education quality. UNESCO (2014:25) suggests that governments should attract the best teachers, improve their training, deploy them fairly and raise their salaries. Most importantly, the improvement of teacher training may boost learners’ achievement. Sadly, in 2014 about 11% and 22% of the teachers at the lower primary education level in Mozambique – in Gaza province especially – were untrained (Ministério da Educação 2014:35). This justifies the need for teacher training in the country. Nevertheless, it is important to note that meeting all the measures proposed above by UNESCO is a serious challenge for many developing countries, particularly for those in Sub-Saharan Africa, mainly due to the potential economic burden.

In addition, the high pupil-teacher ratios should be reduced. Apart from the rapid expansion and increased access to schools, the pupil-teacher ratios are influenced by the unequal distribution of teachers. To illustrate this, in 2014, Zambézia and Nampula had the highest pupil-teacher ratios of 181 and 196 pupils per teacher respectively in at lower primary level while the national average stood at 64 pupils per teacher in Mozambique (Ministério da Educação 2014:31). This shows that the distribution of teachers in Mozambique is biased in the sense that some provinces have more teachers while others are understaffed. For example, Niassa had 23 pupils per teacher at lower primary level in 2014 (Ministério da Educação 2014:31). Unfortunately, UNESCO (2014:28) argues that the biased distribution of teachers is one of the reasons why children drop

out without having learnt anything. Therefore, teachers should be deployed in places with severe teacher shortages (UNESCO 2014:28).

However, the reduction of the high pupil-teacher ratios is another big challenge given the fact that, as stated by UNESCO Institute of Statistics and the GMR team (in UNESCO 2015:198), about 4 million primary school teachers were supposed to have been recruited between 2012 and 2015 in order to fulfil the universal primary education goal by 2015. Although this is a global figure, one can reasonably assume that primary schools are understaffed in Mozambique due to the average of 64 pupils per teacher in the country (Ministério da Educação 2014:31). This is well below the global average of 24 children per teacher at primary level (UNESCO 2016:326).

Additionally, educational resources are other factors located within the school that have the potential to give rise to dropout. As noted by Brock and Cammish, and Molteno *et al* (in Ananga 2011:8), dropout is perceived as being influenced by the availability of resources such as textbooks, desks and blackboards. Also, Brock and Cammish (in Sabates *et al* 2013:226) add that if the toilet facilities are poor or absent, children are also likely to drop out. This potentially has a significant impact on female pupils. In fact, Colclough *et al*, Fentiman *et al*, and Lafraniere (in Hunt:38) state that the availability of separate sanitary facilities is fundamental for sustained school attendance for girls, especially when they grow older and start menstruating.

Educational resources in Mozambique are a cause for concern. In a recent survey on household income in Mozambique, the Instituto Nacional de Estatística (2015:68) reports that 69% of school children are dissatisfied with conditions offered to them and the most significant reason for dissatisfaction is lack of desks, raised by 44% of students, followed by inadequate facilities with about 30%. Indeed, UNESCO (2015:204) states that the majority of children go to schools

with conditions inappropriate for learning such as a lack of clean running water, and safe and hygienic ablution facilities.

Therefore, it becomes fundamentally important to redress the problem of educational resources. Indeed, Edward *et al* (in No *et al* 2016:216) says that it is necessary to improve the infrastructure. In a similar vein, UNESCO (2016:10) states that female education is boosted when there is access to clean water and sanitation.

Furthermore, dropout is connected to teacher deployment. As referred to above, the biased distribution of teachers is the reason why some children drop out before learning the basics (UNESCO 2014:28). This problem may render some schools understaffed and this can lead to overpopulated and unmanageable classrooms – also known as congestion. Abuya *et al* (2013:753) define congestion as a state of overcrowding a class. There are many studies on primary school dropout that have reported on this phenomenon. For example, Pridmore and Jere (2011:521) found classes with more than 100 learners in Malawi, while No *et al* (2012:579) found pupil-teacher ratios of 140 and 150 to one and, most alarmingly, the Ministério da Educação (2014:31) found ratios of 181 and 196 pupils per teacher in Zambézia and Nampula (provinces of Mozambique) respectively.

However, the impact of overcrowded classrooms on schooling is an open question. Fehrler *et al* (in UNESCO 2016:329) observed negative effects when class-size reaches over 60 children. In contrast, Duflo *et al* (in UNESCO 2015: 329) are doubtful about the effect of class size on learning because halving the size of a first-grade class from 82 to 44 pupils did not have any effect on learning in the 210 primary schools surveyed in Kenya. However, due to the workload required to work with large classes, it is safe to assume that effective learning may hardly take place even with well-trained teachers.

In addition, the biased distribution of teachers may lead to a situation whereby some schools do not have any female teachers. Female teachers provide an important influence on a girl's education (Colclough *et al* in Hunt 2008:38). Unfortunately, if female teachers in certain schools are few or non-existent, parents may regard such schools as unattractive on grounds of the safety of female students (Hunt 2008:38). Thus, such schools may result in reduced access to girls or lead them to drop out once they reach an age where they need to avoid sexual harassment by male teachers.

Conscious of the problems associated with the deployment of teachers, it is crucially important to design effective policies to offset its impact. Indeed, as repeatedly indicated above, teachers should be distributed fairly (UNESCO 2014:25).

Moreover, another factor connected to dropout is the number of schools. Hunt (2008:37) claims that there is evidence suggesting that limited supply of schools gives rise to dropout. Hunt (2008:37) further states that a small number of schools may force pupils to attend those that are far away from their homes. Indeed, Abuya *et al* (2013:742) and Wils (2004:20) claim that a long distance between home and school gives rise to dropout. This is because schools located far away are a safety concern for parents (Ananga 2011:7). In addition, as affirmed by Lloyd *et al*, Okumu and Nakajjo, and Open University Institute (in No *et al* 2012:574), children may become exhausted and drop out as a consequence of the long distance.

The government of Mozambique has made improvements in terms of the number of available of primary schools. From 2004 to 2011, the number of schools for the lower primary level jumped from 8,603 to 10,988, representing a 28% rise while that of upper primary level rose from 1,203 to 3,656, representing an astonishing 204% rise (Ministério da Educação 2012:24).

Indeed, building more schools is in line with the calls for improving availability. As urged by Edward *et al* (in No *et al* 2016:216), schools should be proximal to residences. Put differently, it is necessary to build more schools so that the distance from the children's homes to the nearest school is short. Apart from the provision of primary schools, it is necessary to provide secondary schools as well. According to Hunt (2008:23), there is evidence showing that primary school children tend to drop out from school when their access to secondary schooling is uncertain. Thus, Hunt (2008:48) advises that communities should be provided with secondary schools in order to improve and sustain primary school enrolments, attendance and pupil retention.

Dropout can also be linked to teacher behaviour in the school environment. Ananga (2011:9) and Şahin *et al* (2016:200) state that a teacher's attitude towards children at school can give rise to dropout.

There are many ways in which teachers may behave at school that may prompt children to drop out. Firstly, certain kinds of punishment in the classroom can have negative impacts on the confidence and attitude of pupils. Corporal punishment is an extreme example of this. According to Dunne *et al*, and Ampiah and Adu-Yeboah (in Dunne & Ananga 2013:198) and Humphreys, Moses, Kaibo and Dunne (2015:140), excessive punishment was named by boys as the prime cause for irregular attendance and dropout.

Secondly, the teaching practices used by teachers are extremely significant for dropout. As stated by Zuilkowski (2013:44), the quality of instruction may be more significant factor for interrupted schooling of first graders than performance, gender or poverty. Sadly, Smith (in Ananga 2011:8) reports that teachers in Zimbabwe did not plan their lessons, schedule their work, or mark the assignments of their students. Under these circumstances, children may simply drop out.

Thirdly, teachers may perpetrate discrimination among children. In a study conducted in Ethiopia and Guinea, Colclough *et al* (in Ananga 2011:9) found that teachers favoured boys more than girls. As indicated by Hunt (2008:40), social discrimination in schools can sidestep children. According to Liu (in Hunt 2008:43), children who are excluded feel demotivated. Eventually, these children can drop out.

Fourthly, teachers may harm their students psychologically. Liu (in Hunt 2008:42) says that verbal abuse from teachers may lower morale in class and give rise to school disruption. An example of a verbal abuse from a teacher is when the teacher says that a certain child is stupid.

Fifthly, teachers may subject children to rude behaviour. Regrettably, in some studies conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa Filmer *et al*, and Filmer (in UNESCO 2016:191), found that only about 60% of teachers had smiled at their pupils. However, if teachers do not show caring behaviour to their pupils, they may decide to drop out.

Sixthly, teachers may not adhere to official working hours. As postulated by Filmer (in UNESCO 2016:329), in seven countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, the teachers spent 2 hours and 53 minutes teaching, out of the average daily teaching time of 5 hours and 31 minutes. This is serious because teachers devoted only half of their mandatory time to teaching. In Mozambique, particularly in rural areas, this problem seems to be widespread. There are allegations that teachers chronically overrun their break times by busying themselves with activities other than teaching. This behaviour can be disheartening to children, leading them to drop out.

Sexual violence and harassment of children by teachers is another significant factor in drop out. In a study conducted in some African countries, about 40% of headmasters admitted that teacher-perpetrated sexual violence had occurred in their schools (UNESCO in UNESCO 2016:316).

This percentage figure shows that the incidence of sexual violence is widespread. Sadly, children exposed to sexual violence may be forced to terminate their schooling – not to mention the psychological implications.

Therefore, because negative attitudes and behaviour of teachers may be disastrous to the sustained schooling of children, it is important to improve the relationship between the teachers and students. In fact, Lee and Burkam (in Abuya *et al* 2013:743) say that dropout rates are low in schools where the relationship between the teachers and students is sound. By the same token, UNESCO (2016:191) says that learning is enhanced when teachers help and support pupils, urge them to persevere and better themselves, clamp down on discrimination, stimulate cooperation, and give feedback.

Furthermore, school dropout is associated with the cost of education. According to Sabates *et al* (2013:226), Yi *et al* (2012:561) and Abuya *et al* (2013:742), the cost of education has the potential to give rise to school dropout. The fact that lack of money may lead to dropout is plausible. For instance, children may not be able to buy basic school materials. A study conducted in Kenya, Abuya *et al* (2013:755) reports that children whose parents were unable to buy them uniforms, school bags and shoes were not allowed to enter the classroom – leading them to drop out. Similarly, in another study in Kenya, Zuilkowski (2013:55) found that children who could not pay the required amount of money were not allowed to attend classes, resulting in irregular attendance and poor performance. As exposed above, poor performance gives rise to dropout (Barnes in Sekiya & Ashida 2017:65, Lu *et al* 2016:242, Sabates *et al* 2013:230, Yi *et al* 2012:561, No *et al* 2016:221, UNESCO 2014:199, Şahin *et al* 2016:205 and Colclough *et al* in Ananga 2011:9).

It is also worth noting that such monetary constraints can have a harsh impact on girls. According to a female teacher (cited in Pridmore & Jere 2011:520), a 15 year old girl may attract unwanted attention if she does not have appropriate undergarments – such as a bra – or fall under the shadow of stigma and bullying. Obviously this may result in drop out.

Fortunately, public primary education in Mozambique is free (Ministério da Educação 2012:12). This reform, introduced in 2004 in the country and incorporating, among other things, the removal of school fees and the free distribution of textbooks has led authors like Luz and Agadjanian (2015:790) to claim that in Mozambique, since education is free and the financial costs are therefore limited, the decision to enrol a child is less likely to be associated with the household's ability to pay and more likely to be connected to issues such as opportunity cost and the perceived benefits of schooling. However, evidence from China, as indicated by Lu *et al* (2016:237) shows that attending a school is costly even in settings where school fees are low or have been abolished due to opportunity costs associated with education.

Indeed, there are some strong reasons to believe that while school fees have been abolished since 2004 in Mozambique, attending school is not completely free. This is because the burden of other fees is placed upon parents – such as money for supplies or school maintenance costs (Luz & Agadjanian 2015:30).

Some of the indirect costs of education include buying uniforms, exercise books and other school supplies, and transport for those who must commute long distances. Parents in Mozambique are expected to buy these materials despite the touted free education system. Thus, Abuya *et al* (2013:744) concluded that FPE (Free Primary Education) is not a magic bullet that will guarantee that all poor children have access to the public-school system.

Therefore, the above discussion on the cost of education theoretically shows that there is a serious need to drastically reduce the cost of school items that are considered as the indirect costs of education in the systems where the direct costs have been lifted. This would allow the poorest families to avoid dropping out as a result of this. In fact, Edward *et al* (in No *et al* 2016:216) argue that the cost of basic material like uniforms and school supplies should be cut down.

The language of instruction also has a significant impact on dropout. As postulated by Hunt (2008:47), research indicates that the language of instruction in the initial years of schooling has a bearing on dropout. This is due to the fact that language, as observed by UNESCO (2016:104), can be a source of many troubles – such as school failure. For example, Jackson (in Hunt 2008:40) states that repetition rates rose to 40%, up from 28% in Burundi in the first years of using French as the medium of instruction. Gustafsson and Sai, and Lai *et al* (in Lu *et al* 2016:238) note that the performance of primary school children is jeopardized when they are taught in a language other than their mother tongue. As already stated above, if the performance of students is poor, children may repeat a grade and eventually drop out.

Globally, the incidence of persons taught in a language other than their first language is high. According to Walter and Benson (in UNESCO 2016:267), about 40% of people in the world are taught through the medium of a second language.

In order to mitigate the impact of the language of instruction on schooling, some authors advocate the use of bilingual education. It is believed that multilingual education improves the performance of second language pupils in all subjects in the curriculum (Benson in UNESCO 2016:267). In fact, the adoption of multilingual education in Sub-Saharan Africa has increased since their independence. According to Albaugh (in UNESCO 2016:268), a recent study of policy changes in Sub-Saharan Africa over 1960-2010 revealed that at the time of independence,

there were 20 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa out of 43 that used local languages in primary education and now this number had risen to 38 countries. Evidently, the adoption rate of the bilingual education has increased enormously.

Mozambique is not one of the countries that have adopted multilingual education. Children are taught in Portuguese from the start of their education. This may be due to the fact that Mozambique is a linguistically diverse country. According to Ministério da Educação e Desenvolvimento Humano (2017:11), there are 20 languages in Mozambique. Since it may be challenging to teach children in many languages, they are forced to be taught in Portuguese and this may be one of the causes that give rise to dropout among these children.

Additionally, the school-family relations are regarded as being linked to primary school dropout. This factor was deliberately placed within the school-based factors because schools can easily involve families in the schooling process of their children. For instance, if teachers see that many children tend not to do their homework or are usually absent from school, they may call a meeting with all the guardians of these children and discuss these issues with them. Sadly, not all parents get involved in the schooling of their primary school children. As reported by Ahmed (in Sabates *et al* 2013:231), in Bangladesh, teachers consider a lack of parental involvement as a cause of absenteeism, grade repetition and dropout. Conversely, Odaga and Heneveld (in No *et al* 2012:574) claim that children whose guardians were involved in their studies were less prone to dropout.

The fact that the lack of parental involvement in the schooling of children may give rise to dropout is meaningful. Without the necessary involvement of parents, children may find it easier to play truant and lie to their parents about school. The best way to prevent this is to ensure school-family cooperation and raise family awareness about school attendance (Şahin *et al*

2016:206, and No *et al* 2016:216). To do so, school management should also be improved. Unfortunately, if the connection between the school and the family is not ensured, the children, unbeknown to their parents, will still attend school irregularly – leading them to dropout.

Timetables have been found to have some influence on school dropout. In a study conducted in India, The PROBE Team (in Ananga 2011:7) reports that some periodic agricultural activities overlap with school terms and timetables. If the family requires assistance with such activities they may withdraw their children from school. Likewise, Humphreys *et al* (2015:139) state that in their study in Nigeria, school holidays were not synchronised with planting and harvesting times. Under these circumstances, children are expected to drop out as a result of irregular attendance.

Conscious of the impact of school timetables on dropout, some authors have proposed some solutions. According to Ananga (2011:380) and Hunt (2008:47), introducing flexible school timetables may reduce dropout. For example, in the places where initiation ceremonies are prevalent in Mozambique, accommodating cultural practices and traditional holidays in the school terms may reduce the rate of absenteeism. As will be shown below, some cultural practices have a lasting impact on the attitudes of children – particularly of girls who have passed through their initiation rites (Fox *et al* 2012:10).

2.3.4. COMMUNITY-BASED FACTORS

According to Abuya *et al* (2013:755), community factors were regarded as crucial risk factors in the problem of school dropout. An example of a community-based factor linked to dropout is the socio-economic environment of the community. Poverty can manifest at various levels namely the nation, the community, the household and the individual. As reported by Abuya *et al*

(2013:749) in their study in Kenya, the presence of dumpsites among the poor kept children from completing primary school successfully. Here, one can reasonably assume that children, due to poverty, were forced to quit their schooling and engage in income generating activities offered by the dumpsites within their community. Lloyd *et al* (in No *et al* 2012:575) claim that living in a rich community is associated with less likelihood of dropping out.

The incidence of poverty in Mozambique is a cause for concern. As stated above, over 50% of people in Mozambique live below the poverty line (Ministério da Educação 2012:12). For that reason, it is likely that many children may be dropping out of school due to the poverty of their communities as poor communities may not have appropriate incentives to keep children studying such as employment opportunities or supportive school environment.

Therefore, it is fundamentally necessary to offset the effect of community poverty on dropout. As already indicated, poverty cuts across various levels such as the country, the community, the household and the individual. Thus, as indicated above, Yi *et al* (2012:561), Abuya *et al* (2013:757) and Glennerster and Takavarasha (in Delprato *et al* 2015:54) propose that conditional cash transfers or scholarships should be used. Indeed, these actions could ultimately serve as a deterrent to dropout in communities that are overstressed by poverty. In a similar vein, Hunt (2008:48) states that there is evidence indicating that households do not tend to withdraw their children in the face of calamities if they have access to credit through banks or local networks.

In addition, community violence is another factor that is associated with school dropout. As postulated by Abuya *et al* (2013:750), pupils drop out from school because of security concerns. Indeed, Levy (in No *et al* 2012:575) and Staff and Kreager (in No *et al* 2012:574) say that dropout rates were high in places where social security was low. Similarly, Leeds (in UNESCO 2016:123) argues that crime is regarded as a deterrent to formal school participation in Latin

America, particularly in areas where crime and violence are the greatest public concerns. According to UNESCO (2016:109), all forms of violence against children are detrimental to their education, leading to poor academic performance and less likelihood of finding employment.

Dropout is associated with the culture practised by the community. As stated by Ministério da Educação (2012:35) and Hunt (2008:36), there are cultural aspects that may help explain the problem of access or lack of retention in the schooling system. One of the most significant cultural aspects is the initiation rites. These tend to affect girls more than boys. According to Fox *et al* (2012:10), girls may regard themselves as adults after undergoing such rites and thus depreciate their formal education. If they decide to continue studying after passing through the initiation rites, these girls may drop out as a result of an identity conflict. Nekatibeb (in Hunt 2008:36), reports that communities in Ethiopia consider girls who have passed through initiation ceremonies as adults while teachers regard them as children. This problem has the potential to lead these children to drop out.

Also, there are cultural aspects that lead people to give unequal weight to the education of boys and girls. Girl education is frowned upon by some cultures. As reported by Delprato *et al* (2015:43), some communities see the education of girls as less important compared to their role as wives, while the education of boys is favoured in the belief that boys will care for their parents. It was found that in China, surprisingly, girls are regarded by some minority cultures as adults and are eligible to get married at the age of 9 (Xie in Lu *et al* 2016:245). Obviously, since female education is given less value, girls may be likely to drop out thanks to pressure from their families.

Therefore, in order to offset the effect of negative cultural aspects in schooling, some authors advise cultural change so that all children have access to schooling equally. According to

Delprato *et al* (2015:54), it is necessary to improve the empowerment of women through initiatives that challenge the current perceptions of societies on issues of gender roles. As noted by Delprato *et al* (2015:791), greater decision-making autonomy may allow women to negotiate for the labour of girls in the household and reduce the trade-off between her schooling time and the time it takes to do domestic chores. Campaigns for greater gender equality is active in Mozambique and the number of girls attending schools has increased in recent years. According to Ministério da Educação (2012:25), the percentage of girls in primary education increased from 45, 3% in 2004 to 47, 5% in 2011.

Furthermore, the geographic location of the community is another factor in school dropout. According to No *et al* (2016:216) and Birdsall *et al* (in Hunt 2008:33), dropout rates in rural settings are higher than those in the urban areas. There are various reasons to support why rural settings have higher dropout rates than urban areas. For example, rural settings have a lot of activities that may interfere with the schooling of children. Indeed, Blunch and Verner, Canagarajah and Coulombe, and Ersado (in Ananga 2011:7) claim that the rural children work more than the urban and peri-urban children. In addition, the illiteracy rate in rural areas is unacceptably high. As exposed above, in 2015, the illiteracy rate in Mozambique was 63% in rural settings compared with 23% in urban areas. As we should know, uneducated parents are less likely to see the importance of schooling than the educated ones. This is a serious concern because about 70% of the population in Mozambique lives in rural areas (Ministério da Educação 2012:11). In any case, children in rural settings are more prone to dropout. Nevertheless, Mugisha (in Hunt 2008:33) advises that this rural-urban divide is sometimes incorrect due to differences within certain areas. Put differently, urban areas are not homogeneous.

