

**INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WELFARE OFFICERS IN
REDUCTION OF SCHOOL DROPOUT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL
STUDENTS: A CASE OF IGUNGA DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
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2025

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned certifies that he has read and recommends for acceptance by the Open University of Tanzania a Research Report titled: **“Assessing the Role of Social Welfare Officers in Reduction of School Dropout Among Secondary School Students: A Case of Igunga District Council”** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Social Work (MSW).

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DECLARATION

I, **Abakos Deodatus**, declare that the work presented in this dissertation is original. It has never been presented to any other university or institution. Where other people's works have been used, and references have been provided. It is in this regard that I declare this work as originally mine. It is hereby presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Social Work (MSW).



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Signature

23/10/2025

.....

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my father, Deodatus Kululetela, my mother, RehemaTungaraza and my beloved brothers and sisters Peter Deodatus, Hilida Deodatus, Magedalena Deodatus, Efrazia Deodatus, Anna Deodatus, and DeniDs Deodatus for giving me the best upbringing, laying the foundation of education and continuing to encourage me to study for my master's degree. Also, to my beloved wife, Elizabeth Mayunga, and our son, Fredrick Abakos, for their prayers, love, encouragement, tolerance, care, and support during my studies.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the role of Social Welfare Officers (SWOs) in reducing school dropout among secondary school students in Igunga District Council. The study was guided by three specific objectives: to assess the strategies used by SWOs in reducing dropout, to examine their level of engagement, and to identify barriers hindering their efforts. Guided by Structural Functionalism Theory and grounded in a pragmatism philosophy, the study employed a descriptive research approach. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 20, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that SWOs are not fully implementing strategies aimed at reducing dropout rates among secondary school students. Their limited engagement was attributed to several challenges, including inadequate funding, a shortage of SWOs particularly at the ward level harmful traditional practices, and weak enforcement of relevant laws. These barriers significantly constrain SWOs' capacity to carry out their roles effectively. The study concluded that the limited application of dropout reduction strategies by SWOs is primarily due to institutional and social constraints. It recommended that the government establish a clear policy to deploy SWOs at both primary and secondary education levels to address student-related issues, including dropout. Furthermore, it emphasized the need for the government, in collaboration with stakeholders, to allocate sufficient resources to support SWOs and facilitate the effective implementation of intervention programs aimed at minimizing school dropout rates.

Keywords: *Social Welfare Officers, School Dropout Secondary School, Students.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AASW	Australian Association of Social Workers
AU	African Union
DC	District Council
DEWS	Dropout Early Warning Systems
ESL	Early School Leaving
LCA	Law of the Child Act
MEST	Ministry of education, Science and Technology
NASW	National Association of Social Workers
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NPA-VAWC	National Plan of Action to End Violence against Women and
PO-RALG	President's Office, Regional Administration, and Local
RS	Regional Secretariat
SEUIP	Secondary Education Improvement Programmer
SWO	Social Welfare Officer
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
URT	United Republic of Tanzania

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter presents the information concerning the background to the study, statement of the research problem, research objectives, research questions, and significance of the study.

1.2 Background to the Study

According to the World Bank (2018), the number of enrolled students is very high during the early stages of schooling, however, the number of students dropping out increases at the secondary school level, leading to many countries having very few students completing their education. Students' dropout can be influenced by different factors such as school factors, socio-cultural factors and home-based factors. These include early marriage, distance from home to school, poverty, child labour and early pregnancy, forced marriage and domestic activities (Kalamba and Mpiza, 2024).

In many Sub-Saharan African countries dropout is still a problem that hurts the socio-economic development and overall wellbeing of the community and influences most students to engage in high-risk behaviors such as premature sexual activity, early pregnancy, delinquency, crime, violence, and the use of alcohol and drugs (Issa et al., 2022). As noted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2021), in many countries around the world, secondary education is divided into two levels: lower secondary education (spanning 3 to 4 years) and upper secondary education (spanning 2 to 3 years). Globally, the school social welfare officers are recruited in

education settings and have consistently focused on coordinating the efforts of schools, families, and communities towards helping students improve their academic achievement and social, emotional, and behavioral competence by using their unique perspective of viewing the person in their environment.

School social welfare officers seek to ensure equitable education opportunities, ensure that students are mentally, physically, and emotionally present in the classroom, and promote respect and dignity for all students, as noted by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2017). This contrasts with Tanzania, where social welfare officer cadres are not employed in secondary schools to deal with student problems, including student dropout (Mwaisuma, 2016).

The most recent statistics from UNICEF, (2021) show that between the ages of 6 and 18, approximately 244 million children and teenagers in primary and secondary schools worldwide dropped out of school in 2020, with 125.5 million boys and 118.5 million girls. About 49 million primary students dropped out, while 195 million secondary students between the ages of 12 and 17 were out of school in 2020, of which 93 million are girls and 102 million are boys.

In the developed countries Social workers who are employed as school counselors in the schools and they work with families involves counselling and teaching parents to deal with student problems that lead to dropout (Soni, 2023). In addition, social welfare officers are employed in schools to deal with student dropout by reviewing school attendance to prevent students from dropping out. In Sub-Saharan countries, social welfare officers are not employed in public schools and are less employed in

private schools and they deal with student dropouts when there are out of education settings. (Huxtable, 2022).

