“Dropout or Continue Schooling? Determining Factors for Student Dropout or Completion at Primary School Level”

Researcher: KHIEU Dany

Supported to: UNESCO Chair of the University of Bergamo, Italy

March 2013
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The study entitled “Dropout or Continue Schooling? Determining Factors for Student Dropout or Completion at Primary School Level” was made successful through the combined contribution of many people. Therefore, I would like to take this greatest opportunity to extend my profound appreciation and special gratitude to the following individuals and all the people whose names cannot be mentioned here.

My utmost acknowledgement and gratitude go to Mr. Phal Des, the Vice-Rector of the Royal University of Phnom Penh for his constant support, invaluable advices and constructive guidance and encouragement throughout the whole process of this research. I would also like to acknowledge the UNESCO Chair of the University of Bergamo, Italy for awarding a research grant that has been used for the filedwork expenses and other relevant expenditure.

I would also like to elaborate my special thanks and acknowledgement to all of the research participants for their friendly and active involvement in completing the questionnaires and during the interview process. I am also indebted to the faculty and staff of the Royal University of Phnom Penh, particularly the faculty and staff of the Graduate Program in Development Studies for their administrative assistance to my research.

Last but not least, I am most grateful and heartfelt to my late father, Mr. Khieu Phim, my beloved mother, Mrs. Soeur Saron, my brothers, sisters, relatives and friends for their continuous emotional, moral and financial support and constant encouragement, especially their tremendous sacrifices when I am in need of their positive care and attention. Without their precious support and encouragement, this research study would not have come to a successful end.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This chapter briefly describes the background of the study by discussing the various factors leading to student dropout or completion at primary school level, particularly in the Cambodia’s context. Then, some major impacts leading to the conduct of the study are also presented in the problem statement section, followed by separated sections on research objectives, research questions and justification for the study. Then, the study scope is formulated. It, finally, ends with the chapter outline, which enables the readers to capture the overall picture of the whole report.

1.1 Background of the Study

Education is widely viewed as an on-going process and a good preparation for a person’s life. Investing in education; thus, is considered as a productive activity and a good investment in human resources because education is one of the most important elements of human resource development (Mohsin, Aslam, & Bashir, 2004). It is considered to be the investment in human capital as it builds human capabilities, which is a vital nation-building ingredient. A progressive and developing state would never ignore its indisputable needs for socialization of its masses and education is considered to be the chief organ for this purpose.

Furthermore, in order to accelerate the social and economic development and growth of the country, it is vital for the governments to educate all its citizens because education is an important component of socio-economic development (Mohsin, Aslam, & Bashir, 2004) and it contributes significantly to a country’s progress and social returns to education are especially high, particularly in a country like Cambodia (Royal Government of Cambodia [RGC], 2006). Without spread of literacy, the dream of socio-economic development of the country can never be realized. Therefore, the equitable and quality education should be provided free of charge to all the people regardless of their gender, races, ethnicities and status in the society.

Therefore, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has given due importance to basic education in order to meet the Cambodia’s Millennium Development Goal (CMDG) 2 ‘Achieving Universal Primary Education (UPE)’ and CMDG 3 ‘Promoting Gender Equality and Empower Women’ by 2015. In so doing, the tremendous effort of the RGC has been placed on increasing the literacy rate among 15-24 year-old population, net enrollment ratio in primary education and primary completion rate of up to almost, if not, 100 percent and reducing the gender gap and eliminating the gender disparities in upper secondary and tertiary education at all public institutions (RGC, 2011). The government of Cambodia; moreover, has endeavored not only to increasing the
educational access and literacy rate, but also to improving the quality of education at all levels in order to enroll and retain students beyond primary school level (RGC, 2011).