Moreover, dropout is linked to corruption. As postulated by Rose-Ackerman (in UNESCO 2015:253), dropout rates in countries characterised by high levels of corruption were five times higher than in those countries with little or without corruption. This is meaningful because corruption can highly ruin the spirit of education. For example, if students pay bribes to teachers in order to pass, this behaviour may cause some children, particularly the poor, to feel demotivated to continue studying. Also, school financial resources may be channelled to personal interests and not get the resources for that which the money is meant for. As a result, the school may lack some essential materials like chalk, pens, pencils, blackboards and many more. In any case, corruption may prompt the children to drop out.

2.4. PREDICTORS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL DROPOUT

Dropout does not occur suddenly. Rather, it is a process (Ananga 2011:380). As indicated by Hunt (2008:44) and Sabates *et al* (2013:227), frequently, there are signs that show that a child is about to drop out. Some of these signs, as postulated by Lewin (in Sabates *et al* 2013:227), include poor school attendance by the child, low performance, failure and overage enrolment. Indeed, Grant and Hallman, and the PROBE Team (in Hunt 2008:46) claim that scientific study indicates that poor school attendance and temporary withdrawals can both be signs of dropout. According to Grant and Hallman, and the PROBE Team (in Hunt 2008:46), irregular attendance and temporary withdrawal cause children to be left behind and they find it difficult to catch up when they return. Also, a child's attitude towards homework may be a predictor of her or his future decision to terminate their schooling (No *et al* 2016:221). Knowing that dropout is a process is extremely important in solving this problem. According to Hunt (2008:51), the points of intervention can be pinned down prior to the occurrence of dropout if the processes are known.

2.5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

From the above literature, it is clear that children drop out from school as a consequence of a multiplicity of factors. Dropout is a multidimensional phenomenon concerning the child, the family, the school and the community at large (Zuilkowski 2013:83). This shows that an appropriate framework to study dropout should offer a possibility of involving these four facets. Thus, to study the problem of dropout taking into account these four perspectives, the Bronfenbrenner ecological framework was used. This framework was developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, a psychologist who believed that a person's development was influenced by his or her surroundings. Indeed, according to this framework, as claimed by Abuya *et al* (2013:743), development is directly influenced by interactions that take place within a microsystem and indirectly influenced by those interactions taking place between systems.

These systems form complex layers from the closest to the most distant in terms of their impact on the child's development. These layers, as outlined by Bronfenbrenner (1979:22-26), comprise the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem. Each of these layers or systems is briefly discussed in this section. The first system is the microsystem. This is the closest system to the developing child while the macrosystem is the furthest. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979:22), the microsystem refers to those structures that are experienced by the child in a given setting. These include the home, the church, the school and all those other places with which the child has a direct contact. Bronfenbrenner (1979:22) argues that the interaction between the child and the environment within the microsystem is bi-directional. This means that both the child and the environment can influence each other directly. The mesosystem is the second layer in this framework. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979:25), this refers to the

interrelationship between the settings where the developing child is based like the connection between the child's parent and his or her teacher.

The third layer of this framework is the exosystem. As postulated by Bronfenbrenner (1979:25), this is about those settings where the developing child is not actively involved, but in which there are events that occur that affect or are affected by things taking place in the setting where the developing child is actively engaged. Some examples of the structures belonging to this layer as indicated by Bronfenbrenner (1979:25) comprise the activities of the school management and the parent's workplace. In this system, the child is not actively involved but he or she may sense the positive or negative effects through this system's interaction with a structure of his or her own microsystem like his home for example.

The macrosystem is the most distant layer in this framework affecting the child's development. As claimed by Bronfenbrenner (1979:26), the macrosystem refers to the consistencies observed in the lower-order layers namely the microsystem, the mesosystem and the exosystem along with the beliefs and ideology undergirding such consistencies. Put differently, the macrosystem is about the cultural values and laws governing a particular setting.

While the above exposition gives the original meaning of this framework, it stands to reason to report that this meaning was adapted to fit the intentions of this study. Indeed, for the purposes of this dissertation and in line with a study conducted in Kenya by Abuya *et al* (2013:743), the microsystem of the child is conceptualised to refer to the child-based factors, the mesosystem refers to the household-based factors, the exosystem refers to the school-based factors and finally, the macrosystem refers to the community-based factors. This adaptation is important because it allows the researcher to be sensitised about the fact that dropout is not a one-off event but rather, a complex process occurring as a result of interrelated factors. Indeed, as affirmed by

Hunt (2008:4), dropout is a process of events working together in order to produce it. Below is an outline of the factors investigated and these factors form the focus of the present study.

2.5.1. CHILD-LEVEL FACTORS

At this level, the study looks at the impact of age, gender, academic performance, school attendance, orphanhood and child labour on dropout. The impact of these factors on dropout has been documented in other studies of school dropout elsewhere. In fact, various authors cited above have concluded that these factors give rise to school dropout.

2.5.2. HOUSEHOLD FACTORS

At the level of the household, the study investigates the impact of household poverty, parental education and household composition on dropout. These factors are identified in other studies as causing children to dropout from school as evidenced by authors cited in this study.

2.5.3. SCHOOL FACTORS

Here the study focuses on four factors that lead children to drop out namely, the effect of education quality, teacher attitudes, cost of education and parental involvement in dropout. Indeed, many authors cited above have concluded that these factors are connected with absenteeism, grade repetition and dropout.

2.5.4. COMMUNITY FACTORS

Here the study focuses on one community-based factor, namely community culture. Culture is a crucial factor in the study of school dropout as it can have an influence on whether or not girls continue their schooling, which child is favoured, and a range of other factors. Several of the

authors cited above concluded that examining cultural aspects may reveal the reasons behind issues of school access, attendance, and retention.

2.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided the theoretical background regarding the problem of primary school dropout. It has shown that the definition of dropout is complex because it takes into account the duration of the withdrawal and the possibility of dropping in. The literature review has generated four groups of factors that give rise to dropout. These include child-based factors, household-based factors, school-based factors, and community-based factors. To examine all these factors, this chapter has shown that the Bronfenbrenner ecological framework was the most appropriate given the fact that this framework provides a wide scope for investigation. Also, the chapter has identified the predictors or signs of dropout. Below follows the description of the methodology that guided this study.

CHAPTER THREE

3. THE METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH APPROACH

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to delve into the reasons that lead primary school children to drop out and identify measures to curb the problem. The researcher believes that understanding and providing an apt solution to this would allow a large number of children who enrol in primary schools to graduate their last grade. To attain this understanding, the study focuses on three research questions. Firstly, it asks why learners drop out from primary schools in Chicualacuala, in Mozambique. Secondly, the study interrogates the predictors or precursors of primary school dropout in Chicualacuala, in Mozambique. Lastly, the study aims to discover ways to avoid the problem of school dropout in Chicualacuala, in Mozambique.

This chapter offers the description of the research methodology and is structured in the following way: Firstly, it describes the rationale that informed the research approach. This is followed by the description of the research sample, an outline of the research design, a description of the methods for data collection, a description of the steps taken for data analysis and synthesis, and an exposition of the ethical considerations and trustworthiness. Finally, the limitations of the study are identified.

3.2. RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH APPROACH

This study was based on a qualitative approach. Qualitative research aims to exhaustively investigate the root causes for observable behaviour (Burchinal 2008:116). According to Pretorius (2009:8), the main interest of qualitative researchers is to understand social phenomena

based on the meanings that people attach to their world instead of explaining people's actions according to general laws. In qualitative research the focus is on how the people under observation make sense of their world. This approach is distinctive from quantitative research in that qualitative research allows participants some agency and does not require data-collection instruments to be prepared ahead of time. In other words, this approach allows the researcher to make spontaneous discoveries or lets her or him uncover unanticipated information. As stated by Burchinal (2008:116), in qualitative studies, researchers mix informal interviews consisting of prolonged conversations with people and systematic observation of their daily activities. Instruments used in qualitative research generate data that can be expressed in words. Therefore, qualitative research was more suitable for the purpose of this study because it allowed an in-depth understanding of the realities held by the people being studied.

Quantitative approach would not be appropriate for this purpose. As claimed by Van Rensburg, Alpaslan, Du Ploony, Gelderblom, Van Eeden and Wigston (2009:22), the quantitative approach uses standardised procedures in order to study certain events and to learn something about their interconnections. These standardised procedures are different from the interviews that characterise qualitative research. Also, as postulated by Burchinal (2008:114), quantitative approach is based on numerical analysis. Again, this would not be suitable for this study, as it was meant to generate rich narrative data that was to be analysed by the researcher.

More specifically, this topic could most appropriately be studied through a case study method. As claimed by Burchinal (2008:128), a case study provides an understanding that is richer and more in-depth as compared to a survey. In addition, Merriam (in Bloomberg & Volpe 2008:80) suggests that educational phenomena can be better understood through a qualitative case study.

Therefore, the case study is the perfect method for this study as it would generate data that are both extensive and intensive.

3.3. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH SAMPLE

Before describing the research sample or research participants as commonly referred to by some qualitative researchers, it is crucial to describe the research setting. This study was conducted in one school in Chicualacuala district, in the Northern part of Gaza province in Mozambique. Chicualacuala is one of the largest districts in the province of Gaza, but has a remarkably small population. According to INE (in Instituto Nacional de Estatística 2013:10), Chicualacuala has 18 065 square Kilometres of land and represents about 24% of the province. However, as indicated by INE (in Instituto Nacional de Estatística 2013:10), Chicualacuala has 42,542 people, representing only 3% of people living in the province.

Moreover, the level of poverty in Chicualacuala is extremely high. According to INE (in Instituto Nacional de Estatística 2013:14), about 79% of households in Chicualacuala live in stick-and-mud-walled houses. Also, INE (in Instituto Nacional de Estatística 2013:15) further states that roughly 40% of households in Chicualacuala drink water from rivers, lakes or ponds and close to 64% of households do not have toilets in their homes.

Having briefly described the study setting, it is imperative to describe the study sample. Although the study population are children who had once experienced the problem of dropout, the study also includes other participants who can provide additional data about the study population and the topic. To clarify, this study made use of three types of participants namely the dropouts, the guardians and the teachers.

As for the first group of participants, the researcher purposively selected those learners who were 18 years or older and had once dropped out from the study school. As claimed by Creswell (in Mohlouoa 2014:58), purposive sampling ensures that the researcher is able to include research participants that are information rich due to bearing certain characteristics relevant to the study. In fact, the selection referred to above was based on some important features. The first was the gender of the participant and the second was their availability in the study area. Also, they should have dropped out from the study school at some point in the past. Lists of eligible candidates were provided by the school management at the request of the researcher. The researcher worked with school management, teachers, and learners to identify and locate the children who eventually took part in the study. In total, 12 participants with ages ranging from 18 to 29 years took part in the study. The gender distribution was 50/50 – 6 girls and 6 boys.

The choice of participants was also informed by the following reasons: Firstly, based on the findings of Ananga (2011:374) and Hunt (2008:51) there are few studies of school dropout that have used actual dropouts as participants. Thus, this would be an opportunity to examine the children themselves and find out about what sparked their withdrawal from school. Secondly, older learners were selected for the study because, as affirmed by No *et al* (2012:580), working with small children is problematic given the fact that they may provide misleading information. This setback was added to other constraints levelled against working with small children that will be alluded to below.

Having identified the first group of participants to take part in the study, the researcher then had to include the teachers and the guardians of those children who were aged 17 years or younger and had dropped out from the study school in 2015. It is crucially important to note that although there are children who are as old as 17 years here, they belong to primary school. As indicated in

this study, the problem of over age in grade children is common in Mozambique. Also, it should be noted that the teachers and the guardians just referred to are not related to the 12 research participants referred to above in terms of family ties or teacher-learner relationship.

The selection criteria of these two groups of participants were done in the following way. First, the researcher requested a list of eligible teachers from school management. They were considered to be eligible if they worked at the study school in 2015 and were continuing to work there during the duration of the study. The names of these teachers were grouped by the researcher in three cycles with the help of the school management. A cycle can be defined as a stage of schooling comprising two or more years of formal education. The division of cycles in three parts corresponds to how primary education is structured in Mozambique. Indeed, the first cycle comprises grades one and two, the second cycle comprises grades three, four and five, and finally, the third cycle comprises grades six and seven.

Once the teachers were divided in cycles, the number of teachers who were supposed to take part in the study was purposively selected. This was different from using the random sampling method that was indicated in the original plan for this study. This change from the original plan occurred for two important reasons. Firstly, some teachers who were working in the study school in 2015 had already been transferred when the study was conducted. This meant that there were few teachers left in the school. Also, some of the remaining teachers had registered as few as only one dropout in their classes. Obviously, sampling these teachers using a random sampling method became inappropriate.

Using the purposive sampling method, 6 teachers were selected for the study. In relation to their division according to cycles, 2 teachers were selected from each of the cycles.

Once the required number of teachers was selected, they were requested to provide a list of children who had dropped out from their classes in 2015. After the provision of the lists by all the participating teachers, the researcher, with the help of the teachers, purposively selected 4 children from each of the cycles. The selection was based on one important characteristic, namely the availability of the child's guardian. The age was not included in the selection criteria because the researcher hypothesised that its impact would be reflected between the cycles given the fact that the age increases as children progress from first to third cycle. Indeed, as postulated by No *et al* (2012:575), the risk factors that give rise to children's dropout in the first and last grades are different. In total, 12 children were selected.

Nevertheless, it is crucially significant to note that the selection of these children was made in order to identify their guardians. The selected children did not take part in the study. Thus, the researcher expected that both the teachers and the guardians of these children would provide rich information on why the children had decided to terminate their schooling. Also, the participants were expected to suggest measures to overcome the problem of dropout in Chicualacuala. In total, 12 guardians were selected in this way.

Indeed, the teachers and the guardians were selected for the study on two important reasons. Firstly, there was a need for a triangulation of the research participants. According to Burchinal (2008:352), triangulation is fundamentally important to successful qualitative research. Here, triangulation refers to combining more than one research participant to understand why children drop out and what should be done in order to curb this problem. In a similar vein, Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:71) define triangulation as the use of various perspectives to shed light on meaning. Secondly, only the teachers and the guardians were selected rather than the children who dropped out in 2015 because, aside from working with small children leading to misleading

information (No *et al* 2012:580), children should never be part of a study if the results may be obtainable when working with adults (UNISA 2014:14). Globally, 30 participants were expected to take part in the study.

3.4. THE RESEARCH DESIGN

In this section, the process involved in the design of this study is described. A more detailed discussion of some of the steps taken is provided below.

Following the choice of the study topic entitled *primary school dropout: case of Chicualacuala, Mozambique*, the researcher carefully selected the sources on the topic. After the selection, the sources were critically reviewed in order to write a research proposal. Once the research proposal was accepted and the ethical clearance was granted by the Departmental Research Ethics Review Committee at UNISA, further sources were located and critically reviewed before the actual empirical study was conducted.

The research approach chosen was the case study. In fact, the research participants were contacted in person by the researcher and those selected were examined through interviews and focus group discussions. The interviews and focus group discussions were designed to collect data on dropout and possible ways to curb the issue. The interviews, which were in-depth in nature, were conducted with the 12 dropouts and the focus group discussions – that were 4 in total – were conducted with the 6 teachers and the 12 guardians. It should be noted that focus group discussions with teachers and the guardians were held separately. In addition to delving into the causes and panaceas to the problem of dropout, the interviews and the focus group discussions were used to examine the predictors of this problem.

The researcher also observed the behaviour of the teachers, pupils and teachers – this is often called the observation method. The use of the observation method preceded the interviews and the focus group discussions, it was designed to observe the occurrence of those factors referred to in the literature as leading children to terminate their schooling.

Following the interviews, the focus group discussions and the observation of behaviour, the researcher carefully analysed resulting data. To do this, the researcher followed two steps, namely: ensuring that the research findings were reported correctly, and ensuring correct interpretation and synthesis of the data. As stated above, the following section discusses some of the steps that were considered pertinent to this study.

3.5. DATA-COLLECTION METHODS

As already referred to above, Burchinal (2008:352) states that triangulation is important to a successful qualitative research. Therefore, in order to meet the requirements of triangulation, the researcher combined various data-collection methods namely the interviews, the focus group discussions and the observation method.

3.5.1. INTERVIEWS

In this study, the interviews were chosen as the primary method for data generation. The interviews were semi-structured and were conducted with the children who had dropped out from the study school in the previous years. Interviews that are less structured are appropriate for qualitative research (Babbie 2011:312). The potential participants in the interviews were personally contacted by the researcher. All the participants in the interviews were dropouts from the study school. Fortunately, all those who were contacted to take part in the study accepted. Consent was obtained from all the 12 participants.

The choice of the semi-structured interviews was advantageous for this kind of study, as it allowed the researcher to delve deep into the understanding of the interviewees by adjusting questions where required. This allowed for more in-depth interview sessions. According to Van Rensburg *et al* (2009:180), the main purpose of in-depth interviews is to get detailed information. Thus, rich information on why children drop out and how to eradicate the problem was obtained through this method.

It is worth noting that one of the weaknesses of semi-structured interviews is that some topics may be omitted (Patton in Pretorius 2009:83). In addition, the level of cooperation, articulation and perception differs from person to person (Bloomberg & Volpe 2008:81). Therefore, in order to reduce the impact of topic omission, the researcher made all possible efforts to get as much detail as he could regarding the aspects related to the purpose of the research. As far as the problems of cooperation, articulation and perception are concerned, the researcher tried to build rapport with the dropouts when they were first requested to take part in the study. During this initial encounter, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and the relevant ethical issues.

To develop the interview guide, the researcher made matrices to ensure that the research questions were in line with the interview questions. This is based on Bloomberg and Volpe's (2008:83) assertion that matrices are constructed to ensure that the research questions of the study are related to the questions of the interview. Also, the interview guides used in other studies on dropout were reviewed to see what could be included in this study. Once the interview guide for this study was completed, it was submitted to the researcher's supervisor for review. After a series of interactions between the supervisor and the researcher, the final version was produced and subsequently approved. Thereafter, the instrument was field tested in order to see

whether the participants would understand the research questions. This is typically tested by asking if the participants understand each question and by timing the length of an interview (Burchinal 2008:276). It is important to note that the participants who took part in the field test are not the same as those who took part in the official interview process, although both groups bore similar characteristics. This is in line with Burchinal's (2008:275) assertion that the pre-test should be done with a small sample of participants who bear similarities to those who will be interviewed later. The final interview guide is included as Appendix A.

The field test showed that the chosen instruments were in order. Thereafter empirical study with the research participants followed. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, at the homes of each respective participant, at a pre-arranged time and date. Each participant was asked to sign the consent letter. The consent letter was presented in Shangana, the language of the participants, to avoid any misunderstandings.

It should be noted that some participants were not available at their homes at the set time, however alternative arrangements were made where appropriate and all participants were eventually interviewed. All the interviews were conducted in Shangana and were audio recorded on a mobile phone. Once the interviews were completed, the researcher transcribed the recordings for analysis. Each interview took less than 60 minutes – a length of time that is considered suitable (Burchinal 2008:277).

For ethical reasons and anonymity, the names of all participants are omitted. Furthermore, all data were stored on a computer protected with a password known only to the researcher, to guarantee that no one other than the researcher would have access.

3.5.2. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The focus group discussions were conducted with the selected teachers and guardians. According to Babbie (2011:315), focus group discussions allow the researcher to hold conversations with many people at the same time. In number terms, Babbie (2011:315) suggests that a focus group should comprise of 5 to 15 persons assembled in an appropriate environment and involved in a guided discussion on a particular topic. Potential participants for the focus group discussions were personally contacted by the researcher. Although all the contacted people from the two groups had agreed to be part of the study, 1 teacher and 3 guardians did not appear at the interview venue. Thus, the actual number of participants was 5 teachers and 9 guardians.

Each participant was asked to sign letter of consent when they were initially contacted. However, in regards to the guardians, their consent was obtained verbally to 3 members as they were unable to read and write and it was written to 9 members who were literate. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study using the language each group felt most comfortable with. As a result, Portuguese was used during the interaction with the teachers while Shangana was used with the guardians. The interviews during the focus group discussions were semi-structured.

One of the advantages of focus group interviews is that they may allow the researcher to obtain a multiplicity of opinions on an issue (Van Rensburg *et al* 2009:180). Moreover, focus group discussions, as argued by Krueger (in Babbie 2011:316), include the provision of immediate results and little cost. Furthermore, Babbie (2011:316) states that in focus groups, aspects not anticipated by the researcher or unlikely to emerge from interviews conducted individually are normally brought about by group dynamics.

However, focus group discussions also have some shortcomings. According to Van Rensburg *et al* (2009:180), in focus group discussions participants may be influenced by others to conform. This is known as group think in academic community. In addition, Babbie (2011:316) says that

one or more persons in focus group discussions may dominate the conversation. Also, Van Rensburg *et al* (2009:180) further argue that it is difficult to guarantee confidentiality in focus group discussions.

Therefore, it became fundamentally necessary to offset the negative effect of focus group discussions. In this case, to mitigate the problems posed by conformity and domination, the researcher explained to all participants in the group discussions that everyone's opinions and ideas were equally valid and valuable, and that all were welcome to speak without reservation. As for the protection of research participants from harm – either physical or psychological resulting from identifying research results with participants – the researcher guaranteed confidentiality. According to Babbie (2011:492), confidentiality means that the researcher promises not to expose information of the participants although the researcher is able to identify such information with the participants. Therefore, all the names of the participants were omitted when reporting the findings. Also, to ensure that the data would not be accessed by another person, the researcher stored all the data on a password-protected computer that could only be accessed by him.