In the European Union, secondary school is divided into two phases: lower secondary students are enrolled between the ages of 10 and 12, and upper secondary students are enrolled between the ages of 14 and 16 (European Commission, 2022). The problem of secondary school dropout is called early school leaving (ESL). ESL refers to students who are unsuccessful in completing their secondary education (Cubero-Perez et al., 2023). The overage dropout rate in the European Union was 10.2% of all students enrolled in 2018, while Spain and Romania had the highest dropout rates at 16% and 16.4%, respectively (Mashhad, 2021). In 2022, the secondary student dropout rate was 11.4% and 7.9%, respectively, according to Cubero-Perez et al. (2023).

According to UNICEF (2022), in Europe, school social welfare officers, by underpinning multi-stakeholder engagement and a holistic approach, prevent and address child protection issues as they arise and connect interventions at school with the broader child protection system and services that help reduce school dropouts and educational outcomes. The United Kingdom enacted the Education Act of 1880, which required all schools to make attendance compulsory and prosecute both children and parents for non-attendance.

Social workers were engaged in implementing the enacted law to prevent student dropout (Huxtable, 2022). In America and European governments allocate a substantial portion of their budgets to funding social worker positions across various

sectors like child protection, education setting to deal with student problems including dropouts, elderly care, and mental health (Yildirian, 2021)

In Northern America, the dropout rate decreased from 8.3% in 2010 to 5.1% in 2021. The dropout rate varied by race and ethnicity, where the black status of student dropouts decreased from 10.3 to 5.6%, Hispanic from 16.7 to 7.8%, Asian from 2.8 to 2.1%, American Indian or Alaska Native from 15.4 to 10.2%, two or more races from 6.1 to 4.9%, and whites from 5.3 to 4% (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2021). In Latin America (Southern American countries) and the Caribbean, about 12 million (6.3 million girls and 5.6 million boys) students dropped out of secondary schools in 2018, as noted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2019).

According to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW 2017). School social welfare officers in America possess skills in systematic assessment, data gathering, and interpretation at multiple levels using a variety of methods (for example, interviews, direct observation, standardized instruments, surveys, and focus groups) to assess the needs, characteristics, and interactions of students, families, and school personnel. Therefore, school social welfare officers conduct reliable and valid assessments of students and organizations to inform the design of interventions to remove barriers to learning, including school dropouts (NASW, 2017). According to Zippia (2024) there are over 142,288 school social workers currently employed in the United States to conduct student and family assessment and reviewing student attendance which identify the early sign of student dropout.

In Australia, the secondary dropout rate ranges from one out of four students from low-income families dropping out of public schools. The retention rate at the national level has fallen from 84.8 to 80.5% over the past five years (Julie, 2023). In Oceania the overall dropout rate was 5.4% of lower secondary students and 24.6% of upper secondary students in 2018 (UNESCO, 2019). School social welfare officers have a history spanning more than 50 years in Australia.

In addition, SWOs assist teachers in analyzing student challenges with learning and behaviors and make recommendations for teaching, learning and curriculum modification, individualized support, behavior management, student groupings, and classroom environments. They also prepare and support children in beginning primary school, finishing secondary school, and college education as noted by Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW, 2020).

In Asia, the dropout rate of secondary students is categorized into different parts of the continent, whereby the dropout rates of Central Asia were 5.2% of lower secondary students and 26.7% of youth upper secondary students; in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, the dropout rate was 9.7% of lower secondary students and 20.6% of youth upper secondary students; and in Northern Africa and Western Asia, the dropout rate was 13.9% of lower secondary students and 29.8% of youth upper secondary students in 2018 (UNESCO, 2019). A significant role for school social welfare officers in Asia, particularly as countries have widespread poverty and the accompanying child labor contributes to under-enrolment in school, is to support education for all targets by reaching out to families to enroll children, providing for basic needs such as school meals, and maintaining school attendance (Huxtable,

2022).

Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region with the highest secondary school dropout rate, whereby for students who drop out of secondary education, their rights have been undermined, and their opportunities have been limited (Mayomaa, 2022). In 2018, the overall dropout rate was 36.7%, with 35.3% of female and 38.1% of male students dropping out of lower secondary school and 57.5% dropping out of upper secondary school, whereas the female dropout rate was 60.5% and the male was 54.5% (UNESCO, 2019). However, in most Sub-Saharan countries, SWOs are not employed in public schools and are less employed in private schools to reduce absenteeism, whether caused by truancy, school phobia, dropping out, or poor health. (Huxtable, 2022).

In Tanzania, secondary school dropout is still a significant issue, particularly in rural areas. In 2022, about 2,823,588 students were enrolled in secondary schools. However, 134,690 dropped out, or 4.8% of the enrolled students. About 68,964 were boys and 65,726 were girls, while the primary school dropout rate was 1.6%, as noted by the President's Office, Regional Administration, and Local Government (PO-RALG, 2023). In Tanzania, social welfare officers are employed in the Regional Secretariat, local government authorities, and colleges to ensure the children's welfare, including the student's right to complete the study by preventing student dropout rates through counseling the student and his/her parents, guardians, and relatives (URT 2018). Social welfare officers have been implementing various strategies, programs, and policies to prevent and reduce student dropout rates as indicated below.

The Law of the Child Act of 2019, Parenting, Guidance, and Child Protection of 2020; the Education and Training Policy (2014); Safe School Programs and the Five-Year National Plan of Action to End Violence against Women and Children (NPA-VAWC 2022/23–2026/27). However, Mwaisuma (2016) notes that, the recruitment of support staff in Tanzanian secondary schools did not include social welfare officers among the cadres required to be employed in secondary schools. The Law of the Child Act [Cap. 13 R.E. 2019] has stated that the social welfare officer may, upon receiving the report of infringement of child's rights including right to education, summon the person against whom the report was made to discuss the matter; and a decision shall be made by that officer in the best interest of the child.