Despite the government’s efforts in retaining students, the educational system in Cambodia has experienced an endemic problem of student dropout in the past decade. According to the data obtained from the Education Management Information System (EMIS) of the Cambodia’s Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) from 2005 to 2012, the dropout rate at primary level has declined from 11.7 percent in 2004-2005 to only 8.3 percent in 2010-2011 (see Table 1.1). Even though the national dropout rate has slightly decreased, the dropout rates have actually increased among children at grades 1 to 6 (see Figure 1.1) regardless of their sex.

Table 1.2: National Dropout Rates at Primary School Level, 2004-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: MoEYS, Education Management Information System, 2005-2012)

Figure 1.2: National Dropout Rates from Grades 1 to 6, 2007-2011

(Source: MoEYS, Education Management Information System, 2008-2012)
Statistically, in the last 3 years from 2010 to 2012, primary school enrolment rates for males and females were almost equal at 95.83 and 95.10 percent respectively, while the national enrollment rate was 95.46 percent. This results shows that not all Cambodian school-aged children are able to consistently attend the school’s curriculum due to some individual constraints (i.e., low aspiration for school, low test scores and/or repeat grade) and some other household constraints such as financial reasons, parental preference, parents’ attitudes toward schooling and to name a few.

Moreover, it is important to note that boys have lower dropout rates than that of girls at primary school level within a range of 2 to 3 percent. In recent years, the gap has narrowed slightly but still remains of some concern. Therefore, gender inequality in education has attracted considerable international attention since the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All adopted by the World Conference on Education for All, in Jomtien, Thailand. The commitment to gender equality in education spells out targets and strategies to meet the basic learning needs of all. Particular emphasis was placed on female education because of the pivotal role it is perceived to play in the economic and social development process (Rose, & Al-Samarrai, 2001). Despite this emphasis, the World’s effort in bridging the gender gap in basic education has been modest. Overall, the enrollment rates of girls increase slightly higher than that of boys. However, the absolute number of excluded children has increased from 100 million to 125 million and girls still constitute more than 60 percent of these out-of-school children (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2001).

Like other countries around the globe, Cambodia is facing similar trend of the rapid dropout rates among primary school children, particularly female pupils. Cambodian girls drop out of school from as low as grade 1 at an average of 13.4 percent across the primary grades, while the boys’ dropout rates average at 10.5 percent from grade 1 to grade 6 (Keng, 2003). The schooling survival and completion rates among girl cohorts are very low. Out of 100 girls who enroll in grade one, only 26 are expected to reach grade 6 and as few as 19 would successfully graduate from primary education compared to 29 and 23 boys in that order (MoEYS, 1999, 2000 & 2001).

A number of earlier studies which focused mainly on dropout determinants reported many constraints and obstacles Cambodian pupils, especially girls faced in their schooling participation. Girls normally started school at a later age of 10 or above rather than the official starting age of 6-7 (Keng, 2003; & Rose, & Al-Samarria, 2001). The late entry is a deterrent of school completion, thus making girls dropout early. Their early dropout is partly because opportunity costs increase with age and partly because girls in particular are more likely to be withdrawn from school because their household burden and other farming-related activities tend to increase with their age (Keng, 2003;
Rose, & Al-Samarria, 2001; & Velasco, 2001). This poses a tremendous challenge and burden to female students in their desire to develop their full potentials as individuals.

Parental education is another important determinant of students’ dropout or continuation at primary level. Earlier study showed no significant difference between the proportion of boys and girls with educated mother or father (Rose, & Al-Samarrai, 2001). However, illiteracy of a mother or father does have significant impacts on their children’s schooling participation. Father’s formal education is an important determinant of school attendance and completion, particularly for girls. A study by Rose and Al-Samarrai (2001) showed that fathers of children in school are less likely to be illiterate compared to those out-of-school children’s fathers. Both boys and girls with fathers who have some education are more likely to have attended school and boys are more likely to complete school.