Two interview sessions were held with each of the two groups of participants. The researcher decided to conduct the interviews separately for ethical reasons that will be made clear below. In total, four focus group interview sessions were conducted. Each interview lasted less than 120 minutes – the maximum time considered appropriate for focus group discussion sessions (Burchinal 2008: 364).

The data from the discussions were recorded by the researcher using a mobile phone. This resonates with Burchinal's (2008:279) suggestion that responses may be audiotaped or annotated during qualitative interviews. The interviews were informed by a focus group interview guide

that had been prepared by the researcher beforehand. There were two interview guides in total: one for the teachers and one for the guardians.

In order to develop the interview guides for the focus group discussions, the researcher identified the aspects that related to the purpose of the study. Some of these aspects were adapted from previous research on similar topics. The supervisor played a crucial role in the refinement of these instruments. After a number of interactions between the researcher and the supervisor, sound versions of the focus group discussion guides were produced. After approval, these final versions were field tested with participants similar with each of the two groups of participants. The purpose of the field test was to set or adapt the level of difficulty of the questions and to establish the approximate duration of the discussion. The focus group discussion guides are included as Appendix B for the teachers and Appendix C for the guardians.

3.5.3. OBSERVATION OF BEHAVIOUR

Another method for data-collection used in this study was the observation method. More specifically, participant observation was employed. This means that the researcher travelled to the study school in order to make observations. As defined by Burchinal (2008:339), participant observation is when the researcher observes people while participating with them in their day-to-day activities. Since the researcher was a headmaster of a nearby school and would frequently come to the study school for work commitments, it was easy for him to enter the school premises during the study without being regarded as an intruder by teachers or learners. Nevertheless, it is important to note that despite this privilege, permission to conduct the study in the selected school was obtained from the school management prior to conducting this study. Therefore, the behaviour of the teachers and the learners was easily observed by the researcher at the study school.

However, with the exception of those teachers who participated in the focus group discussions and the school management, other teachers working in the study school were not informed about the study nor were the learners. This was to reduce reactivity. According to Babbie (2011:290-291), reactivity is the phenomenon whereby people being observed change their behaviour in several ways when they know that they are being observed.

Although some observational data were collected without the consent of the people being observed, this action should not be interpreted as something that was unjustified. Indeed, as postulated by Burchinal (2008:154), some researchers argue that three conditions may justify conducting research without obtaining consent. These include: the fact that the behaviour is public, no interference is made in the behaviour on the part of the researcher, and the observation does not cause harm (Burchinal 2008:154).

Each of these conditions was met. In fact, the behaviour of the teachers and the learners took place naturally in the schoolyard and was observable to anyone. More significantly, the school was not fenced and had two paths alongside it. This meant that the space was public as there were no real restrictions that prevented anyone from entering or observing behaviour. That being said, the school records, which were consulted as part of the study, were not public because they were kept in the school archives. These records were provided by school management upon request by the researcher. They included statistical maps and class books. These records were important for the observation of the average age of children at each school level along with orphanhood and school attendance. Additionally, the children's exercise books were observed to see children's ability to write.

Yet, no criticism should be levelled against the observation of private archives. This follows from the fact that consent to conduct this study at the school had been obtained. The permission letters are included as appendices D and E.

The observational method was chosen for two important reasons. Firstly, since the purpose of the study was to gain in-depth understanding of the reasons behind primary school dropout and how the problem could be solved, participant observation was appropriate. As postulated by Burchinal (2008:338), participant observation is ideal if the purpose of the study is to know why behaviour occurs the way it does. Secondly, the researcher wanted to see whether the observations, which were informed by the literature review, were supported by data obtained from dropouts, teachers and guardians. This called for a triangulation of data-collection methods.

However, this method was characterised by some limitations. As claimed by Babbie (2011:291), the researcher runs the risk of losing objectivity as a result of “going native” or thinking like the research participants.

The observation of behaviour was done on three occasions. Firstly, teachers and pupils were observed during break times. Secondly, since the school lessons were always preceded by the National Anthem, the researcher observed the teachers and the learners at the gathering for this activity. Lastly, due to the fact that the school benefited from a feeding project, the researcher decided to observe teachers and pupils during their lunch break. The feeding project was run by the WFP and offered mealie pap and beans to all pupils and teachers at school.

It is important to note that each observation session had predetermined aspects. This is in line with Babbie’s (2011:317) assertion that before the beginning of the study, a great deal of crucial observations can be anticipated. To this end, the researcher prepared the aspects that he was

supposed to observe during each session. The recording form for the observation method is included as Appendix F. However, as warned by Babbie (2011:317), this advanced preparation should not block the recording of unanticipated aspects. Thus, other aspects considered important by the researcher were recorded when applicable. The observation instrument was refined by the researcher's supervisor.

Then, once the study was underway, the researcher recorded the observations on the basis of a schedule. The observations made on the teachers and the learners was made using memory and this was followed by notes on a recording form. This is in accordance with Burchinal's (2008:352) warning when he says that whenever possible, memory notes should be converted into full field notes once the observation has come to an end in order to avoid data distortion. Moreover, the notes were taken unobtrusively to avoid reactivity. According to Babbie (2011:317), people tend to modify their behaviour if they see that notes are being taken. As for the observation of school records, notes were taken right away as no reactivity would take place given the fact that the observation was indirect.

To guarantee that the wellbeing of those who were observed was not compromised, the researcher decided to keep the notes in a safe place. Eventually, these notes will be destroyed. Also, the handwritten notes converted into digital notes were stored on a computer protected with a password. This data can only be accessed by the researcher.

3.6. DATA ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

The methods of data collection outlined above generated masses of data that required analysis. These data were analysed in the light of Bronfenbrenner Ecological Framework exposed in the literature review chapter. This framework proposes that development occurs because of

interaction between various systems. In this study, these systems were conceptualised to mean child-based factors, household-based factors, school-based factors and community-based factors. In an effort to define analysis, Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:98) argue that it is concerned with the reduction and presentation of data. Creswell, citing Tesch (in Van Rensburg *et al* 2009:239-240) claim that although the most important activity of analysis is sorting data into chunks of information, the ultimate goal is the development of a complete picture. This means that data analysis and synthesis are inseparable. Indeed, while the former means breaking the raw data into smaller units, the latter means making sense of these smaller units and bringing about a consolidated portrait.

Therefore, to analyse the masses of data generated by the research instruments, the researcher followed a step-wise approach. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:99) argue that to a certain degree, qualitative data analysis is a step-by-step process that involves a combination of approaches. However, in practice, there was a constant forward and backward movement during the process of data analysis in this study. In fact, this to-and-fro movement is supported by Leedy (in Van Rensburg *et al* 2009:242) stating that a linear procedure is not followed in qualitative data analysis. The steps followed include the organisation of data, identification of categories, the codification of the material, the preparation of data summary tools and memos, the assortment and placement of coded data in categories, and, finally, the reporting of findings.

Starting with the organisation of data, it is important to state that following the collection of data, audiotapes were transcribed word-for-word on a personal computer. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:97) advise that interviews should be transcribed verbatim. As for the notes made during the observation study, the researcher typed them up in a recording form that had been prepared beforehand.

Data from personal interviews, focus group discussions and from the observation method were managed through Microsoft Word 2013. In order to allow easy access, each document type was labelled appropriately. The final tally was: 12 transcripts from the 12 dropouts, one transcript for the focus group discussion with the 9 guardians, another for the focus group discussion with the 5 teachers, and, finally, the recording form containing notes taken during the observation.

Following the organisation of data, came the phase for the generation of categories. This was done by reading through all the data stored on the computer. This strategy followed Bloomberg and Volpe's (2008:101) recommendation that each transcript should be read in order to identify big ideas or themes. These big ideas or themes were those ideas that helped to answer the research questions. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:101), the initial reading is done to allow the researcher to have a glimpse of the whole before breaking it into parts. In other words, the researcher makes the initial appreciation of the raw data to be sensitised about the data before embarking on the analysis.

After the initial reading and the identification of categories, all the data sources were read again and coded manually by the researcher. This was different from the original plan that proposed a mechanical data analysis because, in practice, the researcher felt more comfortable to code data personally. According to Neuman (in Van Rensburg *et al* 2009:245), codes are labels attributed to the meaning units. As stated by Van Rensburg *et al* (2009:246), meaning units are sections of information that ensure coding. These meaning units were generated from the raw data. In order to code the data sources, the researcher used a coding legend. The coding legend is included as Appendix G.

The codes combined letters and numbers. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:95) argue that the process of coding involves attaching alphanumeric system to chunks of information in the transcripts.

These codes were written alongside the chunks of information in the data sources following Bloomberg and Volpe's (2008:102) advice that codes may be written either in the margins or alongside the text.

The codes for this study came from two sources. As postulated by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:75), the process of data analysis is simultaneously a deductive and inductive undertaking. Therefore, the categories obtained from the literature review deductively oriented the researcher to identify the meaning units from the raw data that were conceptually related to them. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:99) consider this as a template approach. Conversely, categories not referred to in the literature review were inductively generated from the raw data. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:99), this is termed editing approach. The categories that were created as a result of the editing approach were regarded as the emerging themes of the study.

The coding process followed a two-step process. Firstly, the researcher used open coding to code the words used by the participants. According to Babbie (2011:398), open coding is the first categorisation of concepts in qualitative data analysis. Following the initial labelling, the researcher used axial coding to code the contents of open coding. As described by Babbie (2011:399), axial coding is when the researcher re-analyses the results of open coding in order to identify the most crucial general concepts. The researcher used the verbatim transcripts of interviews to identify common phrases used by participants to describe major themes relating to the stated research objectives. These phrases were in turn matched with the conceptual framework undergirding the study. In this fashion, codes were set up.

During the coding process, two other activities were taking place. This is in line with Bloomberg and Volpe's (2008:103) advice that while data are being read, sorted and coded, the data summary tables and memos should be attended to at the same time. According to Bloomberg and

Volpe (2008:103), data summary tables are tools that capture how each participant responded about each of the categories. Thus, as the data were being coded, the data summary tables were being checked to see the number of times each descriptor of a category was invoked by the participants and, in the meantime, additional notes were made.

Once all data had been coded, they were sorted and placed into categories. As postulated by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:105), once the researcher has coded the data, he or she may start to copy the quotes and paste them in their corresponding categories. Four groups of factors emerged from the empirical study as leading children to drop out.

After the assortment and placement of coded material into categories, the researcher reported the findings. Here, the quotations from the participants were used to support the findings statements. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:107) argue that findings should be presented with objectivity in the best possible way.

To write the findings chapter, the data summary tables became the most crucial tools. These tools allowed the researcher to see the number of times each descriptor of a category was mentioned by various participants and identify the patterns. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:131), qualitative researchers are interested in the concentration of responses across various participants. The researcher made a cross-case analysis of responses in the data summary table to uncover patterns. These patterns were used to report the findings of the study.

As stated above, the process of data analysis is simultaneously a deductive and inductive undertaking (Bloomberg & Volpe 2008:75). This means that the codes that informed the reporting of findings came from the literature and the raw data. It was found that many of the factors indicated by the research participants as causing children to drop out from school were

similar to those already identified in the literature. Be that as it may, some new aspects were uncovered. These were considered to be emergent factors on the problem of dropout.

After the interpretation of findings, they were linked to the relevant literature. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:133) state that linking the analysis to the available literature is an important step in interpretation. This means that it was imperative to identify literature related to the findings.

Finally, following the analysis and the synthesis of the research, the researcher considered the implication of the study. Thus, he had to formulate some relevant conclusions and practical recommendations that could curb the problem of dropout. To do so, a consistency chart of findings, interpretations and conclusions was used. Most significantly, the recommendations were informed by the literature review and the empirical study.

3.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Because field research involves direct and intimate contact between researchers and participants, it raises ethical problems in an amazing fashion (Babbie 2011:322). Aware of this, the study took necessary measures to identify ethical issues associated with it and proposed ways to address such issues. On this point, Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:85) state that it is the responsibility of social researchers to inform and protect participants.

Three ethical principles became fundamental to the study. The first of these is the principle of voluntary participation. As claimed by Babbie (2011:478), the regular activities of subjects are disrupted by their participation in a study. Thus, it is crucially important to guarantee that participants are not coerced to take part in the study. In other words, they should voluntarily accept to be participants. This was the case for the dropouts, teachers and guardians as they were studied obtrusively through interviews and focus group discussions. As for the participants

studied through the observational technique, this principle was violated because these participants were observed unobtrusively. However, the second principle was strictly observed with these participants.

The second ethical principle considered in this study was a need for not harming the research participants in any way. Although it was anticipated that this study would not cause any physical harm to the research participants, the researcher employed powerful safeguards to ensure that psychological harm would not happen. As maintained by Babbie (2011:479), social research usually requires subjects to expose information that may embarrass them or jeopardise their social life.

The research participants had the potential to expose information that would cause loathing among themselves. For example, a certain parent might say that a particular teacher caused their child to drop out. If such accusation became known by the teacher, the future of the children belonging to such a parent might be doomed. Therefore, it was crucially important to employ a strong safeguard against identifying the research participants. To that end, confidentiality was assured. According to Babbie (2011:482), confidentiality means that in spite of the fact that the researcher can identify the participants' information, he or she promises not to do so publicly. Therefore, all the names of the research participants were omitted in the report of findings.

Also, another important aspect related to this principle was the possibility of invoking distressful incidents that might have caused a child to drop out. An example of such an incident might be the death of parents. If the incident is deemed significant and the child is not receiving any welfare help, the researcher would connect such a child to the appropriate support services available in the area. Fortunately, some children who had dropped out due to such distressful

incidents were aided by the social welfare organisation that is operating in the area. It should be stated, however, that some participants suggested that the help provided was negligible.

The last ethical principle observed in this study was the need to obtain informed consent from the research participants. As stated by Babbie (2011:480), informed consent means that participants agree to take part in a study following a full understanding of the potential risks involved. However, such informed consent was obtained from the dropouts, the teachers and the guardians. This was due to the fact that, as exposed above, the researcher studied these participants obtrusively using interviews and focus group discussions. To obtain the informed consent, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and the inherent risks. It was in the light of this that the participants were asked to take part in the study. Informed consent letters are included as Appendices H, I and J.

As for the observation technique, there was no need to obtain an informed consent. This is because the study through this method was unobtrusive. Yet, as already indicated, no harm would take place on the observed participants because their names were not exposed. In addition, all the data related to the study was stored on a computer protected with a password that would only be accessed by the researcher.

3.8. THE VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE STUDY

In social research, the concepts of validity and reliability are extremely important. As postulated by Babbie (2011:414), validity involves asking whether the researcher measures what he or she says is being measured. With regard to reliability, Babbie (2011:415) states that it is about whether a data-collection method would produce the same results whenever it is used again.

Various strategies were used to enhance the quality of this research in terms of these two concepts.

To ensure validity or credibility as some qualitative researchers prefer to call it, four strategies were used. Firstly, probes were used during the interviews and the focus group discussions to delve deep into the meanings held by the research participants. Secondly, the researcher reported the data in an unbiased way. Given and Saumure (2008:896) argue that, in qualitative research, data should be represented as accurately as possible. Therefore, in the presentation of findings, the researcher tried by all means to say exactly what the research participants said during the process of data collection. Thirdly, validity was also enhanced by the triangulation of the participants in the study. As indicated above, the dropouts, the teachers and the guardians were interviewed separately. Here, repeated assertions by these different research participants were regarded as an indication of agreement on a point. Burchinal (2008:353) states that when the research participants provide the same information on a particular point, their responses can be regarded as accurate. The last strategy to strengthen validity was the reporting of discrepant findings. In this study, some participants disagreed on particular points.

With regards the enhancement of reliability (or dependability of as claimed by some qualitative researchers) two strategies were used. However, it is important to note that Babbie (2011:321) affirms that qualitative research has a problem with reliability. Thus, since reliability is concerned with whether or not the same results may be yielded upon further studies, the researcher first tried his best to ensure that an explanation of how the data were collected and analysed was given in detail. This detailed description of the methodology was to ensure that other researchers would be able to replicate the study. Secondly, during the coding process, the researcher asked some colleagues to review the codes created from the transcribed interviews

and focus group discussions. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008:75) recommend that inter-rater reliability consisting of requesting some colleagues to read the interview transcripts in order to review the codes should be obtained.

Apart from the foregoing discussion on validity and reliability, another important point that merits attention is the generalisability or transferability of the findings. According to Mohloua (2014:63), transferability refers to how the results of a particular qualitative research can be generalisable or transferrable to other places. To guarantee transferability, Mqulwana (in Mohloua 2014:63) says that the context of the research should be described. Therefore, the researcher described the research setting in a way that the readers could judge where the results could be applicable.

3.9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Just like any scientific research, this study contains some limitations. While some of these limitations are associated with qualitative research as a paradigm, there are also other limitations that are inherent to the design of the study. Yet, it is fundamentally important to note that these limitations were given careful thought in order to reduce their impact.

The first limitation of this study was the lack of generalisability of the results of the study. This is due to the fact that the study used a limited number of participants associated with only a single school in Chicualacuala. Thus, the results from this study could hardly be generalised to other schools in the district let alone the schools around the country. This limitation was controlled by describing the context of the study so that readers could easily decide on the places where the results could be applicable.

The second limitation of the study was the time. The empirical component of this study produced a large amount of data that required a considerable length of time to analyse. The tight deadline for the dissertation meant that the analysis was done with a certain degree of urgency. This means that much attention was paid to the meaning units linked to the theoretical framework and the purpose of the study. That said, the researcher also paid some attention to the emerging themes that could meet the purpose of the study.

The third limitation of this study was the limited availability of locally-based literature on the problem of primary school dropout. Because of that, a great deal of resources used in this study was international, mainly from other developing countries as they share common characteristics.

The fourth limitation is the credibility of the experiences of the dropout participants. The accounts of some of these participants who had dropped out from school some years ago might not be credible or no longer relevant. While it would be difficult to control this limitation, an effort was made to include 12 participants belonging to this group. This meant that the repetition of their assertions would be taken as an indication of agreement and hence, it would increase the validity of such assertions.

The fifth limitation of the study was the grouping of males and females in the same focus group discussions. Here, the gender dynamics may have inhibited some participants to voice their opinions about the problem under study. However, before embarking on the focus group discussions, the researcher told all the participants that they should feel free to speak. Also, the research participants were assured that whatever they said would be kept confidential and that they would remain anonymous.

3.10. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is crucial to indicate that this chapter has provided a detailed description of the research methodology that was used to conduct the study. The chapter has shown that the case study method was chosen to delve into the reasons that cause some primary school children to drop out from school and provide some feasible recommendations to curb the problem.

In relation to the research sample, the chapter has exposed that three types of participants were used. These were the dropout children, the guardians and the teachers. In total, 27 participants took part in the study out of 30 participants who were expected.

As for the data-collection methods, the study has used three methods. These included the in-depth interviews, the focus group discussions and the observational method. As shown in this chapter, these data-collection methods generated voluminous masses of data that were analysed and synthesised using some logical steps.

In addition, this study took into account three ethical principles. The first of these principles was voluntary participation. Secondly, no harm was supposed to be inflicted on the research participants. Finally, the participants were expected to provide informed consent.

Moreover, the issues of validity and reliability received due attention in this study. As for validity, it is crucial to note the use of probes, presentation of data in an unbiased way, the use of different participants or triangulation and, lastly, the presentation of discrepant findings. In relation to reliability, the researcher offered a detailed description of how the study was conducted to ensure dependability. Also, he obtained inter-rater reliability to review the codes in the transcripts.

Finally, the chapter has presented the limitations of the study. These included lack of generalisability of the study results, time constraints that characterised the study process,

shortage of local sources on dropout, possibility of forgetfulness of critical issues associated with dropout on the part of the dropout children given the fact that a long time was passing after the dropout event and the study and, finally, the grouping of women and men in the same setting in the focus group discussions might have inhibited the expression of gender sensitive issues by the participants. The next chapter reports the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING OF FINDINGS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to delve into the reasons that lead primary school children to drop out from school and identify measures to curb the problem. It was believed that understanding the causes that give rise to dropout and following the suggested solutions, the occurrence of the problem would be limited and hence, an overwhelming majority of primary school children would complete primary school education once registered.

Indeed, the empirical component of this study generated a range of findings that potentially lead children to quit their schooling. These findings are grouped as factors belonging to the child, the household, the school and the community in line with the theoretical framework used in this study. This is the Bronfenbrenner Ecological Framework which affirms that development is influenced by interplay between various systems as explained above. In this study, these systems are conceptualised as child-based factors, household-based factors, school-based factors and community-based factors. Starting with those factors concerning the child, this chapter shows that these include age of the child, gender of the child, academic performance, school attendance, orphanhood, child labour, lack of interest to schooling, migration, substance consumption and bad relationship with colleagues. As for the factors belonging to the household, it is seen that dropout is associated with household poverty, the parental education and the composition of the household. As regards the factors belonging to the school, it is indicated that education quality, teacher attitudes, cost of education, educational resources, parental involvement in the schooling of children and school management are significant factors in causing children to quit their

schooling. Finally, in relation to the factors belonging to the community, this chapter reveals that the culture of the community, value given to education, enjoyment of night life by children, participation of children in smuggling, illegal gambling and exaggerated freedom given to children are crucial risk factors for dropout.