There is no official document from the government that points to SWOs being employed and allocated in educational settings such as secondary schools. Unlike Europe and America, in SSA no document provides the duties and responsibilities that direct SWOs to work in an educational setting to deal with school problems, including dropouts, but they work generally work according to the Law of the Child Act of 2029 and other strategies, programs, and policies to prevent and reduce student dropout rates when they are out of school. URT, 2023).

According to Rushwaya (2022), SWOs from Sub-Saharan Africa face various challenges, including insufficient allocations of budget funds for social services, limited SWOs, lack of transport means, and shortage of essential furniture like tables and chairs for staff and clients, computers, and stationery. The mentioned challenges are similar to those for Tanzania SWOs and hinder them from being involved in various interventions, including dealing with student dropout. (URT, 2018).

According to 2023, Basic Education data, in 2022, Tabora region leads in dropout rates with 8.4%, followed by Geita (7.8%), Dodoma (7.6%), and Mwanza (4.3%). Igunga District Council had the highest dropout rate of secondary students compared to other councils at 11.7%, followed by Kaliua (11.1%), Nzega DC (11%), Sikonge (10.8%), Urambo DC (9.2%), Uyui (8.9%), Nzega TC (2.8%), and Tabora MC (2.1%). The table provides information on secondary dropouts by council over the last three years between 2020 - 2022 as shown in Table 1.1

Table 1.1: Secondary Dropouts between 2020 - 2022

Years	2020			2021			2022		
Council	Total Enrolments	Student dropped out		Total Enrolments	Student dropped out		Total Enrolments	Student dropped out	
Igunga DC	13,984	2,259	16.2 %	14,414	2030	14.1 %	14,802	1,734	11.7 %
Nzega DC	10,591	806	7.6%	13,893	1649	11.8 %	12,224	1,338	10.9 %
Tabora MC	17,401	499	2.9%	16,187	734	4.5%	18,766	392	2.0%
Uyui DC	9,756	997	10.2 %	13,049	1812	13.8 %	12,065	1,082	8.9 %
Urambo DC	8,153	614	7.5%	10,993	714	6.4%	9652	894	9.2%
Kaliua DC	10,582	981	9.3%	12,301	1202	9.7%	14,017	1,556	11.1 %
Nzega TC	5,077	289	5.7%	4,662	464	10 %	5,998	171	2.8%
Sikonge DC	5,339	767	14.4 %	6,432	587	9.1%	9,059	986	10.8 %
Total	80,883	7,212	8.9%	91,931	9,192	9.9 %	96,583	8,153	8.4 %

Source; School dropouts in Tabora region (URT 2021, 2022 &2023)

Igunga District Council has the highest dropout rate of secondary students compared to other councils in the region for three consecutive years, as shown in Table 1.1. In Tabora region, only 76 out of 269 social welfare officers have been employed and allocated at the regional level, council headquarters, and health facilities to provide

services to different groups, including the promotion of the welfare of the children, the right for students to complete the cycle of education. Also Igunga DC has five social welfare officers to deal with children's rights, including the programs and intervention to deal with dropout (Tabora Regional Commission Office, 2025).

The government of Tanzania through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, Sectorial Ministries has made various efforts to reduce the problem of students dropping out of school by increasing access to secondary education (Kalamba and Mpiza, 2024) (Kalamba & Mpiza, 2024). The government has enacted various laws and policies that direct students to get the right to complete the cycle of education including the Education and Training Policy (2014). Education policy states that all students selected to join secondary education have been mandated to complete their secondary education by removing all the obstacles that hinder students' ability to complete the education circle at the relevant level.

In addition, the policy states that the government shall continue to increase various education and training opportunities on an equal basis for all social groups at all levels, including children with special needs (URT, 2014). To stop student dropout, the government has enacted, the Law of the Child Act (CAP.13 R.E. 2019) which insist on the child's right including right to education. In addition, the law has directs the Local government authorities to take legal action against parent, guardian, or relative having custody of a child who can, but refuses or neglects to provide the child with education. Also, the Written Laws (Miscellaneous Amendment) (No. 2) ACT, 2016, Section 60A, has prohibited marrying or impregnating a primary or secondary student. Section 60A "commits an offense and shall, on conviction, be

liable to imprisonment for thirty years (URT, 2016). Because of such punishment, the society is afraid to marry or impregnate a primary or secondary student, which ultimately reduces the dropout rate especially girls.

SWOs in local governments have been carrying out the role of overseeing the laws that protect the rights of the child, including the right to education. In addition Through various commemorations and events, such as the sixteen days of activism for ending violence against women and children and the Day of the African Child, SWOs have been using the LCA of 2019 and Written Laws (Miscellaneous Amendment) (No. 2) Act, 2016, Section 60A, to prohibit community members from marrying and impregnating children and to continue with their studies for the purpose of reducing dropout rates (URT, 2022).

The government also introduced Secondary Education Development Programme (SEDP) to reduce secondary dropout among secondary school students (Herman & Nestory, 2022). In 2022, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and the President's Office of Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG), in collaboration with the World Bank, launched a five-year program named the Secondary Education Improvement Programme (SEQUIP) with its primary objective of increasing access to secondary education, providing responsive learning environments for girls, and improving the completion of quality secondary education for girls and boys.