Keng’s (2003) study also found that fathers’ education had significant impact on girls’ perseverance in schooling. Illiteracy of fathers contributed to the early school discontinuation of the children. The study also found that out of all dropout girls’ fathers, 15.1 percent were illiterate, 21.2 had literacy education and 54.5 percent had primary education. Only 9 percent had lower secondary education and none had any upper secondary education. In contrast, none of school-attending girls’ fathers were illiterate. The study also showed that about 17.9 percent of school-attending girls’ fathers had literacy and lower secondary education, 50 percent had primary education, and 14.3 percent had even up to upper secondary education (Keng, 2003). Hence, the consistency that school-going girls had better educated fathers than had the dropout girls suggests that fathers’ education was critical for girls’ continuation in schools.

Besides the impact of fathers’ education, the influence of mother’s education on girl’s schooling continuation is even more profound. Mothers’ education also has significant influence on their children’s school dropout or continuation. Both boys and girls are more likely to drop out of school if they have illiterate mothers. However, they are more likely to attend and complete primary school if their mothers have some levels of education (Keng, 2003; & Rose, & Al-Samarrai, 2001). The effect of mothers’ education, though initially marginal, started to emerge even at the primary level of education. For instance, among those who had dropped out of school, as much as 30.2 percent belonged to families with illiterate mothers, compared only 12.5 percent of girls who were currently enrolled in upper grade of primary school. More acutely, the non-dropout girls were 7 times more likely than the dropout girls to have mothers with lower secondary education (Keng, 2003). Thus, a mother’s education, in addition to a father’s education, is an important determinant of attendance and completion of primary school for both boys and girls.
No single factor can completely account for the students’ decisions to continue in school until graduation. Hence, Family structure is another important determinant of school dropout or completion. Earlier study showed that children who are living with both parents have lower dropout rate that those who are living with either female-headed or male-headed household (Rumberger, & Lim, 2008; & Rose, & Al-Samarrai, 2001). Some evidence suggests that children, particularly girls in female-headed household are able to attend and complete school because of women’s positive attitudes toward schooling (Rose, & Al-Samarrai, 2001).

1.2 Research Problems and Objectives

There is a growing body of research on school dropout and a number of empirical studies have identified a wide range of factors influencing the likelihood of a student to leave school. Nevertheless, these existing studies seemed to lack specific information with respect to causes of school completion of some children at primary school level. Therefore, the key objective of this study is to investigate the main determining factors that contribute to the school dropout or completion of many young children in Cambodia. The study; moreover, attempts to identify some of the individual and household characteristics determining the probability of a child attending and completing primary school in Cambodia, and to see how these characteristics differ by gender. Furthermore, it aims to examine the interaction between school-related constraints and economic factors of the households in order to provide an important explanation for the persistence of the gender gap in school enrollment and completion.

1.3 Research Questions

To be more specific, the study aims to answer the following questions.

1. What types of individual and household characteristics that determine the probability of a child attending and completing primary school?

2. How these individual and household characteristics differ by gender?

3. In what ways do school-related constraints interact with economic factors?

1.4 Justification for the Study

Even though there were many studies on dropout, the focus of the studies was not the same. This study explored the determinants of school dropout and completion of primary school pupils in Kratie province, a small and quiet place to which little attention has been paid. This was a year-long study conducted in the period from March 2012 to March 2013. The significance of the study is to
compare between the dropout determinants and school completion factors so that reflection and implication can be drawn. It will also contributes to the formulation of school curriculum and design of the policy to encourage parents to send and children themselves, especially girls to enroll in and complete primary school and further their education to higher levels.

1.5 Chapter Outline

The whole research is segmented into four main chapters. Chapter 1 highlights the significance and states the purposes of the study with specific research questions to be answered. Chapter 2 reviews some of the existing literatures related to the causes of student dropout at both individual and family levels. Chapter 3 introduces the methodology of the study covering the sampling process, research instrumentation, analysis data and analysis tools and so on. The next chapter, Chapter 4, presents the study results and discusses the main finding with earlier studies. Then, the chapter ends with some recommendations and suggestions for further studies.
CHAPTER 2
THE REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURES

This chapter starts with a discussion of the existing dropout literatures and major contributing causes for student dropout. The student dropout at individual and family levels is also presented in the chapter.