In addition, the chapter includes findings about the predictors or signs of dropout. These include irregular attendance, poor performance or grade repetition, being over age in grade, lack of motivation to study, enjoyment of night life and substance consumption.

All the findings statements are backed up by direct quotations taken from the in-depth interviews with children and the focus group discussions with the teachers and the guardians to guarantee that the voices of the participants are reported accurately. Also, in some sections, the findings from the observational method are interwoven with the findings from the other methods. Below is the discussion of the findings.

4.2. CHILD-BASED FACTORS

The empirical component of this study found a range of child level-factors that lead children to drop out. These factors include the age, gender, academic performance, and school attendance of the child, along with orphanhood, child labour, lack of interest to schooling, migration, substance consumption and bad relationship with colleagues.

4.2.1. THE AGE OF THE CHILD

All 12 children interviewed were over age in grade. In fact, they were between 3 and 9 years above the appropriate age of the grades they were attending when they dropped out. One parent described how the age of his son affected his schooling and said:

My child left school in 2015 because he thought he was no longer a child. I came here to find out and perceived that the teachers were no longer being respected by him. He said bad things to the teachers... He thought he was grown-up, but we still considered him as a child. (Parent, FGD)

Also, the observation of the school records conducted by the researcher in the study school on 4 July 2017 revealed that there were children who were older than the appropriate age for the grades that they were attending. This finding was consistent with data obtained from interviews and focus group discussions. The highest average was registered in grade 5, set at 12, 4 years. Since the appropriate age for grade 5 in Mozambique is 10 years, this average clearly shows that the incidence of over age in grade children was high, especially in the grade in question.

4.2.2. THE GENDER OF THE CHILD

Gender was another crucial factor that was highly associated with the problem of dropout particularly for girls. Specifically, early marriages, pregnancies, initiation rites, and a lack of emphasis on girl education emerged as factors that led some children to drop out from school. Commenting on the impact of early marriages and pregnancies, one of the female dropouts said: “It was pregnancy that caused me to drop out.” Another girl commented: “I left school because I had been cheated to get married.”

In addition, two participants commented on initiation rites and the lack of emphasis on educating girls. These participants expressed themselves in the following way:

...children are taken to initiation rites in order to make men believe that the child is grown up in order to get married and *lobolo* [money or property given to the woman’s family by her husband at marriage] may be paid. (Teacher, FGD)

There are parents or guardians who do not see the education of their girl children as something that deserves priority. They think that investing in the education of a girl child is like watering the garden of another person because she will grow up and get married and this will only help another person. (Teacher, FGD)

4.2.3. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Poor academic performance was another child-level factor that led some children to quit their schooling. One dropout commented: “My performance was bad. I used to get marks as low as zero.” Another dropout participant said:

I left school because I knew nothing at school. I failed three times. I decided to stop because I saw that it was all the same... I felt demotivated because I failed many times to the extent that my younger brother overtook me. When I failed the exams the third time, I stopped. I didn't register again. (Dropout, IDI)

However, a very small proportion of participants spoke favourably about the academic performance of their dropout children. One parent recalled: “My child's performance was good but she dropped out.”

4.2.4. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The majority of study participants consented that the school attendance of the dropouts was poor. A guardian of one dropout child commented: “My child missed school a lot because she did not use to arrive at school. We found out about that at the end of the year.” In a similar vein, a dropout child himself recalled: “I used to be absent from school about three days a week.” Moreover, another guardian said:

Many children who drop out do not come to school regularly. Since we have a school feeding programme, many children who drop out may come to school for lunch and go somewhere else just after that. (Guardian, FGD)

Also, during the observation of school archives done on 5 July 2017, the researcher found that in 2015, roughly between 5 and 13% of children were absent from school on the days that were selected for observation, although many teachers did not routinely monitor absenteeism. Because poor attendance is inextricably linked to dropout, one can reasonably infer that absenteeism played a significant role in the school dropout among learners in 2015.

4.2.5. ORPHANHOOD

In the study school, orphanhood was common. Indeed, during the observation process of the school records conducted on 4 July 2017, the researcher saw that the study school had 17% of orphaned children. Since orphanhood is associated with many factors that make sustained school difficult, some children may have dropped out due to it.

Nevertheless, a considerable number of participants said that there were some safeguards to avoid orphanhood-induced dropout. For example, one guardian said: “My child received a school bag and exercise books in 2015 because he has no father.” In addition, a teacher commented: “There is a direct funding to schools, these children [orphans] get help from this amount, and we buy some school materials like the exercise books.” Also, another teacher reported: “I had one orphan...on commemorative days like the first June, as we usually have a small party in our school, the child was exempted from paying money for contribution.” Furthermore, another teacher affirmed: “Save the Children... provided kits to the disadvantaged children... [and these kits] were comprised of schoolbags and exercise books ... including school uniform.”

Although some orphans received some school materials, some participants said that the help received could not overcome the disadvantages created by orphanhood. One guardian said: “Locally, we have INAS [the National Institute for Social Security] that provides some help to vulnerable children, although it may not be like a child who is living with both parents.”

4.2.6. CHILD LABOUR

Child labour was another child-based factor that drove some children out of school. The types of child labour that emerged as incompatible with sustained schooling included herding the cattle, taking care of small children, working in income generating activities, and working in the fields.

In relation to cattle herding, one guardian said that "... boys drop out in order to herd the cattle knowing that they will receive a cow at the end of the year." As for a child taking care of a sibling, a teacher revealed that "sometimes the girl is ordered by her mother to stay away from school in order to babysit her sibling while the mother does something else." With regard to working in income generating activities, a dropout reported: "I left school because of employment. My employer did not allow me to go to school." By the same token, another dropout said: "I used to work for people at the market selling their things in order to buy food and clothes." As far as agricultural activities are concerned, one dropout participant proclaimed:

I left school because of cultivating the fields. When the cultivation period started, there was no one to work at home and they [the parents] told me that I had to work in the fields. (Dropout, IDI)

4.2.7. LACK OF INTEREST IN SCHOOLING

Some parents were disturbed about the lack interest their children had in their education. Three guardians expressed their worries in the following way:

I had two dropouts in 2015. One had school materials but refused to come to school. When I said he was supposed to come to school he even left home and started living with the neighbours. (Guardian, FGD)

My granddaughter left school at her own initiative...When I ask her the reason why she does not go to school she just says I do not want to go. I do not know why she left school. (Guardian, FGD)

My child accepted to be given a bath in order to go to school. However, he couldn't arrive at school. His teacher used to tell me that he was not coming to school and I used to escort him to school. Finally his teacher considered him dropout... (Guardian, FGD)

4.2.8. CHILD MIGRATION

Some participants were concerned about the impact of migration-motivated dropout. Two guardians, stressing this point, argued the following: The first stated that "...boys tend to go to

South Africa” and the second argued that “...boys do ... activities like cattle herding and going to South Africa in order to work”. Also, in an attempt to explain the reason for this migration, a teacher commented:

Chicualacuala is located on the border with some countries...some [children]...once they reach a certain age, they migrate to the neighbouring countries looking for employment. (Teacher, FGD)

4.2.9. SUBSTANCE CONSUMPTION

Some participants reported that alcohol consumption led some children to quit their schooling.

One dropout participant recalled: “I left school because I played a lot. I used to drink alcohol...”

Moreover, one guardian had this to say about alcohol consumption:

As for the boys, nowadays... they get carried away with alcohol. They are used to hide little bottles containing alcohol in their pockets. They may take these little bottles to school and drink secretly at the breaks. This may cause the child to misbehave and drop out because many thoughts will run through his head. (Guardian, FGD)

In addition to alcohol consumption, children could easily obtain marijuana in the area.

Commenting on this, one teacher said: “...there are some shops that sell marijuana. They... sell marijuana to anybody. An underage child may buy and consume it.”

4.2.10. BAD RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES

Bad relationships with colleagues are potential causes of children dropping out. Commenting on this point, one teacher said: “...sometimes there are fist fights at school involving children.

These aspects, if they are not solved properly, may drive some children out of school”. In

addition, the observation of the children’s interaction in the study school during the first week of July 2017 showed children beating and kicking each other for fun at break times. This attitude

has the potential to result in serious fist fights that can eventually lead to dropout. Similarly, one parent said he had witnessed a terrible incident at the study school. He stated the following:

...one day I saw a child being severely beaten by another child at school... This happens because of those children who are registered late. These children, if they fail to answer something correctly in the classroom, the younger ones may laugh. Then, if that child is laughed at, he becomes upset and beats others during the breaks. (Guardian, FGD)

4.3. HOUSEHOLD-BASED FACTORS

Apart from the factors located at the level of the child, this study found some family-based factors that cause primary school children to drop out. These include household poverty, parental education and composition of the household.

4.3.1. HOUSEHOLD POVERTY

The socio-economic background of the family emerged as an overriding factor in driving children to drop out. In fact, the majority of the participants commented unfavourably about the influence of poverty on dropout. One dropout child said: "There are many days I had to go to school without eating anything...I did not have anybody to fend for my schooling. I had no one to buy me pens and exercise books." In addition, a teacher also commented:

...some parents do not have sufficient income to support the education of children. Indeed, primary education is free, but this does not mean just to wake up the child and say go to school while the same child slept without eating. (Teacher, FGD)

Also, a dropout participant recalled in deep sorrow the unpleasant poverty-based experiences she had when she was still at school. This is what she said:

When I went to school I felt ashamed because my mother had no money. When I saw people with things I felt as if I was suffering a lot. Then, I saw that I had better not go to school anymore. (Dropout, IDI)

In addition, the observation of children on 6 July 2017 conducted at the study school revealed that some children, in spite of the fact that the weather was very cold, did not have shoes on their feet and they just wore slippers. Also, the same observation showed that many children did not have schoolbags and carried their books in the hands. These two findings confirm the incidence of poverty in the area that was already uncovered by the interviews and the focus group discussions as leading children to terminate their schooling.

Therefore, to escape the problems associated with poverty, children drop out in order to do something that will ensure their subsistence. Indeed, a teacher commented: “Here, because many families are poor, children are taken out of school to push *txova* [a two-wheeled handcart used to transport things]. This is for the family to get something for its subsistence.” In a similar vein, another teacher said: “...in the second and third cycles, children drop out due to economic problems. Frequently, because of economic disadvantage, such children look for some activities that may generate money for their subsistence.”

4.3.2. PARENTAL EDUCATION

The majority of study participants agreed that the parents of the dropout children were either less educated or not educated at all. Among the comments that were given, three merit attention here. The first was given by a dropout child and she said: “My father completed grade 4.” Also, another dropout child commented: “My mother did not go to school.” The last comment was given by a teacher and he said: “Generally children who drop out come from families where the parents do not have a good academic level.”

One teacher described the negative effect of poor education of the parent on schooling of the child:

In general, these parents are people who did not go to school. They see education as something with no importance... They end up giving some examples: Even I did not go to school but I have this and that. Finally some children start to think that the school is not important. (Teacher, FGD)

4.3.3. COMPOSITION OF THE HOUSEHOLD

The majority of dropouts lived in households not conducive to a sustained schooling. Some of these households were large while others were small. Regardless of whether the household was large or small, it was not supportive to the schooling of children. An example of a large household not supportive to sustained schooling was given by a dropout child. He said: “We were eleven in the family. Six were children and five were adults.” In a similar vein, another dropout child reported: “I lived with my father, my mother and my siblings. I have six siblings. In total, there were nine members in the family.” Moreover, commenting on the impact of large households on schooling, two participants said:

In a family with many children, the head of the family may be poor and not able to feed the children. In a family with 1 child, even if the family is poor, it may be possible for the family to fend for the child and allow him to go to school without any problems. (Teacher, FGD)

In a large household, the guardians themselves may not be able to monitor the academic processes of the children. In a small household, the parents may easily monitor the education of the children and guarantee that there is no dropout. (Teacher, FGD)

As indicated above, there were other children who lived in small households, but such households were incompatible with sustained schooling. For example, one dropout child reported: “...my mother was lame in one leg and arm. I was not living with my father. I lived with my mother only.” Likewise, one guardian said: “My child left school when I was on a visit in South Africa... the child was left with his sisters.”

4.4. SCHOOL-BASED FACTORS

Aside from the preceding factors located within the realm of the individual child and his or her household, the school also presented a plethora of factors that give rise to dropout. These factors include education quality, teacher attitudes, cost of education, educational resources, parental involvement in the schooling of children and school management.

4.4.1. EDUCATION QUALITY

The participants in the study had mixed perceptions in relation to the quality of education given to children in primary schools. On the one hand, most participants claimed that education quality was bad. The participants in support of this position levelled a number of arguments. Firstly, one parent was worried about the abilities of primary school children. He said the following: "...a child in grade 4 cannot even tell the time shown on a clock." This finding concurs with that of the observational method. In fact, the observation of some exercise books of the initial graders (1-3) conducted on 6 July 2017 by the researcher revealed that the majority of the children whose exercise books were observed had serious problems in writing. In the opinion of the researcher, these problems may demotivate both the parents and the children later on and lead children to drop out.

The second argument was about the number of subjects given to the children of grade one. This is what a teacher commented:

...if I had to rate [quality] on a scale of zero to five, I would give 2. I think that the education quality is very poor. Let me give an example of grade one. There are many subjects in grade one and I think these subjects only cram the heads of the children. (Teacher, FGD)

The third argument claimed that there was a clear mismatch between the new curriculum and the reality of the country. This is what two teachers commented:

(He first clears his throat)... the curriculum does not fit into the reality of our country... A class of Musical Education should not be provided in classrooms that we use currently. A lesson of Arts and Crafts should have an appropriate classroom meant for that. Therefore, this curriculum does not fit with the reality of our country. (Teacher, FGD)

The quality is not good because subjects like Musical Education were introduced without any materials for them... Musical Education involves instruments like guitar or piano but many students do not even know these instruments in reality. (Teacher, FGD)

Fourthly, one participant was concerned about the fact that indigenous knowledge did not receive its due respect in the school curriculum. This participant expressed this exclusion as follows: "...we learn more outside things than those that are ours and this is another aspect that the government should pay attention to."

The fifth argument was related with the quality of teachers. To this end, a teacher said: "this teacher who is asked to teach various subjects of the curriculum, is not prepared. And it is difficult for an unprepared person to teach another person."

On the other hand, a tiny fraction of participants reported that the education quality was good. One guardian argued: "I think this type of education is better..." Similarly, another guardian commented the following: "...the education has a quality but it depends on monitoring and the type of teacher who teaches the children."

4.4.2. TEACHER ATTITUDES

A majority of participants consented that there are some teacher attitudes that have the potential to drive children out of school. Some of the participants said that their children were exposed to corporal punishment. This is what a guardian said: "My child says that he...is tired of being beaten by the teacher." By the same token, a teacher said: "When a teacher uses a rod to correct certain behaviour in the classroom, the child ends up fleeing."

Also, one parent said that the teacher-induced sexual harassment had taken place in the study school. In relation to this, the guardian recalled: “A girl failed many times in grade 7 and it was discovered that a male teacher had asked her for a sexual partnership. Sexual partnership between teachers and students is commonplace...”

In addition, teacher absenteeism was another teacher behaviour that was labelled as giving rise to dropout. A parent reported:

I think that teacher absenteeism may lead to drop out. There are some teachers who are irresponsible. They drink a lot. If a child goes to school for two days and is asked to sing because the teacher is absent, that child may lose enthusiasm for schooling. (Guardian, FGD)

Furthermore, rudeness on the part of the teacher was seen as teacher behaviour associated with dropout. Among the comments given under this factor, three merit scrutiny. The first was given by a guardian who said the following: “Some children are very shy and if they are scolded by the teacher at school, they may decide to drop out due to fear. Scolding the young children is a serious threat to dropout.” The other two comments were given by the teachers who said:

“...lack of... connection between the teacher and the learner causes children to drop out. A learner likes to be the friend of the teacher. If the teacher does not bring that friendship, the learner does not feel captivated by his teacher. The matter of motivation is very important especially in the first cycle, grade one and grade two. (Teacher, FGD)

One day a learner came to school late on a day of assessment. Then the teacher told the learner that he had better stay outside and not write the test and he had automatically failed. Then the child decided to stay at home and never come to school. (Teacher, FGD)

Besides, discrimination was cited as one of the teacher attitudes used in the study school. A teacher commented the following:

There are those teachers who treat well the children coming from the rich families and ill-treat the children who come from poor families. This can lead to a lack of interest by the children who come from the poor families. (Teacher, FGD)

However, only one participant spoke favourably about the behaviour of the teachers. This is what such guardian said: “Here in our school I see no problem caused by teachers that may lead children to drop out. Instead, the teachers in our school are so loving.”

4.4.3. COST OF EDUCATION

A considerable number of participants claimed that there were some costs of schooling that had the potential to drive children out of school. One of these costs is the school uniform. A guardian stated: “...the school uniform has the potential to cause dropout because if children do not wear it, children tend to mock others saying that their clothes are of poor quality.”

Apart from the uniform, there are other school materials that may lead children to quit their schooling. As another guardian explained:

...there are some materials like mathematical sets, the drawing exercise books, the rulers and the exercise books that some parents may not be able to buy. Lack of these materials may drive learners away. (Guardian, FGD)

In support of this, one of the dropout children commented: “...I lacked some materials. The exercise books were not sufficient. I did not have a bag and the mathematical set.”

Moreover, the children’s need for some pocket money for snacks at school was another cost of education faced by parents. This is what a teacher commented:

“...one day my child came from school and told me that he saw his friend at school eating bread that he had kept in his schoolbag. Next day, when he wanted to go to school, he told me that he wanted bread. As you know, there are children who leave home with 10,00mt every day while there are other children who do not have anything... (Teacher, FGD)

Also, the school was said to demand some contributions from children for the school festivals.

This was regarded as a cost of education. An example was the contribution for the children’s day that is celebrated every year on 1 June. This is what a teacher had to say: “Other costs [of

education] are the contributions for the children's day that is 1 June... If they [children] do not participate in the party with others, they may be prompted to drop out.”

Nevertheless, there is only a tiny fraction of participants who could not see any costs associated with the schooling of children. One of the guardians said: “There is no cost associated with education that may lead children to drop out. They drop out on their own, not because of costs.”

4.4.4. EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Aside from those things that should be provided by parents so that their children may be able to study like the uniforms, exercise books, pens and many more, there are things that should be provided by the state or the government. These are educational resources and include things like the classrooms, desks, the blackboards, and the like. One participant indicated that there were some characteristics of the school that had the potential to drive children out of school. This participant commented in the following way:

I think that some conditions of the school may cause dropout of learners... I work in an open-air classroom. The conditions are not any good. There are certain students... I already know their behaviour. On cold days... I should not expect them to come. I come to associate that with the conditions of the classroom. I think if we had good classrooms, the children would not be scared to come to school even on cold days. (Teacher, FGD)

4.4.5. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE SCHOOLING OF CHILDREN

The majority of participants consented that the parents or guardians were not involved in the schooling of their children. Some parents were said to go to school only at the request of the teachers and in case of a problem. A guardian said: “I didn't visit the school. I visited it when there was a problem with my child.” In addition, another guardian commented: “I didn't visit the school because I thought that my child was going to school and that there was no problem.”

Some of the participants indicated the effect of lack of monitoring on schooling. This is what a teacher said: "... in the first cycle, children drop out because of lack of parental monitoring. These children, due to their age, need constant monitoring for their academic activity. Failing that, the child is prone to drop out." Indeed, one guardian commented: "My child was registered in 2015 when she was 6 years old. Whenever she came to school, she could not arrive there... She came home at the time when other children came from school."

Yet, such lack of monitoring was regarded as being linked to the working regimes practiced by parents. Indeed, one teacher reported: "...sometimes such lack of monitoring occurs because... some parents do not have the chance to go to school." Similarly, another teacher commented as follows: "The working regime of many parents ends up causing children to drop out due to lack of monitoring. Children are left at home alone with other children and these children cannot guarantee monitoring."

4.4.6. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

The quality of school management was raised as a cause for dropout. A child who had abandoned school in 2015 said the following:

I left school because I could not know where my name was registered. I didn't know whether I was in grade 5 or 6... I contacted the school management and reported about it but they said I had to wait... I waited and waited but they told me nothing. I entered the sixth grade and the teachers told me to get out of the classroom because my name was not there. I didn't know whether I had failed grade 5. I just went home. (Dropout, IDI)

In addition, one guardian, reporting on the quality of school management, said: "I think some of the things that may cause dropout is lack of strict control leading to a child being beaten by other children at school". This suggests that children's interactions should be monitored by the school management bodies.

4.5. COMMUNITY-BASED FACTORS

The community also emerged as a powerful contributor to the problem of dropout. The community-level factors that influenced children's decisions to drop out that were cited by the participants included culture of the community, value given to education, enjoyment of night life by children, participation of children in smuggling, illegal gambling and exaggerated freedom given to children.