The programs provide financial support to increase access to secondary education nationwide and in its 184 councils by constructing 1000 new schools and adding

new facilities to existing secondary schools. Finally, the program aims to reduce the distance from home to school (URT, 2022). Another effort done by the government is to introduce Dropout Early Warning Systems (DEWS), which identifies the key indicators that track students at risk of dropping out (URT 2022).

The government implemented the five-year National Plan of Action to End Violence against Women and Children (NPA-VAWC 2022/23–2027/28) by consolidating eight action plans and addressing different interventions for protecting a child's rights, including the right to education. Also, the plan strengthens norms and values that empower female children and support, nurture, and promote gender equity by modifying and distracting from harmful gender norms that preserve harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and girl discrimination, which cause student dropouts, especially girls (URT, 2016).

Other efforts have been made by the Tabora region, where the region has been collaborating with stakeholders to reduce student dropout among secondary students. In 2022, Tabora region, with the collaboration of UNICEF Tanzania, launched a program called Educate a Child." This program aimed to bring back to school all students who had dropped out. Social welfare officers and education officers cooperate to implement a program known as "Safe School, aiming at improving a safe environment for students to continue their studies by encouraging parents to donate food for students in schools. Also, instruct teachers to reduce excessive corporal punishments that lead some students to drop out of school (Tabora Regional Commissioner Office, 2023). According to the reports from PO-RALG presented in table 1.1, it is evident that students continue to face challenges with dropping out of

school, despite various studies and reports showing the roles of SWOs in implementing various interventions to reduce the wave of students dropping out of school especially from secondary school. Therefore, the study aimed to investigate the role of social welfare officers in reducing school dropout among secondary school students.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

In developed countries such as the United States of America, England, Spain, Canada, and Australia, student dropout is at minimal levels as noted by World Bank (WB, 2018). This is due to the government programs to deal with retention of students and conducive environments, which are supported by social welfare officers, who work in educational settings to recognize and address student problems, including those with the signs of dropping out. Social welfare officers are also responsible for counseling students, conducting student psycho-social assessments and consulting with parents and teachers (Sherman, 2016).

Students dropout is a disaster for both individuals and society in many Sub-Saharan African countries, which leads individuals to lack the knowledge and skills that have been learned from school and become an obstacle in creating socioeconomic development (Kalamba & Mpiza, 2024). Because social welfare officers are not employed in education setting including secondary schools increases the workload of teachers who have to toil with many curriculum activities including classroom teachings and extra curriculum activities such as dealing with school dropouts (Mwaisuma, 2016). The absence of SWOs in education settings creates a vacuum for increasing school dropout among secondary school students. The studies conducted

by Soni (2023) and Sherman (2016) explored the role of social workers concerning student dropouts focused on American and European countries, therefore, leading geographical gap to prevail. Hence, the current study intended to fill in the identified gap by revealing either similarities or dissimilarities of this study with those studies conducted elsewhere. Finally the current study providing evidence-based recommendations that will create a conducive environment for SWOs to carry out their role in reducing dropout.

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study is to investigate the role of social welfare officers in reducing school dropout among secondary school students.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The following specific objectives guided the study:

- i. To assess the strategies applied by social welfare officers in reducing school dropout among secondary school students in Tanzania
- ii. To examine the level of engagement of social welfare officers in reducing dropout among secondary school students in Tanzania
- iii. To identify the barriers facing social welfare officers in their efforts to reduce dropout among secondary school students in Tanzania

1.5 Research Questions

The following research question led the study.

- i. What are strategies applied by social welfare officers to reduce school dropout among secondary school students in Tanzania?

- ii. What is the level of engagement social welfare officers engage in reducing school dropout among secondary school students in Tanzania?
- iii. What barriers face social welfare officers in their efforts to reduce dropout among secondary school students in Tanzania?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is valuable for social welfare officers and other education stakeholders who will use the findings to eliminate school dropouts among secondary school students in Tanzania and the world. These stakeholders include government institutions, social welfare officers, teachers, policymakers, academicians, school administrators, parents, non-governmental organizations, students, and the community.

The results of this study will support policymakers and academia to develop strategies that will enable social welfare officers to participate in various interventions for reducing school dropouts among secondary school students. The study findings will help policymakers to urge the government to hire social welfare officers and allocate them to education setting to deal with student dropout by using their professions. Identified and challenges that face the implementation of programs will inform policymakers to amend policies dealing with school dropouts.

In addition, the findings from the study will help social welfare officers and other practitioners to acquire new strategies and knowledge for reducing student dropouts in their jurisdiction area. The study helps researchers, stakeholders, and academicians with methodological approaches to study strategies and techniques,

which can be applied by SWOs in reducing student dropouts in different locations in Tanzania. In addition, the results of this study raise awareness of parents, school leaders, and the community on the role of SWOs in reducing student dropout. This will enable them to consult SWOs on any issues related to student dropout.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter conceptualizes the key terms, a theoretical literature review, an empirical literature review, a research gap, and a chapter summary.

2.2 Conceptualization of the Key Terms

The following are key concepts in this study:

2.2.1 Social Welfare Officers

Social welfare officers are those professionals who implement the programs and services designed to meet the needs of the people. These needs include economic and social wellbeing, health education, and quality of life (Diziegielewski, 2016). In Tanzania, Social welfare officers include professional social workers and non - professional social workers who work within Social Welfare Agencies/Institutions to offer support services such as child care workers in child care institutions, for the welfare and wellbeing of those they serve (URT, 2018).