2.1 Causes for Student Dropout at Individual Level

There were many individual factors contributing to school dropout of many students. For instance, the study by Keng (2003) found that late enrollment was one of the many challenges that contributed to early school dropout of many primary school children. Overage enrollment of some children at the age of 10 or above rather than the official starting age of 6 or 7 was a deterrent to school completion and it also affected the students’ image at school as ‘too old’ for primary school level (Keng, 2003; & Rose, & Al-Samarrai, 2001).

In addition, repetition and high absence record were also reported as an important determinant for dropout. The same studies by Keng (2003) and Rose and Al-Samarrai (2001) revealed that children who were absent frequently from school were more likely to drop out of school (Keng, 2003; & Levy, 1971). Moreover, if children have to repeat grade, they will be older before they reach the last grade of primary school, which increases the opportunity cost of their time; hence, the possibility of dropping out also increases (Rose, & Al-Samarrai, 2001).

Low educational and occupational aspirations have also been shown as individual attributes to predict school dropout (Ekstrom et al., 1986; Rumberger, 1995; Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Newmann, Wehlage, Lamborn, 1992; Pirog & Magee, 1997; Swanson & Schneider, 1999; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). And these factors were also related to families and parents’ aspiration for their children future education and career (Keng, 2003).

2.2 Causes for Student Dropout at Family Level

Family background is widely recognized as the single most important contributor to success in school. Although early work by Coleman, Jencks, and others suggested that family background alone could explain most of the variation in educational outcomes (Coleman et al., 1966; Jencks et al., 1972), subsequent research found that much of the influence of family background was mediated through schools. Yet in virtually all research on school achievement family background still exerts a powerful, independent influence. Much of the empirical research has focused on the structural characteristics of families, such as socioeconomic status and family structure. Research has consistently found that socioeconomic status, most commonly measured by parental education...
and income, is a powerful predictor of school achievement and dropout behavior (Bryk & Thum, 1989; Ekstrom et al., 1986; McNeal, 1999; Rumberger, 1983; Rumberger, 1995; Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Pong & Ju, 2000). Research has also demonstrated that students from single-parent and step families are more likely to drop out of school than students from two-parent families (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Ekstrom et al., 1986; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; McNeal, 1999; Rumberger, 1983; Rumberger, 1995; Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Teachman et al., 1996).
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the overall design of the study, including data collection methods such as the selection of the sites and population, sampling techniques, tools and procedures. A discussion of the strategies employed for data analysis and the identification of the study limitations are also presented in this chapter. The chapter ends with a brief description of ethical issues throughout the conduct of the study.

3.1 Overview of Kratie Province

3.1.1 Geography

Kratie is one of the smallest and peaceful provinces in Cambodia. This province is located in the Northeast of Cambodia and has the total land size of 11,094 square kilometers (NIS, 2010). It is bordering with Stung Treng to the North, Mondulkiri to the East, Vietnam and Kampong Cham to the South and Kampong Thom to the West. It has been divided into 1 krong (Krong Kracheh) and 5 districts (Chholoung, Krong Kracheh, Praek Prasab, Sambour and Snuol).

Kratie is known for its attractive riverside scenery and its green villages and paddies. Fisheries are part of the Upper Mekong River Zone, which is important support for migratory species and subsistence fishing but does not play a major role in commercial fishing. The Mekong River flows from the north to the south of the province and is home to several types of dolphins, fish, and birds.

3.1.2 Demography

Based on the General Population Census of Cambodia (2008), Kratie has the total population of 319,217 with 50 percent female. The total number of households in 2008 was 65,778 with an average household size of 5.0 persons (NIS, 2010). The population density of the province is much lower than an average population density for Cambodia, which was 29 persons/km$^2$ and 75 persons/km$^2$, respectively.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Sites Selection

Kratie province was purposively selected as the study area because of three main reasons. To begin with, this place seems to be ignored and, to the best of my understanding, there was no earlier studies focusing on this area. Next, this place was chosen as the study site because the researcher wanted to collect some data which represented the province as a whole to ease the policy makers
and curriculum developers to formulate the policies and other assistance programs to help raise the awareness and participation of the local people, particularly to encourage parents to send their children to school. Finally, the study wanted to produce some important data for the province in order to assist the future research which aims at conducting for in-depth studies for this site.