4.5.1. COMMUNITY CULTURE

Many participants indicated some cultural values cherished by the community that had the power to give rise to dropout. One of these cultural products was the practice of initiation rites. In fact, one of the guardians said: "Girls drop out in order to take part in initiation ceremonies." By the same token, another two participants commented the following about the initiation ceremonies:

The initiation rites lead children to drop out. In my area, even this month there are some children who were planned to be involved in the initiation ceremonies, but they postponed the ceremony for December. Right here in Chicualacuala the initiation ceremonies are common. (Guardian, FGD)

Sometimes children at grade 6 or 7 are taken to participate in these ceremonies [initiation ceremonies] and they take long time. Practically, these children... when they return, they have another mindset. They consider themselves grown-up. (Teacher, FGD)

Apart from dropping out due to initiation rites, the participants claimed that some children were involved in early marriages and these led them to quit their schooling. One guardian said: "Girls drop out in order to marry before the appropriate age."

Most importantly, as it was exposed above under the child-based factors, these cultural factors are biased against girl education. In fact, one teacher commented:

...there are some families that see a girl as an instrument for marriage and not for school. There are some parents or guardians who even say, you are old enough to get married. And they even arrange marriage in exchange for some cattle. (Teacher, FGD)

4.5.2. VALUE GIVEN TO EDUCATION

Some participants affirmed that many people no longer give sufficient value to education, possibly due to high levels of unemployment for the youth. Two teachers explained this problem in the following way:

I think the main cause [of dropout] is that the population no longer gives value to schooling. Imagine a family with two, three or five children, three have already completed grade 12 but are unemployed... if they [children] do not work, they become demotivated. (Teacher, FGD)

One of the community factors that cause dropout is the fact that, you know, there are many youths who have completed grade 12 but do nothing. These youths talk to each other, and their conversations are heard by children saying that we have already done grade 12 but we are not doing anything. The school did not help us. And for a child who always hears this type of talk, the likelihood of dropping out becomes high because the child thinks that what is happening to these youths will happen to him in future. (Teacher, FGD)

4.5.3. ENJOYMENT OF NIGHT LIFE BY CHILDREN

The majority of the participants said that playing at night was one of the community-based factors that influenced some children to leave school. This is what one of the children who have dropped out said: “I used to watch movies and play at night. I returned home at 11 pm or midnight.” In addition, another two participants commented as follows:

Playing is excessive in our community. Children spend much time dancing and watching movies at night. Once children leave home they hardly see that it is time to return home to rest. Thus, they can't wake up early... I usually reprimand this behaviour at home. This occurs. (Guardian, FGD)

This issue [night entertainment]... ends up causing dropout because children lose nights by being in the market dancing and cannot report to school on time... And besides dropping out because the child was not able to come to school, that is the place where pregnancies are obtained because apart from dancing, they date in that place...they even take drugs. (Teacher, FGD)

4.5.4. PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN IN SMUGGLING

Moreover, the participation of children in smuggling was indicated by some participants as a crucial factor associated with dropout. Commenting on this issue, one guardian said the following: “Another aspect that happens in our community is smuggling done by children on the border between Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Once these children feel the taste of money, what can they think about school?” In addition, one teacher said: “...children who are in grade 7 or 6 engage in helping Zimbabweans to move illegally through the border with their commodities. That is a factor that contributes to the dropout of children.” Also, smuggling was one of the factors mentioned by a dropout child when asked about the community-based factors that hindered him from attending school. This is what he said: “Sometimes I could not go to school because I had to go to Sango [name of the border] for some odd jobs”. At Sango, such odd jobs exclusively involved smuggling.

4.5.5. ILLEGAL GAMBLING

Some parents were troubled by the fact that some children were engaged in illegal gambling.

One guardian sadly reported such an incident as follows:

There is another problem that troubles me a lot. This problem is associated with decreased willingness to attend school on the part of the child... This is the illegal game of cards. The game of cards is associated with many problems. You cannot find your child when you want to send him. If you leave some money, it is taken to the game and lost there. These games are played in the houses belonging to adults. I am worried and I ask myself whether the police are not aware about this problem. (Guardian, FGD)

Indeed, the observation of children’s behaviour conducted by the researcher in the study school in July 2017 revealed that children tended to play cards at break times betting with cashew nuts.

While they were not observed betting with money, one can infer that cashew nuts could easily be replaced with money.

4.5.6. EXAGGERATED FREEDOM GIVEN TO CHILDREN

Some participants called into question the liberty given to children. They argued that the liberty was taken to the extreme. One parent advised that we should return to the way children were taught in the past. This is how she said: “Nowadays children are not beaten at school. This is the reason why they do not respect school. They should be beaten as it was in the past”. In a similar vein, one teacher, reporting on the problem of heightened freedom given to children, said the following:

For me one of the biggest problems is that... we are treating our children like eggs. If it falls, it is broken. We give our children a full liberty. We do not put limits to our children. Consequently, that boils down to the education of the same child. The child will do what he wishes. (Teacher, FGD)

4.6. PREDICTORS OF DROPOUT

The participants of the study revealed that dropout is associated with some signs that usually precede it rather than being an event that happens overnight. These signs include irregular attendance, poor performance or grade repetition, being over age in grade, lack of motivation to study, enjoyment of night life and substance consumption.

4.6.1. IRREGULAR ATTENDANCE

A majority of participants claimed that dropout was preceded by absenteeism. One teacher said: “Normally, the school attendance of a child who eventually drops out is not good.” Another

teacher commented: "...when a learner is about to drop out, he or she starts to come late, attends irregularly and that leads him to have a poor academic performance." In fact, one of the children who had dropped out, when asked about the types of behaviour she exposed at school to show that she no longer wanted to study, she said: "I started to be absent from school and finally, I stopped attending."

4.6.2. POOR PERFORMANCE OR GRADE REPETITION

Poor performance or grade repetition was another telling sign of dropout. In fact, many participants reported that dropout was preceded by low academic attainment. One of the dropout children said: "I ... got bad marks because I was no longer interested in schooling." Also, another dropout child recalled: "...I failed many times to the extent that my younger brother overtook me. When I failed the exams the third time, I stopped. I didn't register again." In addition, one teacher commented:

...when a learner is about to drop out, he or she starts to come late, attends irregularly and that leads him to have a poor academic performance. When these factors are combined, then comes a factor that is said to have caused dropout, but there were other factors already taking place. (Teacher, FGD)

Nevertheless, some participants claimed that poor performance could not always be used as a sign to predict dropout. Indeed, one teacher commented as follows: "There are cases where children drop out while they have a good academic performance... That normally happens due to the migration of the guardians..." Indeed, another teacher reported:

There are situations when the guardians decide to change the place of residence... they do not inform the school that they will be living somewhere else... Therefore, these children ...are not able to enrol where they go because they do not have any academic record to present in the new place. (Teacher, FGD)

4.6.3. BEING OVER AGE IN GRADE

As exposed above, being over age in grade emerged as a telling sign of dropout. Essentially, all the dropout children interviewed between 8 July 2017 and 19 July 2017 revealed that they were over age in grade. The age difference to the appropriate age for the grades that these children were attending when they dropped out ranged from 3 to 9 years. Thus, since all these children were over age and they finally dropped out, this suggests that their age predicted their dropout decision and hence, age is a strong predictor of dropout.

4.6.4. LACK OF MOTIVATION TO STUDY

The lack of motivation to study was reported by some participants as another predictor of dropout. One dropout child commented: “I started to become demotivated in schooling and left.”

Also, one parent reported the problem of lack of motivation in the following way:

If the child does not revise the lessons at home, this shows that the child will drop out. A child should study while he plays and should do homework. Therefore, if a child does not like studying, he will eventually drop out. (Guardian, FGD)

4.6.5. ENJOYMENT OF NIGHT LIFE

Virtually all the teachers and guardians were concerned about the fact that there were some primary school children in the community who liked playing at night. They said night life was a powerful sign of dropout. One guardian commented on night life as follows: “If a child plays at night, this shows that the child is about to drop out because the child is no longer thinking about schooling.” To see that a child enjoys night life, another guardian commented: “If a child wakes up at 8 or 9 on Saturdays and Sundays, this means that the child goes out at night and does not return in time.”

4.6.6. SUBSTANCE CONSUMPTION

The consumption of substance was another precursor of dropout. This is because substances like alcohol alter the behaviour of the person who consumes it. Thus, the school child consuming alcohol may develop bad relations with the teachers or even other colleagues. One child who had dropped out reported: “I started to behave badly. I took gin to school and secretly drank there during the break times. I placed it in the school bag. The teachers would only smell of it from me.”

4.7. CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the findings generated by this study. The organisation of the findings was informed by the theoretical framework in tandem with the questions that the study sought to answer. The direct quotations taken from the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussions were used throughout the chapter to guarantee that the voices of the participants were reported accurately. Furthermore, the findings from the observational method were seamlessly interwoven with the data from the interviews and the focus group discussions.

The findings showed that a multiplicity of factors lead primary school children to drop out. These factors were divided into four categories namely, the child-based, household-based, school-based and community-based factors. Starting with the child-based factors, this chapter has shown that these factors include the age of the child, gender of the child, academic performance, school attendance, orphanhood, child labour, lack of interest in schooling, migration, substance consumption and bad relationship with colleagues. As for the household-based factors, it was seen that dropout was associated with household poverty, parental education and composition of the household. As regards the school-based factors, it was indicated that education quality, teacher attitudes, cost of education, educational resources, parental involvement in the schooling of children and school management were significant factors in

causing children to quit their schooling. Finally, in relation to the community-based factors, this chapter has revealed that the culture of the community, value given to education, enjoyment of night life by children, participation of children in smuggling, illegal gambling and exaggerated freedom given to children were critical risk factors for dropout.

Also, the findings revealed that the problem of dropout is usually preceded by some signs or predictors. These signs include irregular attendance, poor performance or grade repetition, being over age in grade, lack of motivation to study, enjoyment of night life and substance consumption. The interpretation of these findings follows in chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESEARCH SUMMARY

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to delve into the reasons that lead primary school children to drop out and to identify measures to curb the problem. In light of this purpose, this chapter discusses the findings that were empirically obtained as the causes behind dropout. The discussion is done in accordance with the categories of factors that give rise to dropout as indicated in the previous chapter and in line with the Bronfenbrenner ecological framework discussed in chapter two. These categories include the child-based-, the household-based-, the school-based- and the community-based factors. However, it is crucial to note that the location of some factors in a particular category is debatable given the fact that some factors may transcend their categorisation.

To interpret the findings, both deductive and inductive approaches are used. This means that, on the one hand, the factors reported in the literature were used as the basis to interpret findings. This was done by linking the findings and their interpretation to the literature. On the other hand, the findings about which the literature was silent were interpreted as emergent themes on the problem, thus adding to the existing body of knowledge on the topic.

Following the discussion of the findings, the chapter discusses the predictors of dropout in light of these findings. This is followed by the presentation of recommendations of the study. Indeed, two types of recommendations are indicated here namely the action that must be taken into

consideration in order to curb the problem of dropout, and recommendations for further studies on dropout. In the end, the summary of the research is outlined. Below is the presentation of the interpretation of findings, recommendations and research summary.

5.2. FACTORS LEADING CHILDREN TO DROP OUT FROM SCHOOL

There are four categories of factors that lead children to drop out. These factors are child-based, household-based, school-based and community-based. Each category of factors is discussed below.

5.2.1. FACTORS LEADING TO DROPOUT LOCATED AT THE LEVEL OF THE CHILD

At child-level, there are some risk factors that drive dropout. For example, a crucial finding was that all the dropout participants in the study were over age in grade. In fact, a guardian in the focus group discussion invoked the influence of age on dropout and said: “My child left school in 2015 because he thought he was no longer a child.”

There are many problems associated with this finding that may lead children to drop out. One of these problems is the fact that the curriculum is designed for children of specific ages. According to Ministério da Educação (2012:56), the curriculum of grade one is meant for children aged 6 or 7 years old. Thus, mixing children of differing ages may create a situation whereby some children, as claimed by Ananga (2011:10) consider the school less attractive because of feeling less intelligent when comparing themselves to their younger colleagues. In addition, older children have higher opportunity costs of schooling. This is emphasised by Hunt (2008:45) when she states that the pressure for children to work increases as they get older. Furthermore, age may be among the factors that cause some children, especially girls, to discontinue their schooling

due to pregnancies or early marriages. In support of this position, Sabates *et al* (2013:227) argue that older girls face the problems of school safety, premature pregnancies and marriages and these are linked to school disruption. A conclusion that can be drawn from this foregoing discussion is that the age of the child is a critical factor in schooling because it is associated with many factors that may cause the child to drop out from school like feelings of inferiority in case of poor performance, high opportunity costs for schooling, early marriages and pregnancies.

Another child-based factor that leads children to drop out is the gender of the child. Some of the gender-based factors that cause children to stop schooling include early marriages, pregnancies, initiation rites and lack of emphasis of female education. Reflecting on the impact of early marriages and pregnancies, a female respondent said: “It was pregnancy that caused me to drop out.” Another girl also commented: “I left school because I had been cheated to get married.” In support of these observations, Fox *et al* (2012:10) argue that in Mozambique, early marriage or pregnancy negatively affects the education of girls.

Moreover, other participants expressed their views about the influence of initiation rites and lack of emphasis of the education of girls in dropout. Among the various views, two deserve attention and they were expressed as follows:

...children are taken to initiation rites in order to make men believe that the child is grown up in order to get married and *lobolo* [money or property given to the woman’s family by her husband at marriage] may be paid. (Teacher, FGD)

There are parents or guardians who do not see the education of their girl children as something that deserves priority. They think that investing in the education of a girl child is like watering the garden of another person because she will grow up and get married and this will only help another person. (Teacher, FGD)

A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that there are cultural aspects related to gender that negatively affect the education of girls. These aspects include permissiveness of early marriages and pregnancy by the community. Also, children, particularly girls, at a certain age undergo

initiation rites and these may cause them to stop valuing their education. Most importantly, the education of girls is brought into question by the community. Eventually, these pupils are forced to drop out.

In addition, the poor academic performance of a child was another crucial factor that negatively impacted on the schooling of children. Indeed, Yi *et al* (2012:561) say that academic performance largely determines dropout. In the empirical study, one dropout said: “My performance was bad. I used to get marks as low as zero.”

There are many reasons that may cause children to be academically weak. For instance, learners can perform badly because of their lack of support at home, or because of high levels of illiteracy that characterise many parents in rural Mozambique. In fact, Juneja, Pryor, and Ampiah (in Hunt 2008:21) say that illiterate parents can hardly provide the support or appreciate the value of education. Furthermore, the performance of children may be affected by their school attendance. According to Hunt (2008:46), faltering school attendance may cause children to fall behind and find it hard to catch up when they return. A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that poor academic performance plays a crucial role in driving children to drop out. It became clear that poor academic performance may be affected by parental illiteracy and irregular school attendance.

Also, another important finding at the level of the child was that an overwhelming majority of the participants claimed that dropouts tend to attend school intermittently. This finding suggests that irregular attendance is a critical risk factor behind dropout. In support of this finding, Sabates *et al* (2013:230), Sekiya and Ashida (2017:70) and Abuya *et al* (2013:755), say that irregular attendance is a crucial factor contributing to dropout. Indeed, a dropout child in the interview said: “I used to be absent from school about three days a week.” In a similar vein, the

observation of school archives conducted in the study school revealed that although many teachers did not monitor absenteeism in their classes, roughly between 5 and 13% of children were absent from school on the days that were selected for observation.

It is important to stress that the fact that absenteeism leads to dropout is plausible. For example, if children are absent from school, they fail to learn some crucial lessons. This causes them to perform badly on tests. Indeed, as indicated above, Hunt (2008:46) says that faltering school attendance may cause children to fall behind and find it hard to catch up when they return. Thus, because they fail to catch up and consequently perform badly, they decide to quit attending school altogether. It can be concluded that attending school irregularly is a driving force for dropout.

Furthermore, orphanhood was prevalent in the study school. The school records consulted in the study school revealed that 17% of school children were orphans. This percentage is not completely a surprise because, according to Fox *et al* (2012:24), for the time being, there is an unprecedented number of orphans in schools. Since orphanhood is seen as detrimental to schooling in various studies on school dropout, it is safe to believe that there may be many children who drop out in the study area due to this factor. In support of this view, Hunt (2008:20), No *et al* (2012:578), Fox *et al* (2012:26) and Glick *et al*, and Gingoux & Mendez in Woldehanna & Hagos (2015:31) say that orphaned children are likely to interrupt their schooling.

There are several reasons that may cause orphaned children to drop out from school. For instance, children may be forced to live in conditions that are counterproductive to schooling, such as being forced to live in child-headed families. Under such circumstances, they may stop attending school because of a lack of motivation to attend. In support of this argument, Pridmore

and Jere (2011:521) say that school dropout of children from child-headed families occurs as a result of a lack of encouragement to stay in school. Also, orphaned children may drop out because of shortage of essential school material like schoolbags, pens, pencils, uniform and the like. A guardian in the focus group discussion commented: “Locally, we have INAS [the National Institute for Social Security] that provides some help to vulnerable children, although it may not be like a child who is living with both parents.” This finding shows that although there may be a safety net to support orphaned children in the study area, the support provided is far from ideal to guarantee sustained schooling possibly due to financial constraints or the magnitude of the problem of orphanhood in the area.

It can be concluded that orphanhood is counter to sustained schooling. This is due to the fact that it forces some children to live in child-headed households and consequently lack motivation for schooling. Also, orphanhood renders some children unable to have some school essentials like schoolbags, pens, uniform and more. Ultimately, these factors eventually drive children out of school.

Child labour was another important finding that emerged as a critical risk factor in driving children to drop out. In fact, there were specific types of child labour that were responsible for this. These included cattle herding, babysitting, engagement in economic activities, other agricultural activities, etc. As for cattle herding, one guardian said that “...boys drop out in order to herd the cattle knowing that they will receive a cow at the end of the year.” In relation to sibling care, a teacher revealed that “sometimes the girl is ordered by her mother to stay away from school in order to babysit her sibling while the mother does something else.” With regard to working in income generating activities, a dropout participant reported: “I left school because of employment. My employer did not allow me to go to school.” In support of all these barriers to

sustained schooling, Dachi and Garrett (in Ananga 2011:6), Colclough *et al* (in Hunt 2008:12), Itthida (2015:2359), and Woldehanna & Hagos (2015:35) maintain that dropout is the direct consequence of child labour.

One of the reasons that make child labour incompatible with schooling is absenteeism. Obviously, the types of child labour indicated above may not allow a school child to attend school regularly. Dachi and Garrett (in Ananga 2011:6) say that absenteeism, school failure and dropout cases in Tanzania were described as consequences of child labour.

A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that specific types of child labour have a detrimental effect on their education. Some of these specific types include herding the cattle, taking care of small children, participation in income generating activities and engagement in agriculture. In fact, such tasks restrict children from fully participating in their schooling as they require a considerable amount of time.

Furthermore, some participants were worried about the interest that their children had on their education. This is how at least two parents in focus group discussion lamented:

I had two dropouts in 2015. One had school materials but refused to come to school. When I said he was supposed to come to school he even left home and started living with the neighbours. (Guardian, FGD)

My granddaughter left school at her own initiative...When I ask her the reason why she does not go to school she just says I do not want to go. I do not know why she left school. (Guardian, FGD)

While the literature on the impact of interest on schooling is scarce, at least one study alluded to it. The Instituto Nacional de Estatística (2015:79) found that about 30% of children in Mozambique were not attending school due to lack of interest. However, it is not always easy to identify the factors that dampen a child's interest to schooling as evidenced in the quotations above. Therefore, a conclusion that can be drawn from this is that lack of interest to education

results in dropout. Thus, it becomes critically important to strive to identify issues that can dampen the motivation of children for schooling and act upon.

In addition, some parents were restless about the dropout sparked by child migration. A guardian stated: "...boys tend to go to South Africa." In a similar vein, a teacher in the focus group discussion commented the following: "Chicualacuala is located on the border with some countries... Some [children] ... once they reach a certain age, they migrate to the neighbouring countries looking for employment." In support of these findings, Dunne and Ananga (2013:376) and Hashim (in Hunt 2008:15) claim that child migration leads to school disruption. A conclusion that can be drawn from these findings is that since Chicualacuala is a poor district and is located on the border of both Zimbabwe and South Africa, the probability of migration-motivated dropout is high. Most importantly, the boys are disproportionately at a greater risk of dropping out in order to find employment.

In addition, some participants consented that substance consumption had led some children to drop out. In fact, one dropout commented: "I left school because I played a lot. I used to drink alcohol..." In a similar vein, this is what a parent had to say concerning alcohol consumption:

As for the boys, nowadays... they get carried away with alcohol. They are used to hide little bottles containing alcohol in their pockets. They may take these little bottles to school and drink secretly at the breaks. This may cause the child to misbehave and drop out because many thoughts will run through his head. (Guardian, FGD)

Apart from alcohol consumption, marijuana is easily accessible to children in the area. As regards this situation, a teacher in the focus group discussion said the following: "...there are some shops that sell marijuana. They... sell marijuana to anybody. An underage child may buy and consume it." In support of this, Abuya *et al* (2013:749) claim that drug taking and alcohol consumption by children was one of the reasons that gave rise to school dropout in Kenya. A conclusion that can be drawn is that the consumption of substances like alcohol and marijuana

renders children unable to complete their studies. This is because these substances modify the behaviour of children in a way that it becomes completely incompatible with schooling.