In the context of this work, social welfare officers mean social welfare officers in the service of the government professionally trained in Social Work, Sociology, Psychology, Social Protection, Guidance and Counseling, Theology, Divinity, Child Protection, Social Policy, Early Childhood Development, Social Gerontology or any other professions related to Social Welfare from government-recognized college or University.

2.2.2 School Dropout

School dropout refers to terminating compulsory education, defined as leaving school before completing it (Krstic, Stepanovic & Videnovic, 2017). According to Kinyagu (2020), school dropout is the act of a person or student leaving an educational institution while they have not graduated and have not currently enrolled in a regular school anywhere. In this study, school dropout means an act of Ordinary-Level-Secondary School or Advanced-Level Secondary student to terminate his studies before completing for any other reason except death.

2.2.3 Secondary School Students

Secondary education refers to the education students receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage (Chika, 2007). In Tanzania, secondary education consists of two sequential cycles. The first cycle is a four-year ordinary-level (O-level) secondary education program. The second cycle is a two-year pro grammar of Advanced Level (A-Level) secondary education (PO-RALG, 2020). In this work, secondary school students are those enrolled in Ordinary-Level-Secondary Education or Advanced-Level Secondary Education.

2.3 Theoretical Literature Review

In this part, the researcher discussed a theory on the role of social welfare officers in reducing school dropout among secondary school students. This study was guided by the structural functionalism theory developed by Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), a French sociologist. Functionalism is associated with other authors such as Talcott Parsons, Herbert Spencer, and Robert Merton, who dominated American social theory in the 1950s and 1960s (Diago, 2020).

2.3.1 Structural Functionalism Theory

Many theories that may be useful in the study of social welfare officers' contribution to reducing school dropout among secondary school students, this study was guided by the structural functionalism theory. The main assumption of this theory is that a society is like a system (an organism), which is made up of sub-systems, each performing functions that contribute to the wellbeing of the entire system (Julius, 2014; Soepeno & Suyadi (2015).

Structural functionalism's weaknesses arise from the conflict theory's main assumptions. Conflict theory focuses on differences in power between individuals or social groups. This theory emerges from philosophical perspectives developed by Niccolo Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, and Karl Marx and emphasizes the idea that people are inherently contentious when competing for resources and power (Paige & Frederick, 2024). Structural functionalism ignores the contributions of other social institutions and tends to ignore the conflict and exploitation stressed by Marxists. It does not acknowledge exploitation and inequality within society; hence, structural functionalism is weak as it focuses too much on the stability of societies; it fails to consider individual differences within society.

That is, not all societies look or act alike. Finally, it assumes that everything in society is mainly positive, forgetting, for instance, about people are not working towards the common good. What about people who commit crimes? On the other hand, the strengths of structural functionalism theory are that it shows how each of the parts of society is interrelated, each contributing to the wellbeing of society, provides a very harmonious view of society and the family and puts more emphasis

on basic explanation of needs and functions of society. Regardless of the weaknesses of the structural functionalism theory identified above, in this study, structural functionalism provides a framework for understanding how different institutions and social structures play specific roles to understand precisely the nature and extent of the contribution of social welfare officers in the reduction of school dropout among secondary school students in Tanzania.

2.3.2 Relevance of Structural Functionalism Theory to this Work

The structural functionalism theory is relevant to investigating the role of social welfare officers in reducing dropout among secondary school students. According to the theory, a society is like a system (an organism), which is made up of subsystems, each performing functions that contribute to the wellbeing of the entire system (Julius, 2014; Soepeno & Suyadi, 2015). In this context of the study, structural functionalism provides a valuable lens to examine how different subsystems, like various government subsystems and other stakeholders, must work together with SWOs to ensure the reduction of dropout among secondary school students. Therefore, the relevance of the theory describes the following specific objective:

2.3.2.1 The strategies applied by Social Welfare Officers in Reduction of School dropout among Secondary School Students

Structural functionalism theory emphasizes society's consensus and order, focusing on social stability and shared public values (Beck & Grayot, 2021). Structural functionalism theory emphasizes the need for the government to prepare strategies applied by stakeholders, including social welfare, to reduce secondary school dropout. In this context, the government and other stakeholders are responsible for

preparing and launching various strategies for SWOs. Therefore, the failure of the Government and other stakeholders to prepare strategies, may cause SWOs not to participate fully in the reduction of school dropouts. On the other hand, SWOs and stakeholders are responsible for implementing strategies prepared by the government to reduce school dropout rates.

2.3.2.2 Levels of Engagement for Social Welfare Officers in Reduction of School Dropout among Secondary School Students

Structural functionalists emphasize that laws contribute to the specialization and balance among parts building the society (Beck & Grayot, 2021). Therefore, structural functionalism theory can be applied to determine the engagement of the SWOs in reducing school dropout. According to the theory, The government is responsible to make laws and policies that will engage SWOs to participate in various strategies and programs for reducing student dropouts. Failure of the government to enact those laws and policies may contribute to low engagement of SWOs in reducing student dropout rates.