3.2.2 Study Participants

One urban and one rural primary school in Kratie province were purposively selected for the study. These two schools were a good representation of the whole primary school age population in Kratie province because of a high enrollment rate in these two selected schools. In total, there were 117 respondents participating in the study (see Table 3.1). The participants comprised of 92 grade-6 students, 20 dropouts, 3 classroom teachers 2 school principals.

| Table 3.2: Sample of the Study Participants |
| Population | Characteristics of Primary Schools | Total |
| 6 Graders    | Urban 58 | Rural 34 | 92   |
| Dropouts    | Urban 10 | Rural 10 | 20   |
| Classroom Teachers | Urban 2 | Rural 1 | 3 |
| School Principals | Urban 1 | Rural 1 | 2 |
| **Total**   | 71      | 46      | 117  |

3.2.3 Sampling Techniques

This study employed purposive sampling to select the study participants. The purposive sampling approach was used to choose specific participants with characteristics relevant to the research questions. In addition, purposive sampling enabled the researcher to select participants who could best add to the understanding of the phenomenon under study (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). These participants were grade-6 children, dropouts, grade-6 classroom teachers and primary school principals.

3.2.4 Instruments

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed for the study. Questionnaires were distributed to grade-6 pupils and those who dropped out of school before reaching grade-6. Interviews were also conducted with pupils in grade 6 and dropout children. To gain more in-depth picture of the issues arising from the questionnaires, interviews were carried out with the school directors and classroom teachers. Interviews with pupils and dropouts were to collect information on a number of child and household characteristics, including sex, age, school starting age, distance to the nearest school, whether a child has repeated grade, work performed by a child for the household, household possessions and number of children and adults in the household.
3.2.5 Procedures

In carrying out the research design, several specific procedures were used. First of all, the researcher finalized all supporting documents and data collection tools such as Information Sheet, Informed Consent Form, Official Fieldwork Letter, Interview Protocol for school principals, Interview Protocol for classroom teachers, and Questionnaires for 6 graders. These documents were initially written in English and then translated into Khmer in order to assist participants (see Appendices A, B, C, D, E, and F respectively).

Then, the researcher requested official fieldwork letter from the rector of the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) with technical supports from an assistant of the Graduate Program in Development Studies (MDS). This letter was addressed directly to the school principals of each primary school to seek his/her support in the conduct of the study at his/her schools. Requesting this letter, the researcher wanted to follow administrative procedures of each targeted school. In so doing, the researcher could ensure that all the participating schools were voluntary.

Once the letter was issued from the rector of RUPP, the researcher immediately distributed the letter to all the targeted schools along with all supporting documents such as Information Sheet, Informed Consent Form, Questionnaires for grade-6 and dropout students and Interview Schedules for school principals and classroom teachers. Once receiving all the documents, each school positively confirmed their volunteer participation in the study. With notification from top management of each school to all their staff mentioning that this study could be conducted at their schools, the study was fully supported by all the people involving in the study and all the targeted respondents participated with no hesitation. After gaining permission from the schools, the researcher started to visit the schools for data collection. All grade-6 students were asked to complete a short questionnaire about themselves and their families. A follow-up interview with individual students was also conducted to gain in-depth insights of the students’ condition. Moreover, the researcher started to make appointment with targeted respondents such as the school principals and grade-6 teachers to schedule interviews at a mutually convenient time. Finally, the data were successfully collected.