Moreover, the children's bad relationship with their fellow pupils was seen as a driving force for school dropout. The basis for this position came from a crucial comment given by a guardian in the focus group discussion. This is what the guardian said:

...one day I saw a child being severely beaten by another child at school... This happens because of those children who are registered late. These children, if they fail to answer something correctly in the classroom, the younger ones may laugh. Then, if that child is laughed at, he becomes upset and beats others during the breaks. (Guardian, FGD)

The finding that bad relationships with classmates lead to dropout is supported by other studies on dropout. Indeed, in a study conducted in Cambodia, one of the reasons for the dropout of some children as indicated by No *et al* (2016:222) included bad relationship with colleagues. In a similar vein, Şahin *et al* (2016:202) say that children who do not secure good relations with their colleagues, teachers and managers and do not like the school nor the subjects taught there have a higher probability of being absent from school and drop out. A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that bad relations with colleagues give rise to dropout. One of the reasons for this is that bad relationship with colleagues may be associated with dreadful incidents like beatings and these may eventually cause the child to fear going to school.

5.2.2. FACTORS LEADING TO DROPOUT LOCATED AT THE LEVEL OF THE HOUSEHOLD

At the level of the household, the study revealed a number of risk factors that force children to terminate their studies. The first of these factors is the household poverty. This is a powerful finding since the majority of participants claimed that poverty influenced children's decisions to drop out. Complaining about the effect of poverty, one dropout child commented: "There are

many days I had to go to school without eating anything...I did not have anybody to fend for my schooling. I had no one to buy me pens and exercise books.” Similarly, another dropout child said:

When I went to school I felt ashamed because my mother had no money. When I saw people with things I felt as if I was suffering a lot. Then, I saw that I had better not go to school anymore. (Dropout, IDI)

Obviously, in situations like these, it can be very difficult for a child to study. In fact, Yi *et al* (2012:561), Ananga (2011:5), Hunt (2008:7), UNESCO (2011:48), Şahin *et al* (2016:199) and Ministério da Educação (2012:56) state that children quit their schooling in response to their disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that poverty is a critical force in determining school dropout. This is because due to poverty, children may lack some basic materials like exercise books to study. Also, poverty produces feeling of shamefulness on children. In either case, the child’s motivation to study drops to the point of prompting the child to leave.

Another important finding at the level of the household was that the majority of participants claimed that the parents or guardians of dropout children are either less educated or not educated at all. Indeed, one dropout child during the in-depth interview said: “My father completed grade 4.” Also, another dropout child commented: “My mother did not go to school.” In support of the influence of poor parental education, Şahin *et al* (2016:199) argue that lack of parental education seems to give rise to absenteeism and school dropout. The reason for this, as claimed by Juneja, and Pryor and Ampiah (in Hunt 2008:21), illiterate mothers neither support the schooling of their children nor see the benefits of education. Indeed, a teacher in the focus group discussion exposed the danger of illiteracy in the schooling of children and said the following:

In general, these parents are people who did not go to school. They see education as something with no importance... They end up giving some examples: Even I did not go to school, but I have this and that. Finally, some children start to think that the school is not important. (Teacher, FGD)

A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that lack of parental education makes a child vulnerable to dropout. Partly, this occurs as result of a lack of encouragement for the schooling of children by parents.

Moreover, another significant finding was that the composition of a household mattered a lot on schooling. Indeed, some of the households that were not supportive to sustained schooling, as indicated by the study participants were large while others were small. Commenting on the influence of large households on schooling, a study participant said the following:

In a family with many children, the head of the family may be poor and not be able to feed the children. In a family with one child, even if the family is poor, it may be possible for the family to fend for the child and allow him to go to school without any problems. (Teacher, FGD)

In support of this view, Hunt (2008:17) says that some studies propose that larger household sizes mean that children can either attend school irregularly or dropout prematurely due to financial constraints or excessive workload.

Also, a large household may jeopardize a sound monitoring process. This is what a teacher in the focus group discussion said: “In a large household, the guardians themselves may not be able to monitor the academic processes of the children.”

As indicated above, there were small households that were incompatible to schooling. The basis for this position was offered by a dropout child during the in-depth interview when she said: “...my mother was lame in one leg and arm. I was not living with my father. I lived with my mother only.” Also, one guardian commented: “My child left school when I was on a visit in South Africa... the child was left with his sisters.” In this last instance, the child lacked

encouragement to stay in school because there was no adult in the household. Indeed, according to Pridmore and Jere (2011:521), school dropout of children from child-headed families occurs because of lack of encouragement to stay in school.

In conclusion, if the household is large and poor, it may be difficult to support the schooling of all children in the household. However, even if the household is small, dropout may still occur. Most significantly, the physical status of the household head is critical in determining dropout. If the household head is disabled and this problem is coupled with poverty, the child of that household may not have the means or motivation to study. Finally, if a household is composed of children alone, dropout becomes inevitable as a result of lack of encouragement.

5.2.3. FACTORS LEADING TO DROPOUT LOCATED AT THE LEVEL OF THE SCHOOL

At the level of the school, the findings from the empirical study revealed that there is a plethora of factors that cause primary school children to quit their schooling. One of these factors is the education quality. However, participants had mixed feelings in relation to their perception of education quality. While most participants claimed that the education given to children was of poor quality, a tiny fraction said it was good. For those who claimed that education quality was poor, a parent in the focus group discussion said: "...a child in grade 4 cannot even tell the time shown on a clock." Also, the observation of some exercise books of the first graders in the study school exposed that many children whose exercise books were observed could not write. Under circumstances whereby children lack the basic competences like telling the time or writing as a result of poor education quality, the potential for them to drop out is high. Indeed, Palme (in Porteus *et al* 2000:8), Colclough *et al* (in Hunt 2008:42) and Zuilkowski (2013:75) state that education quality is associated with dropout.

The participants who said that education quality was bad gave many reasons to explain why education quality was poor. The first of these reasons was linked to the number of subjects given to the children of grade one. This is what a teacher in the focus group discussion said:

...if I had to rate [quality] on a scale of zero to five, I would give 2. I think that the education quality is very poor. Let me give an example of grade one. There are many subjects in grade one and I think these subjects only cram the heads of the children. (Teacher, FGD)

This association between the number of subjects and education quality was an emergent issue in the study of dropout. Indeed, the literature is completely silent about the effect of the number of subjects on education quality.

Secondly, some participants complained about a mismatch between the new curriculum that was introduced in 2004 and the reality of the country. To reflect this statement, a teacher in the focus group discussion said the following:

... the curriculum does not fit into the reality of our country... A class of Musical Education should not be provided in classrooms that we use currently. A lesson of Arts and Crafts should have an appropriate classroom meant for that. Therefore, this curriculum does not fit with the reality of our country. (Teacher, FGD)

Obviously, in a situation where the curriculum is introduced in a country without taking into account the condition of that country, the quality can be poor. This is because resources may not be available to accommodate the demands of the curriculum. As rightly put by a teacher in the focus group discussion, “The quality is not good because subjects like Musical Education were introduced without any materials for them...” The finding that education quality was poor due to a mismatch between the new curriculum and the reality of the country is an emergent theme in the study of dropout. Put differently, this association is non-existent in the literature about primary school dropout.

Thirdly, a participant in the focus group discussion was worried because he believed that indigenous knowledge did not feature appropriately in the new curriculum. This participant voiced his perception about the near exclusion of indigenous knowledge from the school curriculum in the following way: "...we learn more outside things than those that are ours and this is another aspect that the government should pay attention to." In support of this view, in a study conducted in China, Chung and Mason (2012:541) found that a teacher in their study reported that he was unable to create a meaningful and relevant educational experience to his learners because the books were full of foreign concepts to the children living in the village and such concepts were too abstract for the children to understand.

Fourthly, a participant was restless about the quality of teachers themselves. He expressed this concern by saying: "this teacher who is asked to teach various subjects of the curriculum, is not prepared. And it is difficult for an unprepared person to teach another person." This problem of teacher quality is expressed elsewhere in the studies on dropout. Indeed, according to UNESCO (2014: 18), children should have teachers who are trained, motivated and those who like teaching if the learning crisis is to be solved.

In conclusion, there is a multiplicity of factors that lead to poor education quality and this, in turn, is a driving force for school dropout. Such factors, as exposed above, include a large number of subjects given to children right from the start of their education experience, the introduction of curriculum with demands that exceed the capacity of the country, a certain degree of neglect of the indigenous knowledge and the quality of teachers working in primary schools.

However, there was a tiny fraction of participants who claimed that the education quality was good. Possibly, this may have occurred because of such participants not having understood clearly the meaning of education quality when translated to Shangana. Indeed, this was a serious

challenge to get the participants to understand education quality especially the dropout participants. They tended to mistake education quality for the importance of education. Certainly, the issue of poor education quality is a widespread problem in Mozambique and it would be naïve to consider it good especially in the rural areas where children face severe learning deficits.

Another important finding at the level of the school was that the majority of participants in the study agreed that there were some teacher attitudes that had the potential to drive children out of school. Ananga (2011:9) and Şahin *et al* (2016:200) state that the attitudes of a teacher towards children at school can give rise to dropout. One of the teacher attitudes that can give rise to dropout is the use of corporal punishment. This is what one of the participants said: “My child says that he...is tired of being beaten by the teacher.” In a similar vein, a teacher commented as follows: “When a teacher uses a rod to correct a certain behaviour in the classroom, the child ends up fleeing.” In support of these views, Humphreys *et al* (2015:140), argue that the interviews with learners in various schools revealed that dislike of corporal punishment led children of both sexes to miss school to avoid being beaten and this eventually caused them to drop out.

In addition, sexual harassment is another factor that had occurred in the study school. In relation to this, a guardian in the focus group discussion said: “A girl failed many times in grade 7 and it was discovered that a male teacher had asked her for a sexual partnership. Sexual partnership between teachers and students is commonplace...” As a matter of fact, UNESCO (in UNESCO 2016:316) says that in a study conducted in some African countries, about 40% of headmasters consented that teacher-perpetrated sexual violence had occurred in their schools. Thus, in such

circumstances, the female children can hardly continue studying. The most obvious option is for them to drop out from school.

Furthermore, teacher absenteeism was another teacher attitude that was labelled by participants as giving rise to dropout. To this end, this is what a parent had to say:

I think that teacher absenteeism may lead to drop out. There are some teachers who are irresponsible. They drink a lot. If a child goes to school for two days and is asked to sing because the teacher is absent, that child may lose enthusiasm for schooling. (Guardian, FGD)

The impact of teacher absenteeism on dropout is indicated in other studies on this problem. Indeed, Diyu, Nicaise *et al*, and World Bank (in No *et al* 2012:574) argue that the teacher's motivation and absenteeism were the most cited factors associated with dropout. One of the reasons to explain why children drop out due to absenteeism is that they may come to think that education has no value if the teachers tend to be absent.

In addition, the teacher's rude behaviour towards the learners was indicated as a factor leading to dropout. One guardian in the focus group discussion said: "Some children are very shy and if they are scolded by the teacher at school, they may decide to drop out due to fear. Scolding the young children is a serious threat to dropout." This problem of rudeness on the part of the teachers is reported in other studies of dropout. Indeed, in some studies conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa Filmer *et al*, and Filmer (in UNESCO 2016:191), found that only about 60% of teachers had smiled at their pupils. Obviously, this is an indication of rude behaviour practised by the teachers.

Also, discrimination was another behaviour exhibited by teachers that could lead children to drop out. The finding from which this statement was based was given by a teacher in the focus group discussion when he said:

There are those teachers who treat well the children coming from the rich families and ill-treat the children who come from poor families. This can lead to a lack of interest by the children who come from the poor families. (Teacher, FGD)

As a result, such children may be prompted to drop out by thinking that they have no value and it can be difficult for them to pass.

A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that teacher attitudes reflected in the form of corporal punishment, sexual harassment, teacher absenteeism, rude behaviour exposed by teachers towards the learners and discrimination against particular groups of learners have a strong potential to drive learners out of school. Generally, these attitudes trample on some of the fundamental rights of children like the right to protection and freedom from discrimination.

Furthermore, a great majority of participants claimed that there were some costs of education that could potentially cause children to drop out. According to Sabates *et al* (2013:226), Yi *et al* (2012:561) and Abuya *et al* (2013:742), the cost of education has the potential to give rise to school dropout. One of these costs is the school uniforms. Indeed, one of the guardians in the focus group discussion said: "...the school uniform has the potential to cause dropout because if children do not wear it, children tend to mock others saying that their clothes are of poor quality." This means that although the government of Mozambique does not force children to wear uniforms, there is still a ground for dropout because of a lack of them.

Besides the uniforms, there are other school materials that may cause children to drop out if they lack them. One guardian in the focus group discussion commented the following: "...there are some materials like mathematical sets, the drawing exercise books, the rulers and the exercise books that some parents may not be able to buy. Lack of these materials may drive learners away." Here, it is important to note that in Mozambique, although primary education is said to be free, parents still have to buy all these resources. Obviously, if children fail to have them due to

poverty, they can hardly continue studying. They may decide to drop out. In support of this view, Rose and Al Samarrai (in Hunt 2008:9) state that the ability to obtain exercise books, pens and appropriate clothing for school determined whether children could be registered or just be withdrawn from school just in the first grade.

Also, children's need for some money to buy something to eat at school emerged as another cost of education incurred by parents. In fact, one teacher during the focus group discussion said the following:

“...one day my child came from school and told me that he saw his friend at school eating bread that he had kept in his schoolbag. Next day, when he wanted to go to school, he told me that he wanted bread. As you know, there are children who leave home with 10,00mt every day while there are other children who do not have anything... (Teacher, FGD)

This finding of the association between pocket money and dropout was found as an emergent issue. In fact, the literature is completely silent about this issue. In the direct quotation above, while the child demanded some bread, he wanted money because, possibly no one was baking bread in the household. This suggests that if the child does not get the money for the snack at school, the consequence can be disastrous. This is because it can be difficult for a child to watch other children have their snacks at school especially when such a child is still young. If that is the case, this child who is repeatedly exposed to such demeaning situation may be tempted to drop out.

Furthermore, some participants claimed that children were required to pay some contributions to throw parties on certain festivities. These contributions were regarded as a cost of education. In fact, a teacher in the focus group discussion said: “Other costs [of education] are the contributions for the children's day that is 1 June... If they [children] do not participate in the party with others, they may be prompted to drop out.” One of the reasons for the decision to drop

out is that such children may feel completely different from others. Such feelings may surely demotivate the children to continue studying. However, like the findings on pocket money, this finding is not invoked in the literature about primary school dropout and hence, it was regarded an emergent theme.

However, a tiny fraction of participants stated that they could not see any cost of education given the fact that education is free. Possibly, these few participants may have come to this conclusion by not being able to know exactly what goes on in the minds of children if they are deprived of certain things like uniform, pocket money for snack or contributions for the parties. There are many costs that may limit children from studying even in situations where education is free. Evidence from China shows that attending a school is costly even in settings where school fees are low or have been abolished (Lu *et al* 2016:237).

A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that although primary education is free, there are other costs that can strongly drive children to quit schooling. As found in this study, such costs include various school materials like uniforms, mathematical sets, drawing exercise books, rulers and exercise books just to name a few. In fact, these materials are not distributed to children in Mozambique. Apart from these materials, the discussion has indicated that pocket money for school snacks and contributions for festivities, although they may be regarded as trivial, they may potentially lead children to drop out.

Moreover, educational resources were found as critical factors associated with dropout. In fact, Brock and Cammish, and Molteno *et al* (in Ananga 2011:8) argue that dropout is perceived as being influenced by the availability of resources like textbooks, desks and blackboards. Obviously, these resources, unlike those that require parents to get them, they are provided by the state or the government. They, in fact, have a strong bearing on schooling. During the

empirical study, a teacher in the focus group discussion gave vent to his frustration regarding the educational resources that were available to him and said the following:

I think that some conditions of the school may cause dropout of learners... I work in an open-air classroom. The conditions are not any good. There are certain students... I already know their behaviour. On cold days... I should not expect them to come. I come to associate that with the conditions of the classroom. I think if we had good classrooms, the children would not be scared to come to school even on cold days. (Teacher, FGD)

As evidenced in the above extract, there are some good reasons for children who study in ill-suited classrooms to drop out. One example is that children studying in the open air may drop out from school due to cold especially in winter. Indeed, the poor can be hit hard by cold because they may even lack winter clothing like jerseys. Under these circumstances, they can dropout.

A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that educational resources play a crucial role in the sustained schooling of children. One of the educational resources indicated in this study is the deficient supply of classrooms which leads some children to study in the open air. This problem has the potential to drive some children out of school because of cold weather in winter.

In addition, a majority of participants in the study said that many parents were not involved in the education process and they only visited the school in case of a problem. Indeed, a guardian in the focus group discussion said: "I didn't visit the school. I visited it when there was a problem with my child." In addition, another guardian commented: "I didn't visit the school because I thought that my child was going to school and that there was no problem." This was a worrying finding given the scientific evidence indicating that lack of parental involvement is counterproductive to sustained schooling. To this end, Ahmed (in Sabates *et al* 2013:231) say that in Bangladesh, teachers consider lack of parental involvement as a cause for absenteeism, grade repetition and dropout.

Some participants indicated the consequences of a lack of parental involvement in the schooling of children. A teacher in the focus group discussion said: "... in the first cycle, children drop out because of lack of parental monitoring. These children, due to their age, need constant monitoring for their academic activity. Failing that, the child is prone to drop out." Also, another guardian commented: "My child was registered in 2015 when she was 6 years old. Whenever she came to school, she could not arrive there... She came home at the time when other children came from school."

It can be concluded that parental involvement in the schooling of children is critical to their sustained schooling, especially for the first graders. If that is not guaranteed, these children, since they are new to the school environment, they may feel completely alien to it and behave in a way that eventually leads them to drop out.

Moreover, the poor quality of school management was indicated as a cause for dropout. In order to exemplify the incidence of poor school management, a dropout child reported the following:

I left school because I could not know where my name was registered. I didn't know whether I was in grade 5 or 6.... I contacted the school management and reported about it but they said I had to wait... I waited and waited but they told me nothing. I entered the sixth grade and the teachers told me to get out of the classroom because my name was not there. I didn't know whether I had failed grade 5. I just went home. (Dropout, IDI)

Clearly, if the quality of school management drops to the level indicated above, there may be many issues that might be occurring within the school that may drive children away from school. For example, as indicated in the extract above, some names may go missing and at worst, although not explicit in the findings, the grades of learners may be swapped among them. Obviously, all these events are frowned upon by the learners. Indeed, the Ministério da Educação (2012:36) says that it is increasingly consensual that the key to the success of a school and children is a good school management. However, while school management is critical to the

success of children at school, studies that link it directly with dropout are non-existent. Thus, this finding was considered as an emergent theme in the study of dropout.

It can be concluded that a poor school management is disastrous to a sustained schooling of children. In fact, it is associated with a series of problems. For example, some names of children might go missing from the rolls and this would eventually lead the children concerned to stop their education as a result of their inability to know the classes that they are supposed to attend.

5.2.4. FACTORS LEADING TO DROPOUT LOCATED AT THE LEVEL OF THE COMMUNITY

The community also emerged as a powerful influencer of dropout. There are various community-level factors leading to dropout. One of these factors is the community culture. Nevertheless, the effect of the community culture has been alluded to in relation to the age of the child given the interconnection between them. In fact, according to Ministério da Educação (2012:35) and Hunt (2008:36), there are cultural aspects that may help explain the problem of access or lack of retention in the schooling system. Put differently, these authors are just saying that culture may influence either access or dropout.

One of these cultural aspects is the initiation rites. Indeed, a guardian in the focus group discussion said: “Girls drop out in order to take part in initiation ceremonies.” By the same token, a teacher in the focus group discussion commented the following about the impact of initiation rites:

Sometimes children at grade 6 or 7 are taken to participate in these ceremonies [initiation ceremonies] and they take long time. Practically, these children... when they return, they have another mindset. They consider themselves grown-up. (Teacher, FGD)

Obviously, initiation rites are detrimental to schooling because, as indicated in the quotation above, it causes children to regard themselves as grown-up. In support of this finding, Fox *et al*

(2012:10) argue that girls may regard themselves as adults and depreciate their formal education once they pass through the initiation rites.

Added to the problem of initiation rites, some participants claimed that some children were forced to marry early, and this led them to stop studying. In relation to this, a guardian in the focus group discussion said: “Girls drop out in order to marry before the appropriate age.” The problem of early marriages goes hand in hand with early pregnancies. Indeed, among the dropout girls that took part in the study, some reported that they had dropped out due to pregnancy. These findings are backed by Fox *et al* (2012:10) when they say that early marriages and pregnancies have a negative effect on the schooling of girls in Mozambique.

It can be concluded that there are some cultural products cherished by the community that can fundamentally drive children to drop out, particularly girls. As revealed in this study, such cultural products are the initiation rites, early marriages and pregnancies. Indeed, although the first two are adored by some community members in the study area and the last one seems to be a by-product of the first two, all have a negative effect on the education of girls.

Also, another factor leading to dropout indicated in this study was a public decrease in the value given to education likely due to high levels of unemployment for the young people. On this point, a teacher in the focus group discussion said the following:

I think the main cause [of dropout] is that the population no longer gives value to schooling. Imagine a family with two, three or five children, three have already completed grade 12 but are unemployed... if they [children] do not work, they become demotivated. (Teacher, FGD)

An explanation for this is that when parents register their children at school, they expect some benefit out of their education. If people come to realise that the education of their children will not give any benefit, it is natural that they may take them out of school or even refrain from

enrolling them altogether. Thus, Hunt (2008:22) argues that retention is the result of how people perceive that education will affect their prospects.