2.3.3 The Barriers Face Social Welfare Officers in their Efforts to Reduce Dropout among Secondary School Students

Structural functionalism theory emphasizes society's consensus and order, focusing on social stability and shared public values (Beck & Grayot, 2021). The theory emphasizes the roles of the government and other stakeholders in planning, meeting social needs, and maintaining law and order. In this context, the government, along with various stakeholders, is responsible for creating a conducive environment for Social Welfare Officers (SWOs) by formulating policies, programs, and plans, as

well as allocating funds to eliminate barriers such as transportation issues and insufficient financial resources that hinder their effort to reduce student dropout rates, particularly in secondary schools. Failure on the part of the government and stakeholders to create a conducive environment will lead to barriers that hinder the effective implementation of SWOs to reduce student dropout.

2.4 Empirical Literature Review

In this section, the researcher reviewed various studies related to the roles of social welfare officers in reducing school dropout among secondary school students. The researcher also reviewed different books, articles, journals, and findings from other researchers published within and outside Tanzania.

2.4.1 The Strategies Applied by Social Welfare Officers in Reduction of School Dropout among Secondary School Students

The study by Huxtable, (2022) provides a global picture of school social work in 2021 using data gathered by the International Network for School Social Work. School social welfare is a growing speciality around the world. There are school social welfare officers practicing in more than 50 countries. School social welfare officers support students' educational success, especially those who are marginalized by poverty, oppression, disability and other personal or social problems. Ideally school social welfare officers practice within a multi-disciplinary team to address wide-ranging barriers to education and participate in preventive programs for all students. The study describes the growth of school social work around the world, various models of practice, the role of specialty professional associations, training and standards, and the growth of school social welfare literature. Changes in the role

and practice of school social welfare since the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020/2021 are included. International communication among school social welfare officers has grown via publications, conferences and the International Network for School Social Work, and continues to assist expansion of the specialty around the world.

Although implications for the future of social welfare in education were discussed, a list of national school social work associations was provided and references include literature on school social welfare from various countries, the study did not keep keen eyes on the role of school social welfare officers in different world classes i.e. first world countries, second world countries and third world countries. Nonetheless, the studies ignored that the economic base determines superstructure and assumed that Tanzania, Congo, Rwanda and Burundi are the same with France, Belgium, Finland, Italy, and Denmark in terms of spending in social welfare benefits.

The study conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2020) in Geneva pointed out that in most European unions, such as Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden, social workers have been employed in education settings to prevent student dropout by reviewing attendance and identifying early signs of dropping out. The study was preoccupied with westernisation, as it was conducted in European countries where social welfare officers have been employed in education settings, contrary to the Tanzanian context, where social welfare officers are not one of the cadres in school staffing levels. A study by Nguyen et al., (2022) evaluated criteria for the cooperation between social workers and educational forces are based on four coordination components; these

include four measures that assess the benefits, goals, content, and mode of collaboration between educational agencies and high school social work staff. According to research findings, strategies applied by social welfare officers, include; intervention, emergency support for teachers or students needing intervention or assistance; Organize events to promote student development, community integration, and assistance for teachers and parents in need.

The study failed to specify those interventions, emergency supports and events organized to promote student development, community integration, and assistance for teachers and parents in need. Therefore, the study's findings on strategies applied by social welfare officers are vague and need clarity by mentioning particular interventions, emergency supports and events organised to promote student development, community integration, and assistance for teachers and parents in need and reduce school dropout. In addition, the study kept its eyes only on high school (advanced level) and leaving strategies in junior school (ordinary level). Therefore, the current study was carried out at both the primary and secondary levels of education.

Likewise, Kataga & Mwila (2024) investigated the causes, impacts, and management strategies for truancy in secondary schools within Temeke Municipality, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 336 respondents, including students, teachers, parents, school heads, and local government officials. Findings revealed socioeconomic hardships, poor school environments, and inadequate parental involvement as primary contributors to truancy. The study highlighted effective strategies such as school attendance

monitoring, positive discipline, and fostering collaboration between schools and communities that are used in reducing dropout.

Recommendations include infrastructure improvement, capacity-building for teachers, and enhanced stakeholder engagement to address systemic issues and promote student retention. The study erred in facts by assigning teachers a role of dealing with school dropout rather than focusing on curriculum interventions and give a room for social welfare officer to deal with extra curriculum interventions. In addition, the study limited itself on school attendance monitoring, positive discipline, and fostering collaboration between schools and communities as management strategies for truancy in secondary schools, and ignored identification of other early signs of student dropout i.e. coming late at the school, sleeping during sessions and skipping sessions, home visit for student and family assessment, and significance of inserting child protection, law enforcement and various programs for reducing dropout.

Soni, (2023) conducted the study on School Dropouts and Role of Social Worker in India. The study was focused on Factors of School Dropouts, Role of School Social Worker and Future Solutions. The study found that students drop out due to family factors, school factors, social environment factors and personal factors. In addition, the study revealed that social welfare officers in India serve as school counsellors, and the majority of them work with families to provide counselling and teach parents. To achieve the objective of ensuring education for all, regardless of caste, religion, or gender, dropout rates must be reduced. To solve this issue, the study recommended, cooperation between government and nongovernmental organizations

(NGOs), implementing a free education programme, increasing scholarships at the primary and secondary levels, reducing the culture of paid coaching, lowering the cost of private schools, improving school infrastructure, increasing parent awareness, preventing early marriage of girls, ensuring equal access to education, combining various curricula into one or two unique systems, providing quality training for teachers, and providing all necessary resources.