3.3 Data Analysis

The gathered data were analyzed and interpreted in relation to the objectives of the research. Descriptive analysis was made both quantitatively and qualitatively. For quantitative analysis, frequency counts, percentages and mean of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) were used to describe the independent and dependent variables.
Moreover, bivariate and multivariate analyses were employed for the data collected from questionnaires. For the bivariate analysis, significance tests will be conducted to examine the differences in characteristics between boys and girls and the differences between grade-6 pupils and dropouts for boys and girls separately. With reference to the multivariate analysis, two logistic regressions will be run. The purpose of running these regressions is to examine the differential impact of household attributes on boys’ and girls’ education.

Data from the interviews and FGDs will be treated in accordance with “content analysis technique” or “pattern-matching method”, which comprised establishing linkages between varying pieces of information to some common concepts (Babbie, 2002). Put another way, data will be categorized into related themes and patterns based on the research questions. Content analysis will also be applied to the secondary data. Triangulation or verification of differing sources of data from the study participants and accessible documentation was conducted where appropriate in order to validate information and strengthen reliability of the findings.

Analyzing qualitative data involved three different steps—(1) data reduction, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994 & Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005). To begin with, the researcher transcribed all the interviews verbatim, read the transcripts very carefully in order to classify responses in different categories based on its themes and patterns. Next, the researcher presented the reduced data in a data display matrix (see Appendix G) in order to answer all the above-mentioned research questions and to achieve the objectives of the study. Then the data were compared and contrast across all actors in the study. Finally, the collected data were analyzed differently based on the sources and nature of the data as follow.

Data derived from the semi-structured interviews were treated in accordance with ‘content analysis technique’ or ‘pattern-matching method’, which comprised establishing linkages between varying pieces of information to some common concepts (Babbie, 2002). Put another way, data were categorized into related themes and patterns based on the research questions. Content analysis was also applied to the secondary data. Triangulation or verification of differing sources of data from the study participants and accessible documentation was conducted where appropriate in order to validate information and strengthen reliability of the findings.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations play a remarkable role in all research studies. Hence, before conducting the study and collecting primary data, the researcher sought volunteer participation from all participants. The researcher had insured that their involvement in the study will not result in any physical, mental, or social harm. An official letter from the rector of RUPP along with Information
Sheet explaining the aims and significance of the research and inviting them to confidentially and voluntarily participate in the study was sent together with the Informed Consent Form and Questionnaires and Interview Schedules to all the targeted population.

These attachments were initially written in English and then translated into the language spoken by the respondents (Khmer) to ensure that all of them fully understand and be aware of the overall aims of the study.

At the beginning of each attachment, there is a paragraph explaining about the purposes of the research. At this point, the participants are introduced to the research topic, a brief and concise description of the research objectives, and the potential significance of the study. This explanation paragraph explains the nature of the research and volunteer involvement being requested from all participants. In so doing, the researcher wanted to ensure that all the participants perceived the broader picture of the study, and then they could decide whether or not to involve in the study.

In the Information Sheet, there is another paragraph mentioning about the audio-recordings and transcription of the interviews. The researcher sought permission from the respondents to audio-record the interviews and transcribe for data analysis. However, the recordings and transcription will only be identified and used by the researcher and will not be listened to or read by any third party. Moreover, the researcher used code number to identify each interview, rather than the participant’s name. No any other participants’ identification such as positions and workplace will be identified through the processes of analysis and on the research paper.

In the attempt to maintain the research ethics, the participants were required to read and sign an Informed Consent Form (both in English and Khmer versions) before the interviews took place to confirm that they were aware of and understand about the purposes of the research and know what needed of them and whether or not they consented to participate in the interviews, having their interviews audio-recorded and a transcript made.