A conclusion that can be drawn from the preceding discussion is that if the value given to education is reduced, the possibility of dropping out is high. One of the factors that can lead to a reduced value given to education as revealed in this study is rampant unemployment, especially for the moderately educated youth. This leads the people to think that even if their children go to school, they will not be able to work. As a result, they may allow their children to drop out.

Moreover, a majority of participants agreed that playing at night was one of the community-based factors that cause some children to drop out. A dropout child said: “I used to watch movies and play at night. I returned home at 11 pm or midnight.” In a similar vein, a guardian also commented the following:

Playing is excessive in our community. Children spend much time dancing and watching movies at night. Once children leave home they hardly see that it is time to return home to rest. Thus, they can't wake up early... I usually reprimand this behaviour at home. This occurs. (Guardian, FGD)

Obviously, if children stay up till late they can hardly concentrate on schooling. There are many reasons to explain this. As indicated in the direct quotation above, children cannot wake up in time to go to school. Also, if they manage to wake up and go to school, they cannot participate in the lessons fully. They may even sleep in the classroom. Thus, this problem can possibly be associated with absenteeism, poor performance and dropout. This problem of night entertainment, although less explored in the literature, is indicated at least in one study about dropout. Indeed, this is a study conducted in Kenya, where Abuya *et al* (2013:749) say that the presence of clubs that played music all the time lured children away of school because of increasing idleness among children.

A conclusion that can be drawn from the preceding discussion is that the enjoyment of night life is associated with school dropout due to a range of factors. As explained, aside from the various factors that we can think of, night life renders children unable to wake up early to go to school to study. As a result, they may attend the school irregularly and eventually drop out as a result of poor academic performance.

In addition, some participants claimed that the participation of children in smuggling was a critical factor behind dropout. One guardian, giving vent to his worry about this problem, said: “Another aspect that happens in our community is smuggling done by children on the border between Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Once these children feel the taste of money, what can they think about school?” Similarly, a teacher also concerned about the issue of children’s participation in smuggling said: “...children who are in grade 7 or 6 engage in helping Zimbabweans to move illegally through the border with their commodities. That is a factor that contributes to the dropout of children.”

The fact that children’s participation in smuggling leads to dropout is plausible. This is because this activity renders the learners completely unable to go to school especially on those days when Zimbabweans arrive at Chicualacuala. Irregular attendance leads to dropout (Sabates *et al* 2013: 230, Sekiya and Ashida 2017: 70, and Abuya *et al* 2013: 755)

Although children’s participation in smuggling gives rise to dropout, the literature is silent about this association. Possibly, this may be because other studies on dropout are conducted in places not located at the borders with other countries, unlike what happened with this study.

A conclusion that can be drawn from the preceding discussion is that the illegal activity of smuggling severely affects the schooling of children. This occurs because children are lured

away from going to school leading them to be absent from school. Eventually, these children end up dropping out for good.

Furthermore, some participants in the study were concerned about the fact that some children were involved in illegal gambling. This refers to the game of cards. A guardian in the focus group discussion was deeply concerned and in great sadness, reported:

There is another problem that troubles me a lot. This problem is associated with decreased willingness to attend school on the part of the child... This is the illegal game of cards. The game of cards is associated with many problems. You cannot find your child when you want to send him. If you leave some money, it is taken to the game and lost there. These games are played in the houses belonging to adults. I am worried and I ask myself whether the police are not aware about this problem. (Guardian, FGD)

Clearly, this game causes the children to be absent from school and this affects their performance. Indeed, as stated elsewhere in this study, Hunt (2008: 46) says that faltering school attendance may cause children to fall behind and find it hard to catch up when they return. Consequently, they may drop out. While the influence of illegal gambling practised by children in dropout is clear, no study has made such connection so far. Thus, it is considered an emergent theme in the study of dropout.

It can be concluded that illegal gambling negatively affects the schooling of children by leading to decreased willingness to study. This decreased willingness may lead them to be absent from school which could in turn drive them away from school as a result of poor performance.

Also, some participants were disturbed about the freedom given to children. They revealed that the freedom was taken to the extreme. Complaining about this phenomenon, a teacher in the focus group discussion said the following:

For me one of the biggest problems is that... we are treating our children like eggs. If it falls, it is broken. We give our children a full liberty. We do not put limits to our children.

Consequently, that boils down to the education of the same child. The child will do what he wishes. (Teacher, FGD)

In the study area, many people were unsupportive of the rule against corporal punishment to children either by parents at home or teachers at school. There are some parents who had to appear in court and some were even convicted for beating their children. This is the context under which the quotation above should be interpreted. Linking it to the problem of dropout, one can reasonably assume that parents may be reluctant to punish their children if they do not support schooling as by doing so, such behaviour can be criticized by the government to the point of putting these parents to jail. They consider it as exaggerated freedom given to children and imply that it is related to dropout. However, the link between full liberty given to children and dropout is absent in the literature on primary school dropout. Hence, it was an emergent theme in this study.

It can be concluded that if children are given unlimited freedom by their parents or teachers, this liberty can affect their schooling negatively to the level of driving them away from school. If need be, the children may choose not to comply with the school rules since they will know that they are free to do what they like. At worse, they may even decide to drop out against the will of their parents.

5.3. PREDICTORS OF DROPOUT

Dropout is a complex process that is usually triggered by a range of events. Indeed, according to Hunt (2008:52), school dropout can hardly be reduced to one event or impact. Thus, since dropout occurs as a result of various factors, it is a good idea to know the signs that predict this phenomenon. Empirically, the study revealed some of the signs that invariably show that a

dropout is about to occur. They should be regarded as warning signs for practical intervention long before the event of dropout occurs.

The first of these predictors of dropout is irregular attendance. Indeed, most participants in the study agreed that dropout was preceded by absenteeism. In fact, a teacher in the focus group discussion said: “Normally, the school attendance of a child who eventually drops out is not good.” Similarly, another teacher commented: “...when a learner is about to drop out, he or she starts to come late, attends irregularly and that leads him to have a poor academic performance.” In support of these findings, Grant and Hallman, and the PROBE Team (in Hunt 2008:46) argue that dropout can be predicted by both irregular attendance and temporary withdrawals.

In addition to irregular attendance, another predictor of dropout is poor performance or grade repetition. In support of the position that poor performance and grade repetition predict dropout, a dropout participant in the in-depth interview said: “...I failed many times to the extent that my younger brother overtook me. When I failed the exams the third time, I stopped. I didn’t register again.” Obviously, the history of poor academic performance reflected by a series of grade repetition occurred prior to this child’s decision to drop out. As claimed by Pridmore and Jere (2011:525) in their study, the best predictor of future dropout was the history of grade failure.

Furthermore, another predictor of dropout reported in the empirical study is being overage in grade. In fact, all the dropout children interviewed by the researcher were over age in grade. Their age difference to the appropriate age in terms of the grades that they were attending when they dropped out was between 3 and 9 years. This finding strongly suggests that being over age in grade can be interpreted as a precursor of dropout. Of course, one of the predictors of dropout as indicated by Lewin (in Sabates *et al* 2013:227) is late enrolment. Here, we can hypothesise

that if a child is registered late, such a child will be older than the appropriate age for that class and as a consequence, such a child may eventually dropout.

There are some good reasons for an over age in grade child to drop out. One reason, as postulated elsewhere in this study by Colclough *et al* (in Hunt 2008:36), No *et al* (2016:221), Wils (2004:20), Yi *et al* (2012:561), Sekiya and Ashida (2017:70) and Lu *et al* (2016:245), is that as children grow older, so do the opportunity costs of their schooling.

Another predictor of dropout as indicated in this study is a lack of motivation to study. Certainly, a dropout participant in the in-depth interview said: “I started to become demotivated in schooling and left.” By the same token, a guardian in the focus group discussion commented the following about the problem of lack of motivation to study:

If the child does not revise the lessons at home, this shows that the child will drop out. A child should study while he plays and should do homework. Therefore, if a child does not like studying, he will eventually drop out.

Indeed, the failure to do homework is cited in other studies as a telling sign of imminent dropout. Of course, as claimed by No *et al* (2016:221) being absent from school and the frequency of doing homework may be considered predictors of dropout.

Furthermore, the enjoyment of night life activities by children was another factor portrayed as a predictor of dropout. A guardian in the focus group discussion said: “If a child plays at night, this shows that the child is about to drop out because the child is no longer thinking about schooling.” However, while some studies have hinted at the association between night clubs and dropout, no study has taken night life as a predictor of dropout. Because of this, precautionary measures to curb dropout sparked by the enjoyment of night life by children are delayed even when this sign is apparent.

Substance consumption or abuse was another predictor of dropout found empirically. One explanation for the problems caused by substance consumption is the behavioural modification going on in the substance consumer. In fact, a dropout child during in-depth interview recalled: “I started to behave badly. I took gin to school and secretly drank there during the break times. I placed it in the school bag. The teachers would only smell of it from me.” The problem posed by substance consumption is noted in other studies on dropout. In fact, one of the strong predictors of school dropout as indicated by the Center for Disease Control (in Graeff-Martins *et al* 2006:443) is substance abuse.

It may be concluded that dropout is preceded by various signs. These signs include irregular attendance, poor performance or grade repetition, being over age in grade, lack of motivation to study, enjoyment of night life and substance consumption. It is crucially important to know the process of dropout because, as postulated by Hunt (2008:51), the points of intervention can be identified before the dropout takes place if the processes are known.

Rounding off the whole discussion of findings about the factors that lead children to drop out, it became clear that the Bronfenbrenner Ecological Framework is a powerful tool to study this problem. This is because the tool, as adapted in this study, encompasses factors belonging to the child, household, school and community. The fact that dropout is a process means that various factors belonging to these 4 levels of factors interact in a complex way to lead children to dropout. The findings chapter revealed that all the dropout children were over age in grade and some lived in very poor households that they even had to go to school hungry. Also, some dropout learners performed badly at school and enjoyed night life. Obviously, if all the factors occur in combination, children can hardly persist in schooling. Indeed, they can simply drop out and this is what happened to many children although each child has his or her story. According

to Hunt (2008:52), dropout is sparked by many factors interacting together and these factors are specific to each child.

5.4. REVISITING OBJECTIVES FROM CHAPTER 1

As indicated in chapter 1 above, the first objective of the study was to examine the reason why children drop out from primary schools. In answering this question, the empirical evidence shows that children drop out as a result of various factors. These factors are clustered as child-based-, household-based-, school-based- and community-based factors. Starting with the child-based factors, the findings revealed that children drop out due to factors like being overage in grade, gender issues biased against girl students like early marriages, pregnancies and initiation rites, poor academic performance of the children, child absenteeism, orphanhood, specific types of child labour, lack of interest in schooling on the part of the child, child migration, substance abuse and bad relationship with colleagues at school. In relation to the household-based factors, poverty, poor educational attainment of parents and the composition of the household emerged as the powerful factors leading to dropout. As for the school-related factors, the findings revealed a number of factors driving children out of school. These factors include poor education quality, bad teacher attitudes, teacher absenteeism, cost of education, lack of pocket money for snacks at school, lack of money for party contributions, inadequate educational resources, lack of parental involvement in the child's schooling and poor quality of school management. With regards to the community-based factors, the findings have shown that the decrease in the value given to education, enjoyment of night life, smuggling opportunities to children, illegal gambling mediated by playing cards and exaggerated freedom given to children are the factors pushing children out of school.

The second objective of the study was to identify the predictors of dropout. In the light of this objective, the findings revealed that irregular attendance, poor performance or grade repetition, being overage in grade, lack of motivation to study, enjoyment of night life and substance consumption are powerful telling signs of imminent dropout problem. Put differently, the phenomenon of dropout is almost invariably preceded by these signs. While they are the predictors of dropout, they are also portrayed as the causes of it. This is to justify the complexity of the problem of dropout and the need to see this problem as a process rather than a one-off event.

The last objective of the study was to indicate the solutions to the problem of dropout. This is done under the recommendations section provided below.

5.5. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides the recommendations for the study. The section is divided in two parts. The first part lists the recommendations that call for a shift in policy and practice. The second part provides the recommendations for a further study.

5.5.1. SHIFT IN POLICY AND PRACTICE

In the light of the findings of this study and their interpretation, it is necessary to consider some practical recommendations in order to curb the problem of dropout. The first of these recommendations is related to the problem of those children who are over age in their grades. Indeed, it is known that this problem is caused by late enrolment and grade repetition. Thus, to solve the problem of late enrolment, the government should lead campaigns to guarantee that children are enrolled at the right age that is 6 years in Mozambique. As for the problem of grade repetition, it is necessary to improve the performance of children because this is the prime cause

for grade repetition. To that end, schools should have mechanisms to help the underperforming children through remedial classes. In addition, there should be a range of in-service training sessions throughout the year based on specific issues faced by the teachers in the classroom like how to improve the performance of struggling children. This would even improve education quality.

Secondly, it is necessary to provide quality adult education. The current adult education programme should be reformed in a way that it takes place over three years – instead of the current two. Also, the contents of the curriculum should be relevant to the needs of adult learners to captivate them into learning. Once these conditions are met, at least graduates of grade 10 who show a demonstrable willingness to work with adults and who are respectful should be contracted to work with adult learners at a minimal cost. Before these newly-contracted persons start working, they should receive a minimal training led by adult professional educators who are currently available in some schools in the study district. These reforms could lure many adults into attending the literacy centres unlike what happens at the moment. Indeed, through sound education, some cultural values that put the position of girls in an unfavourable position may be completely abandoned. These include early marriages, pregnancies, initiation rites and lack of emphasis of girl education. Also, quality adult education would ensure that parents support the education of their children by becoming more involved in it as a result of their heightened understanding of the value of education.

Thirdly, it is necessary to improve the monitoring of absenteeism in schools in order to make the learners more accountable. Indeed, during the observation of school records it became clear that some teachers did not monitor the attendance of their learners. Sadly, if this is the case, the learners may think that absenteeism is not a bad behaviour and they may continue to be absent

from school. Thus, in order to overcome this problem, the teachers should monitor the attendance of their learners every day and any case of absenteeism should be reprimanded right away in the classroom. In case of repeated absenteeism, such case should be communicated to the parents of the learner in question in order to identify the cause for this problem and find a way to overcome it. If this approach does not yield good results, other structures like the school management and the school council should be contacted.

Fourthly, it is strongly recommended that orphans be supported. However, since the number of orphans in schools is currently high, it is necessary to introduce a good selection system to identify the neediest children. One way is to start by selecting the double and maternal orphans since scientific research claims that this type of orphanhood is almost the same in terms of its impact on dropout. In fact, the selection of double and maternal orphans may be the first criterion then followed by other criteria until the desired number of children is selected, considering the resources available. Once the neediest children have been selected, attention should be given to them to guarantee that they do not drop out due to lack of school materials. Also, the orphans living in child-headed households should be identified and given appropriate moral support by their teachers to feel motivated to continue studying.

Fifthly, the organisations that support poor households like the World Food Programme should tie their support to the education of children. Put differently, for a poor household to get the support, such household should have children who attend school regularly. Thus, households which have children who do not attend school should not be eligible for this support while those households whose children attend school irregularly should just get a tiny quantity of the support. Nevertheless, childless households should be eligible for this support. The idea behind this recommendation is to force households to send their children to school in exchange for food.

This means that the current practice of providing food to households in exchange for work should be replaced by a new system that provides food to the households in exchange for their children's schooling. This recommendation would deactivate many poverty related factors that drive children to drop out. For example, child labour and child migration would be cancelled because both these factors appear to happen in response to a severe shortage of food.

Sixthly, the government should ban various activities that severely affect the sustained schooling of children. These include children being involved in substance abuse, engagement in night life, smuggling, and illegal gambling. To do so, alcohol should not be sold to children or consumed publicly. Also, people who sell drugs like marijuana should be identified and brought to justice. They indeed exist in the study area as proclaimed by some study participants. Moreover, children should not be allowed to play at night. In addition, the border police should see to it that smuggling is avoided altogether, and no child can approach the border unless such a child is to travel. Furthermore, illegal gambling should be highly controlled by the police. The perpetrators should be held accountable. Indeed, in order to succeed in achieving these goals, there should be a sound cooperation among various actors. For example, the public should report any occurrence of these acts to the police.

Finally, the quality of school management should be improved. To do so, the headmasters and their assistants should regularly be trained on issues related to school management. Also, the school councils should be trained and become more active in their participation in school management. This would produce a sound relationship among various members of the school community. As a result, the teacher attitudes towards the learners would be improved. In addition, the bad relationship among learners would be minimised.

5.5.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

In this section, three recommendations merit attention. Firstly, it is recommended that a large-scale survey be conducted in various schools based on the findings of this study to see the extent to which these results can be generalisable to other settings.

Secondly, it is recommended that some comparative studies be conducted. The first should be a study conducted in both the rural and urban settings to identify the factors that cause children to drop out from each of these settings. The second should be a study conducted on private and public schools to uncover what causes children to drop out from different kinds of institutions.

Finally, it is crucially recommended that a further study be conducted involving at least two researchers of both sexes to rule out the gender dynamics that may have inhibited some participants from externalising their views regarding dropout in this study.

5.6. RESEARCH SUMMARY

Chapter one served as the introduction to the study. It provided the background and the context of the study. Also, the chapter gave the problem statement, statement of purpose, objectives and the inherent research questions. In addition, the overview of the research design was indicated as well as the rationale and significance of the study. The chapter also provided the definition of key terms that were used in the study to shed more meaning.

Chapter two started with the definition of the concept of dropout. This was to offset the problem of differentiated understanding of concepts among different people. This was followed by an extensive discussion of the literature on primary school dropout. A focus was made on child level-, household level-, school level- and community level factors. Also, the predictors of dropout were identified in this section. It is important to note that various sources were used to frame the literature review. Moreover, the theoretical framework of the study was provided in

this chapter. This is the Bronfenbrenner ecological framework, which was developed by the psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner. In fact, in this study, the framework was adapted in order to reflect the factors just outlined.

An extensive discussion of the research design was provided in chapter three. Here, the rationale of the research approach and the description of the research sample clearly discussed. Also, the methods for data collection were identified. All the procedures used to collect and analyse data were discussed in detail. In addition, special care was taken in identifying the ethical issues associated with the study. Safeguards against potential risks were identified and followed accordingly. For example, confidentiality was identified as a way to offset potential harm and it was ensured to all research participants. Moreover, the issues of validity and reliability of the study were clarified. The chapter ended with the exposition of the limitations of the study.

Chapter four provided the raw data of the study. The findings statements were backed up by direct quotations from the research participants. This was to guarantee the accuracy of results. In some sections, the findings from the observational study were interwoven with the findings from the interviews and the focus group discussions to add more meaning. The findings were grouped in four clusters of factors in line with the focus of the study. These include the child level-, household level-, school level- and community level factors.

The last chapter provided the interpretation of the findings exposed in chapter four. Both the deductive and inductive approaches were used to interpret the findings. In line with the purpose and objectives of the study, the causes that give rise to dropout were indicated. These were clustered in four groups as outlined in chapter four. Also, the chapter provided the predictors of dropout. Finally, the chapter presented the solutions to the problem of dropout. Such solutions

were presented in the form of recommendations. Bearing all this in mind, the researcher believes that the aim of the study was fulfilled.

5.7. CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the interpretation of findings, recommendations and the summary of the study. In the first place, the chapter discussed the findings in terms of four categories of factors that cause primary school children to drop out namely the child-based-, the household-based-, the school-based- and the community-based factors. In order to interpret the findings, the deductive and inductive approaches were adopted. Following the discussion of each finding, sound conclusions were drawn in respect of the findings. Once the interpretation of the findings was made and all conclusions were drawn, the chapter discussed the predictors of dropout. Following the discussion of the predictors of dropout, the chapter provided the presentation of recommendations. Indeed, two types of recommendations were made. The first was about the actions that should be taken into consideration as a way to solve the problem of dropout. The second package of recommendations for further studies meant to augment people's knowledge about the problem of dropout. In the end, the chapter provided the summary of the study.

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APPENDIX A

In-depth interview guide for the dropout children

1. Introduction of the researcher
 - I. Identification of the researcher
 - II. Description of the purpose of the study
 - III. Description of how the participant was chosen
 - IV. Description of the importance of the study
 - V. Promise of privacy assurance
 - VI. Estimation of time to be taken for the interview
2. Demographic information about the participant
 - I. Name of the child
 - II. Age of the child
 - III. Sex of the child (not asked as it is obvious)
3. I would like to know something about your schooling. I will ask you some questions and please feel free to answer them. It is a great opportunity for me to learn something important from you. What grade were you attending when you stopped going to school? When was that?
 - I. Why did you drop out from school? Please explain all the factors that you still remember.
 - II. Who made the last decision for you to stop going to school?
 - III. What aspects related to your gender that used to happen to you as a student that may have contributed to your decision to drop out?
 - IV. What happened at school that made it hard for you to continue with your studies? Please explain all that you remember.
 - V. How was your academic performance at school? Why was your academic performance like that?
 - VI. I would like to know something about your school attendance. How often were you absent from school in the year that you dropped out? Indicate the approximate number of days per week that you would be absent from school.
 - VII. How were your teachers at school when you dropped out? Please describe their behaviour.
 - VIII. If you had to rate the quality of education that you were receiving at school on a scale of zero to five, how would you rate it? Why?
4. I would like to know something about your home environment when you dropped out. What was happening at your home that made it difficult for you to continue studying?
 - I. What did you do at home to help your household? Please identify the activities that you used to do at home when you were a student.
 - II. With whom were you living when you dropped out? Please name the people who lived with you when you dropped out and their relationship with you.
 - III. How many people were living with you when you dropped out? Please name one person at a time and say whether each person was a child or an adult.
 - IV. Please name the adults who were living with you when you dropped out and their income generating activities. Was there someone belonging to your household who was living elsewhere but sent remittances home? If so, how often did they send such remittances?