However, the study revealed that social welfare officers have already been employed in India education settings, it ignored the fact that other part of the world social welfare officers are not part of school staffing level and while the study recommending free education programs and increasing scholarships at the primary and secondary levels to reduce school dropout, it failed to acknowledge that in other countries like Tanzania, free education programs are provided at primary and secondary education levels, but dropout is still a problem.

Minja, (2021) conducted the study on “School-Based Management Strategies for Reducing Girls School Dropout in Secondary Schools: A case of community secondary schools in Babati District, Tanzania. The study objectives were to examine the causes, the effects and strategic measures on girls’ dropout in secondary schools in Babati district. The study adopted a mixed research approach in which a total of 141 respondents participated. The study used questionnaire and interview guide as tools for data collection. The study identified causes of girl’s dropout in secondary schools to be low parents/ guardians’ income, pregnancy, long distance to school, school environment, and school facilities.

The study further showed that, strategies used by school management to reduce girls drop-out included provision of guidance and counseling services, teacher-parents associations (PTA), building of hostels and having lessons on sex education. The study recommended provision of financial assistance to create a good learning environment for girls and enacting laws and by-laws that safeguard girls' education. Government and local authorities have to consider making laws and bylaws for provision of school feeding programs.

Similarly, government and religious institutions work together to encourage good behavior among its society members. The study focused on secondary school among female students and ignored male students, while they also face the challenge of dropping out of school and gender equality not being mainstreamed in the study. Therefore the current study was based on both male and female students to investigate the role of SWOs in reduction of dropout among secondary school student

2.4.2 Levels of Engagement for Social Welfare Officers in Reduction of School Dropout among Secondary School Students

The study conducted by Sherman (2016) examined the role of social workers within the school system. The study provided various roles of social welfare officers in an education setting. Social welfare officers, especially in developed countries in Europe and America, have worked and engaged in schools in different parts of the world for more than a century. Social welfare officers who work in educational settings to recognise and address student problems, including dropout, are referred to as school social workers and are responsible for counselling students, conducting

student psychosocial assessments, conducting home visits and consulting with parents and teachers. Sherman (2016) examined the role of social welfare officers in education settings that also contribute to the reduction of school dropout among secondary students, but she ignored examining at what level social welfare officers have been engaging in reducing school dropout among secondary school students.

Huxtable (2022) revealed that the United Kingdom enacted the Education Act of 1880, engaging social workers to review student attendance, prosecute children and parents for non-attendance, and conduct home visits to convince parents to send their children to school. Then a study revealed that social workers were known as 'Education Welfare Officers (EWOs)' and nicknamed 'Kid Catchers', who looked for children who did not attend school in parks and open spaces. Then the Huxtable study (2022) pointed out that social workers are employed in an education setting, focusing on reducing absenteeism by improving school attendance and providing counselling and guidance in Australia and Nordic countries such as Finland, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland.

Likewise, they looked at Asian countries, especially in the United Arab Emirates, where the Ministry of Education and Youth had placed 994 social workers in 744 schools, averaging 1.34 social workers per school since 1972, to provide a comprehensive range of programmes, including the reduction of student dropout. The study found that social workers provide for basic needs such as school meals and maintain school attendance to reduce absenteeism, which causes students to drop out of school. Unlike the present study, the Huxtable report, in my perspective, is rooted in the developed world, where nations have placed social workers in

educational settings and passed legislation engaging them in dropout reduction initiatives. Thus, the present study was conducted in a region devoid of social workers in educational settings and without legislation directing them to reduce student dropout rates.

The study conducted in India by Soni (2023) pointed out that social welfare officers are engaged to deal with student dropouts by identifying the factors of school dropouts and finding future solutions. The study found that students drop out for various reasons, including family, school, social environment, and personal concerns; therefore, social welfare officers serve as school counsellors and provide counselling to families and teach parents.

The study recommended that social welfare officers, with the collaboration of education officers, be involved in implementing free education programmes, increasing scholarships at the primary and secondary levels, reducing the culture of paid coaching, lowering the cost of private schools, improving school infrastructure, increasing parent awareness, preventing early marriage of girls, and ensuring equal access to education. The study revealed that social welfare officers have already been employed in Indian education settings; therefore, the current study was conducted in an area such as Igunga DC, where SWOs are not employed in the education system to deal with student dropouts.

Another study conducted by Sittert (2018) revealed that in Sub-Saharan African countries, School social welfare officers have been recruited in some countries and other countries are not recruited to work in education systems. Then the study

revealed that, In South Africa, since 2006, school social workers have been recruited into some schools to assist students who face different social problems and various impediments that prevent them from completing their education. The Sittert (2018) study included only 10 social welfare officers who contributed findings, while the current study involved a broader range of participants: 1 social welfare officer, 375 students, 1 head teacher, 1 district director, 1 planning officer, and 1 representative from the stakeholders.

Further, Bulanda & Jalloh, (2019) revealed that Sierra Leone conducted a needs assessment for school social workers. The assessment findings showed that school social workers should be deployed in educational settings to address students' problems, such as dropouts, and conduct student assessments and counseling. The same study found that social welfare officers were engaged in protecting children's rights by advocating against corporal punishment, which may cause students to drop out, and modelling positive behavior management techniques for teachers.

Khumalo et al. (2024) point out that social welfare officers are responsible for visiting schools to identify students with social problems (i.e., domestic violence, child abuse, sexual abuse, parent neglect, HIV/AIDS, extreme poverty and emotional problems) who are showing signs of dropping out of school. Finally, social welfare officers servicing schools are responsible for providing counselling, home visits, and psychosocial support to learners experiencing social challenges. However, the two studies did not examine SWOs' engagement to reduce student dropout. Therefore, the current study examined the level of engagement of SWOs in the reduction of school dropout.