Like the Informed Consent Form, the Questionnaires and Interview Schedule was also sent to the participants in advance because the researcher wanted to ensure that the participants knew what questions will be asked and what information to provide during the interviews. The participants were allowed to choose the settings and timing of the interviews based on their preferences and availabilities. Moreover, the researcher expected the interviewees to provide as detailed information as possible so that she could develop better understanding of the phenomenon under study.
The researcher ensured that the participants taking part in the interviews were voluntary and they could refuse to answer any questions and to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. What is more, the participants were notified that the interviews will be transcribed and their identity will not be presented in any form without their prior approval. Last but not least, the recordings of the transcription will be stored securely with password protected device. No identification will be used and the original materials will be destroyed five years after the study is finished.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The finding shows that there were substantially high percentages of school-going children (75.40 percent) attending pre-school, compared to only 12.20 percent of dropout children participated in kindergarten level. Among all the children attending kindergarten, there was a higher percentage for boy (87.50 percent) than that for girls (66.70 percent). It is statistically significant for the pre-school enrollment of male and female students under study with the p=0.01.

Children who were more absent from school are the most likely dropout group, particularly for girls. The data shows that 32.85 percent of dropout girls, compared to only 22.42 percent of school-going girls, had been absent from school at least 4 days or more in the last two weeks of their last academic year in school.

Repetition, due in part to high absenteeism, is also one of the observable predictors for children to drop out of a primary school. For instance, if children have to repeat grade, they will be older before reaching the last primary grade. This again increases the opportunity cost of girls’ time, resulting in early drop out of education cycle. The study found that two-third of the dropout girls had repeated at least once during their primary education level (grades 1-5), with 22.67 percent having repeated twice or more during their primary school cycle. Repeating the same grade several time increases the likelihood of girls’ withdrawal from school. This is also confirmed by Keng’s (2003) and Levy’s (1971) studies that girls will be more likely to drop out given their grade repetition.

The main reason given for repetition by all the students interviewed was related to poor academic background. On average, boys outperformed their female counterparts because girls are more needed for household work and they did not have enough time to concentrate on their studies. This finding confirmed the finding by Rose and Al-Samarrai (2001) that girls did not perform as well as boys in class because of higher demand on girls’ labour in the household, making them tired and less active in class.

Low educational aspiration is also one of the many predictors for dropout. When students were asked “What is the highest level of education do you wish to complete?” and (2) “What is the highest level of education do your parents/guardians expect you to complete”, girls expressed higher aspiration for the studies than that of boys. Among all the female population, there were 75 percent expected to reach post-bachelor education, whereas there were only 59.60 percent of their male counterparts expected to reach the same level (see Figure 4.1). This finding contradicts with the finding of Keng (2003) that boys seemed to have stronger educational desire. The similar results
were given for the later question about the highest level of education that their parents/guardians expected of them (see Figure 4.2). This result indicates that children are more likely to follow their parents’/guardians’ advices concerning their schooling because they expressed the same level of educational aspiration as expected by their seniors.

![Figure 4.3: What Is the Highest Level of Education Do You Wish to Complete?](image)

![Figure 4.4: What Is the Highest Level of Education Do Your Parents/Guardians Expect You to Complete?](image)

It is significant to note that some parents understand and aware of the value of education. Therefore, they are more willing to send their children to kindergarten even they reach the official age of enrollment in primary grade 1. However, some other factors such as absenteeism of the students from class, grade repetition and poor academic background are the hindrances for student dropout.
To examine how significantly the economic status of a family determined the likelihood of children, particularly girls to complete primary school, the social and economic status of the families of grade 6 pupils and the school dropouts were compared based on the household possessions of the following 10 indicators (ownership of bicycle, motorbike, car, radio, CD/VCD player, TV, cell phone, electricity, and running water) and whether the roof of the house was made of brick, wood or thatch. It was found that a large majority of children attending and completing primary school came from the families who own most of the household possessions indicated above.

**Attitudes of the School Principals and Classroom Teachers toward Their Students’ Schooling**

All of the principals and teachers who were interviewed believed that education was very important for both boys and girls. Teachers were asked among male and female students who were present most in class. The answer was mostly girls presented at school and girls’ enrollment in school was also higher than that of male students. The reasons that boys were absent from school because they had to help their parents with the farming and picking palm nuts for their parents to make sugar palm.