- V. When you were still at school, do you remember any days you were unable to go to school due to hunger? If so, who used to help you?
 - VI. What is the last grade that was passed by the person who was responsible for your education when you dropped out?
 - VII. Please say whether or not there were some school materials that you lacked when you were a student. If so, what were these school materials?
 - VIII. How often did your guardians go to your school to know about your schooling?
5. What kinds of things were happening in your community that hindered you from attending school? Please explain.
 6. Please say whether or not there were some cultural values held by your community that may have influenced your decision to drop out. If so, what were these cultural values?
 7. Before dropping out, what types of behaviour did you show at school that indicated that you were no longer needing to study? Please explain.
 8. How is your life since you left school? Do you regret? Why?
 9. If you were given another chance to study, what changes would you like to see happen before registering? Please feel free to explain.
 10. Is there anything else you would like to add that you think cause children to drop out but I did not address? Please feel free to voice your ideas.

APPENDIX B

Focus group discussion guide for the teachers

11. Introduction of the researcher
 - VII. Identification of the researcher
 - VIII. Description of the purpose of the study
 - IX. Description of how the participants were chosen
 - X. Description of the importance of the study
 - XI. Promise of privacy assurance
 - XII. Estimation of time to be taken for the focus group discussion

12. I know that all of you have lost some children to dropout in 2015. Therefore, I believe that there is a great deal of things that I can learn from you regarding the problem of dropout.
 - I. Why do primary school children drop out from school in Chicualacuala?
 - II. Are there some teacher attitudes that you think may cause children to drop out? If so, please feel free to describe such attitudes.
 - III. The problem of dropout affects both boys and girls. Do you think the reasons that cause boys and girls to drop out from your school are the same or different? Please explain whatever position you take.
 - IV. In this school, both the young and the old children dropped out in 2015. Are the reasons that cause both groups to drop out similar or different? Please explain either position that you take.
 - V. I would like to know something about the school attendance of the children who dropped out in 2015. Please say whether their attendance was good or bad. If their attendance was bad, what have you done to improve it?
 - VI. What do you say about the academic performance of the children who dropped out in 2015? Was it good or bad? If you think that it was bad, please say what arrangements were put in place to solve this problem.
 - VII. The school management told me that the number of orphans in this school these days is very high. What were you doing in 2015 in order to avoid orphanhood-sparked dropout?
 - VIII. Please say whether there are some school costs that may cause children to drop out from primary schools. If so, what are these costs?
 - IX. If you were asked to rate the quality of primary school education on a scale of zero to five, how would you rate the quality? Why do you think so?
 - X. I would like to know the involvement of the parents or guardians of those children who dropped out from school in 2015. How do you rate their involvement in the schooling of their children? What have you done to improve their involvement if you think that it was poor?
 - XI. Do you think the children who dropped out in 2015 did something at home that may have interfered with their schooling? If so, what do you think were these activities?

- XII. Please say whether there were some school children who lacked some essential school material in 2015. If so, what arrangement was made at school to guarantee that these children could get the material they needed?
- XIII. By and large, how do you rate the literacy rate of the parents of those children who dropped out in 2015?
- XIV. How do you compare the school attendance of children coming from larger households with that of children coming from smaller ones?
- XV. Are there some school factors existing in your school that cause children to drop out? If so, what are these factors?
- XVI. Are there some factors in the community that cause primary school children to drop out? If so, what are these factors?
- XVII. Are there some cultural products cherished by the community that may cause children to drop out? If the answer is yes, what are these cultural values?
- XVIII. Knowing that dropout is not a one-off event but rather a process, what factors do you think precede the dropout event? Put differently, what are the things that predict dropout?
- XIX. Whose responsibility is the sustained schooling of children in primary schools?
- XX. Because all of you as teachers have been experiencing dropout each year, what advice would you give in order to curb this problem?
- XXI. Is there anything else you would like to add that you think causes dropout but was not addressed? Please feel free to voice your ideas.

APPENDIX C

Focus group discussion guide for the guardians

1. Introduction of the researcher
 - I. Identification of the researcher
 - II. Description of the purpose of the study
 - III. Description of how the participants were chosen
 - IV. Description of the importance of the study
 - V. Promise of privacy assurance
 - VI. Estimation of time to be taken for the interview
2. I know that all of you have children who dropped out from school in 2015. I believe that there are many things related to their dropout that you could share with me. I am really interested to know what caused these children to drop out.
 - I. What do you think are the main reasons that cause primary school children to drop out from school in Chicualacuala? Please feel free to speak and remember that every person's ideas count.
 - II. Are there some teacher attitudes that you think may cause children to drop out? If so, please feel free to describe them.
 - III. Knowing that both boys and girls dropped out from school in 2015, do you think that the reasons that cause boys and girls to drop out are the same or different? In any case, please explain your position.
 - IV. I also saw that both the young and the old children dropped out from school in 2015. Are the reasons that cause both groups to drop out similar or different? Please explain any position you take.
 - V. Please say whether there are some school costs that may cause primary school children to drop out from school. If so, what are these costs?
 - VI. Please say whether there were some school materials your children lacked in 2015. If so, what have you done to overcome the problem?
 - VII. What did your children do in 2015 to help you with the household activities?
 - VIII. Please tell me something about the school attendance of your children in 2015. If they usually were absent, what have you done as their guardians to get them going to school?
 - IX. What do you say about the school performance of your dropout children? Was it good or bad? If it was bad, what have you done to improve it?
 - X. The number of orphans in schools these days is very high. Are there some community organisations that support orphans in this area? If so, please explain whether the support they provide is strong enough to keep children studying.

- XI. Is there any difference between the school attendance of children coming from larger households and that of those children coming from smaller households? If so, please explain the reasons for the difference.
- XII. If you were asked to rate the quality of primary school education on a scale of zero to five, how would you rate the quality? Why do you think so?
- XIII. I would like to know your relationship with the school that was attended by your children in 2015. How often did you visit the school in order to know about the schooling of your children? If the visits were less often or non-existent, why was it that way?
- XIV. What school factors do you think cause children to drop out in Chicualacuala?
- XV. Are there some factors in this community that cause children to drop out? If yes, what are these factors?
- XVI. Suppose you have a boy and a girl as your children and could only afford one of these two children to register at school. Whom would you register and why?
- XVII. Are there some cultural products held dear by your community that may cause children to drop out from school? If so, what are these cultural values?
- XVIII. Knowing that dropout is not a one-off event but rather a process, what factors do you think precede the dropout event? Put differently, what are the things that predict dropout?
- XIX. Because all of you have experienced the dropout of your children in 2015, what advice would you give in order to curb this problem?
- XX. Whose responsibility is the sustained schooling of primary school children?
- XXI. Is there anything else you would like to add that you think caused dropout of your children in 2015 but was not addressed? Please feel free to voice your ideas.

APPENDIX D

Iceu Juliao Maluleque
Chicualacuala District
Vila Eduardo Mondlane
Bairro C
28 June 2017

Serviço Distrital de Educação, juventude e tecnologia
Gaza Province
Chicualacuala District
Vila Eduardo Mondlane

RE: Letter requesting permission to conduct the study

Dear Mr. Boane

My name is Iceu Julião Maluleque, a Master's student at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and my student number is 45663912. As part of the requirement to complete my Master's degree, I am supposed to conduct a school-based study. Indeed, I have submitted a research proposal entitled "**Primary School Dropout: Case of Chicualacuala, Mozambique**", which was subsequently approved by the University.

Thus, I hereby come to you to request the permission to conduct my research in one school that falls within Chicualacuala district. I hope you will kindly assist me in granting the permission to use this school for data collection.

I thank you in advance

Iceu Julião Maluleque

(Cell): +258868537703/+2583828519

Email: 45663912@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Reference Number, 2016-DEVSTUD-student-10

APPENDIX E

Iceu Juliao Maluleque
Chicualacuala District
Vila Eduardo Mondlane
Bairro C
28 June 2017

Escola Primária do 1º e 2º Graus Eduardo Mondlane
Gaza Province
Chicualacuala District
Vila Eduardo Mondlane

RE: letter requesting permission to conduct the study

Dear Mr. Chichongue

My name is Iceu Julião Maluleque, a Master's student at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and my student number is 45663912. As part of the requirement to complete my Master's degree, I am supposed to conduct a school-based study. Indeed, I have submitted a research proposal entitled "**Primary School Dropout: Case of Chicualacuala, Mozambique**", which was subsequently approved by the University.

Thus, I hereby come to you to request the permission to conduct my research in the school under your leadership. I hope you will kindly assist me in granting the permission to use your school for data collection.

I thank you in advance

Iceu Julião Maluleque

(Cell): +258868537703/ +258823828519

Email: 45663912@mylife.umisa.ac.za

Reference Number, 2016-DEVSTUD-student-10

APPENDIX F

Recording form for the observation method

Date of the observation:

Time of the observation (start time and end time):

Type of data for the observation (textual notes or numerical data):

Aspects to be observed	Purpose	Objective observation	Subjective interpretation
-Noting the approximate age of children when gathered according to their grade outside. -Calculation of the average age of children from data obtained from school management.	Observe the incidence of overage children in the study school.		
Calculation of the number of absences registered in each of the three days selected randomly by the researcher (this data is obtained from the school management)	See the extent of learner absenteeism in the study school.		
Calculation of the percentage of orphans from the data provided by the school management.	Observe the extent of orphanhood in the study school.		
-Observation of the children's footwear. -Observation of the children who do not have schoolbags.	See the incidence of poverty in the study school.		
Observation of some exercise books (The researcher asks for these exercise books randomly from children when they are at the break times)	See the quality of education based on the children's ability to write.		

<p>Observation of the incidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Corporal punishment-Caring behaviour when the children are having school lunches.	<p>See some teacher attitudes that may cause children to drop out.</p>		
<p>The researcher observes whether or not the parents or guardians come to school to see the teachers of their children during the observation study.</p>	<p>See the level of parental involvement in the education of children at school.</p>		

APPENDIX G

THE CODING LEGEND

CAUSES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL DROPOUT

Child-based factors

CBF1-Age

CBF2-Gender

CBF3-Academic Performance

CBF4-School attendance

CBF5-Orphanhood

CBF6-Child labour

CBF7-Miscellaneous (These were factors that emerged from the data but were not indicated in the literature)

Household based factors

HBF1-Poverty

HBF2-Parental education

HBF3-Household composition

HBF4- Miscellaneous (These were factors that emerged from the data but were not indicated in the literature)

School-based factors

SBF1-Education quality

SBF2-Teacher attitudes

SBF3-Cost of education

SBF4-Parental involvement

SBF5- Miscellaneous (These were factors that emerged from the data but were not indicated in the literature)

Community-based factors

COBF1-Community culture

COBF2- Miscellaneous (These were factors that emerged from the data but were not indicated in the literature)

SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF DROPOUT

Solutions at the level of the child

CBFS1-Enroll children early

CBFS2-Terminate early marriages

CBFS3-Use promotion

CBFS4-Monitor absenteeism daily, weekly and monthly

CBFS5-Provide welfare services

CBFS6-Prevent child labour

CBFS7-Miscellaneous

Solutions at the level of the household

HBFS1-Increase school funding, provide school feeding programmes to school, use conditional cash transfers and provide bursaries

HBFS2-Provide literacy programmes to the uneducated mothers

HBFS3-Provide welfare programmes

HBFS4-Miscellaneous

Solutions at the level of the school

SBFS1-Attract best teachers, improve their training, deploy them fairly and raise their salaries

SBFS2-Improve teacher-learner relationship, trust learners, avoid any form of discrimination, encourage them to learn from each other and provide feedback

SBFS3-Cut down the cost of uniform and school supplies

SBFS4-Ensure school-family cooperation

SBFS5-Miscellaneous

Solutions at the level of the community

COBFS1-Empower women

COBFS2-Miscellaneous

PREDICTORS OF DROPOUT

PD1-Irregular attendance

PD2-Poor performance

PD3-grade repetition

PD4-Overage enrolment

PD5-Frequency of doing homework

PD6-Miscellaneous

APPENDIX H

Informed consent letter for the dropouts

Identification of the researcher:

My name is Iceu Juliao Maluleque. I am a primary school teacher in Chicualacuala district, in Mozambique. Now I am conducting a study for an MA in Development Studies at the University of South Africa. This letter provides detailed information about the purpose of the study, the description of the involvement of participants as well as their rights.

Title of the dissertation:

Primary School Dropout: Case of Chicualacuala, Mozambique.

The purpose of the study:

The purpose of this study is to delve into the reasons that lead primary school children to drop out from school and identify measures to curb the problem. I believe that you have rich information on this problem because you dropped out some years ago. Thus, I can learn a lot from you.

The involvement of participants:

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be asked to be interviewed by the researcher in a private place anywhere you like. This one-to-one interview will take an hour at the maximum. You will be required to be interviewed only once for the study to be completed. This one-to-one interview will be audio recorded. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study if you feel it is threatening you. You will not be penalised if you decide not to participate or withdraw from the study after having given initial acceptance.

The benefits of the study:

Research on the problem of dropout will allow the educational actors to understand the reasons that lead children to drop out from school. This will ensure that good policies are designed and more children are retained at school. Once these children are retained, they may gain the necessary knowledge that may be used to fight poverty and hence, spark economic growth. Furthermore, since the research on dropout is in short supply, this study will add to the knowledge base about the problem of dropout and allow other researchers to use it for other studies. In the end, all society will benefit. Last but not least, you will find the participation in the study enjoyable given the fact that you may learn more about the problem.

Discomforts of the study:

Unfortunately, this study also has some risks. The known risks here are psychological. In fact, since various respondents will be interviewed about the problem of dropout, these people may start labelling each other negatively by attaching the problem of dropout to particular persons. Apart from the negative labelling, the study may invoke distressful incidents that may have caused a particular child to drop out. In addition, the research will disrupt the daily routine of the participant.

Confidentiality:

In order to mitigate the risks of participants labelling each other negatively, their names will be codified. Also, if the risk of invoking distressful event is deemed significant, the victim will be linked to the social safety nets available locally for the due support. Moreover, the data on dropout will be stored on a computer protected with a password that can only be accessed by the researcher. The results of the study may be published or presented at meetings relating to education issues. Nevertheless, as already indicated, the identifying information will not be available.

Compensation:

No compensation will be given to research participants as a result of their participation. Thus, I invite you to take part in this study. As already alluded to, your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may even decide to withdraw from the study if you feel that the study is threatening you. If you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study after initial approval, nothing will happen to you for that. In other words, you will not run any risk as a consequence of nonparticipation or withdrawal.

Having read this letter and asked for clarification of some aspects, please complete the blank spaces below:

I.....have understood the content of this letter and I voluntarily consent to participate in the study to which I have been invited.

..... (Signature of the participant)

..... (Name and phone number of the researcher)

...../...../..... (Date)

APPENDIX I

Informed consent letter for the teachers

Identification of the researcher:

My name is Iceu Juliao Maluleque. I am a primary school teacher in Chicualacuala district, in Mozambique. Now I am conducting a study for the MA in Development Studies at the University of South Africa. This letter provides detailed information about the purpose of the study, the description of the involvement of participants as well as their rights.

Title of the dissertation:

Primary School Dropout: Case of Chicualacuala, Mozambique.

The purpose of the study:

The purpose of this study is to delve into the reasons that lead primary school children to drop out from school and identify measures to curb the problem. I believe that you have rich information on this problem because you have some children who dropped out from your class in 2015. Thus, I can learn a lot from you.

The involvement of participants:

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be required to take part in the focus group discussions at the study school at a time convenient to you. The focus group discussions will be conducted with 6 teachers in total. It is estimated that only one focus group discussion session will be conducted for the study to be completed. The discussions will be audio recorded. The focus group discussions will take two hours at the maximum. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study if you feel it is threatening you. You will not be penalised if you decide not to participate or withdraw from the study after having given initial acceptance.

The benefits of the study:

Research on the problem of dropout will allow the educational actors to understand the reasons that lead children to drop out from school. This will ensure that good policies are designed and more children are retained at school. Once these children are retained, they may gain the necessary knowledge that may be used to fight poverty and hence, spark economic growth. Furthermore, since the research on dropout is in short supply, this study will add to the knowledge base about the problem of dropout and allow other researchers to use it for other studies. In the end, all society will benefit. Last but not least, you will find the participation in the study enjoyable given the fact that you may learn more about the problem.

Discomforts of the study:

Unfortunately, this study also has some risks. The known risks here are psychological. In fact, since various respondents will be interviewed about the problem of dropout, these people may start labelling each other negatively by attaching the problem of dropout to particular persons. Apart from the negative labelling, the study may invoke distressful incidents that may have caused a particular child to drop out. In addition, the study will disrupt the daily routine of the participant. In other words, it will demand some time of the participant.

Confidentiality:

In order to mitigate the risks of participants labelling each other negatively, their names will be codified. Also, if the risk of invoking distressful event is deemed significant, the victim will be linked to the social safety nets available locally for the due support. Moreover, the data on dropout will be stored on a computer protected with a password that can only be accessed by the researcher. The results of the study may be published or presented at meetings relating to education issues. Nevertheless, as already indicated, the identifying information will not be available.

Compensation:

No compensation will be given to research participants as a result of their participation. However, there will be refreshments for those taking part in the focus group discussions.

Thus, I invite you to take part in this study. As already alluded to, your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may even decide to withdraw from the study if you feel that the study is threatening you. If you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study after initial approval, nothing will happen to you for that. In other words, you will not run any risk as a consequence of nonparticipation or withdrawal.

Having read this letter and asked for clarification of some aspects, please complete the blank spaces below:

I.....have understood the content of this letter and I voluntarily consent to participate in the study to which I have been invited.

..... (Signature of the participant)

..... (Name and phone number of the researcher)

...../...../..... (Date)

APPENDIX J

Informed consent letter for the guardians

Identification of the researcher:

My name is Iceu Juliao Maluleque. I am a primary school teacher in Chicualacuala district, in Mozambique. Now I am conducting a study for the MA in Development Studies at the University of South Africa. This letter provides detailed information about the purpose of the study, the description of the involvement of participants as well as their rights.

Title of the dissertation:

Primary School Dropout: Case of Chicualacuala, Mozambique.

The purpose of the study:

The purpose of this study is to delve into the reasons that lead primary school children to drop out from school and identify measures to curb the problem. I believe that you have rich information on this problem because you have some children who dropped out from your class in 2015. Thus, I can learn a lot from you.

The involvement of participants:

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be required to take part in the focus group discussions at the study school at a time convenient to you. The focus group discussions will be conducted with 12 guardians in total. It is estimated that only one focus group discussion session will be conducted for the study to be completed. The discussions will be audio recorded. The focus group discussions will take two hours at the maximum. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study if you feel it is threatening you. You will not be penalised if you decide not to participate or withdraw from the study after having given initial acceptance.

The benefits of the study:

Research on the problem of dropout will allow the educational actors to understand the reasons that lead children to drop out from school. This will ensure that good policies are designed and more children are retained at school. Once these children are retained, they may gain the necessary knowledge that may be used to fight poverty and hence, spark economic growth. Furthermore, since the research on dropout is in short supply, this study will add to the knowledge base about the problem of dropout and allow other researchers to use it for other studies. In the end, all society will benefit. Last but not least, you will find 'the participation in the study enjoyable given the fact that you may learn more about the problem.

Discomforts of the study:

Unfortunately, this study also has some risks. The known risks here are psychological. In fact, since various respondents will be interviewed about the problem of dropout, these people may start labelling each other negatively by attaching the problem of dropout to particular persons. Apart from the negative labelling, the study may invoke distressful incidents that may have caused a particular child to drop out. In addition, the study will disrupt the daily routine of the participant. In other words, it will demand some time of the participant.

Confidentiality:

In order to mitigate the risks of participants labelling each other negatively, their names will be codified. Also, if the risk of invoking distressful event is deemed significant, the victim will be linked to the social safety nets available locally for the due support. Moreover, the data on dropout will be stored on a computer protected with a password that can only be accessed by the researcher. The results of the study may be published or presented at meetings relating to education issues. Nevertheless, as already indicated, the identifying information will not be available.

Compensation:

No compensation will be given to research participants as a result of their participation. However, there will be refreshments for those taking part in the focus group discussions.

Thus, I invite you to take part in this study. As already alluded to, your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may even decide to withdraw from the study if you feel that the study is threatening you. If you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study after initial approval, nothing will happen to you for that. In other words, you will not run any risk as a consequence of nonparticipation or withdrawal.

Having read this letter and asked for clarification of some aspects, please complete the blank spaces below:

I.....have understood the content of this letter and I voluntarily consent to participate in the study to which I have been invited.

..... (Signature of the participant)

..... (Name and phone number of the researcher)

...../...../..... (Date)