Another study conducted in Sumbawanga DC by Mwaisuma (2016) which justified the need for support staff in schools, and mentioned support staff who should be recruited to include a social welfare officer to provide counselling. Other support staff mentioned were a bursar/accountant/finance officer, nurse/matron, librarian, secretary, cleaner, laboratory/science technician, cook, catering officer, security guard/watchman, typist, and driver. The study also suggested methods for school administrators to recruit support staff to improve the quality of education.

The study however did not examine the engagement of support staff such as social welfare even though they are not yet employed in schools, despite recognizing their needs in schools to deal with student problems. The present study examined the engagement level of social welfare with various strategies for reducing student dropout. A qualitative study with 10 participants was also conducted in Tabora MC by Buhori (n.d.) The study sought to examine Challenges Confronting Social Workers in Prevention of Teenage Pregnancies and found that the government of Tanzania also employs social welfare officers in the local government authorities and the Tanzania Police Force, specifically at the police gender desk.

The social welfare officers are engaged in implementing various measures including strategies, programmes, and policies aimed at preventing and reducing teenage pregnancy rates as one of the causes of dropout. Some of these measures include the Law Child Act of 2019, Parenting, Guidance and Child Protection of 2020, the Education and Training Policy (2014) and the Five-Year National Plan of Action to End Violence against Women and Children (NPA-VAWC 64 2017/18 – 2021/22).

In recognition of the crucial functions of social welfare officers, the LCA (2019) assigns the duty of summoning the person against whom the report was made to discuss the matter concerned with children. That officer shall decide on the child's best interest. Other duties are safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare within its jurisdiction, such as access to education. In addition, social workers are primarily expected to provide case management in all matters related to the child's best interest. Therefore, the current study examined the level of social welfare engagements in reducing dropout among secondary student.

Law Reform Commission of Tanzania of 2018, reviewed the legal framework of social welfare services. The commission reviewed that social welfare officers work with educational stakeholders, including parents, teachers, school administrators, and others, to address problems such as poor attendance, student dropout, bullying, aggressive behaviour, and other issues that affect children's education. Also, the commission reviewed how social welfare cooperated with other education stakeholders to deal with student problems instead of reviewing various programmes and campaigns for child development. However, the report contradicts the Education Act 1978, which excluded SWOs from secondary school boards and district and regional board appeals. Therefore, the current study reviewed the engagement of SWOs in various programmes and campaigns that prevent the violation of child rights, including the right of students to complete their education circles.

2.4.3 The Barriers Facing Social Welfare Officers in Reducing Dropout among Secondary School Students

Huxtable (2022), noted that social welfare officers, known as school social workers,

were employed in education settings to remove obstacles that prevented children from completing their schooling. These obstacles included absences, physical and mental health problems, drug use, adolescent pregnancy, and learning problems. Although the study focused on the obstacles that emerged from students themselves, it ignored obstacles found at the workplace. Therefore, the current study sought to fill the existing gap by identifying both obstacles found at the workplace and those that emerged from students themselves facing social welfare officers in reducing dropout among secondary school students from their perspective.

Soni (2023) conducted a study on school dropouts and the role of social workers in India. Among other things, the study focused on the challenges facing social welfare officers in executing their roles in reducing school dropout among secondary school students. The study found that social welfare officers have been serving as school counsellors. The study also sought that SWOs stress that the majority of their work with families involves counselling and teaching parents to assist in combating factors such as family, school, social environment, and personal factors that lead to school dropout among secondary school students. However, social welfare officers have not been included in decision-making relating to special education needs.

Therefore, to achieve the objective of ensuring education for all, regardless of caste, religion, or gender, dropout rates must be reduced, the study recommended; social welfare officers should be included in decision-making relating to special education needs. Soni's study applied secondary data in concluding the findings. Therefore, more empirical studies should be done on how social workers, as persons familiar with special needs, could continue to engage successfully with stakeholders to

produce positive results for special education requirements, realise challenges facing them, and find ways to resolve their challenges.

Alotaibi et al. (2020) conducted a study on challenges facing school social workers in Saudi Arabia that was published in the *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), school social welfare officers face challenges that hinder the performance of their required roles, such as administrative restrictions, inadequate levels of professional training, unclear roles, and societal norms. Although the existing literature focused on the possible benefits associated with school social welfare officers, it ignored their challenges, which may influence the performance and the quality of the provided services. Therefore, the study aimed to fill the existing gap by exploring the challenges of social welfare officers in the KSA.

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data from 16 school social workers across Riyadh. Based on the thematic analysis, the study found major challenges: administrative constraints, workload and occupational stress, and socio-demographic differences. The study recommended that national organisations overcome these challenges to enhance the performance and the quality of the services of SSW at schools in KSA. The study employed purposive random sampling, and the criteria included willingness to participate, holding a bachelor's degree in social work, and working as a social welfare officer in schools for more than one year. The study set a criterion of holding a bachelor's degree in social work to participate in the study. This criteria loses relevance in Tanzania, where more social work professionals are employed as social welfare officers, and these officers

are not included in school staffing levels. However, Buhori (nd) conducted a study on Examination of Challenges Confronting Social Workers in Prevention of Teenage Pregnancies: A Case of Tabora Municipal – Tanzania. According to the study, Tanzania is confronted with an increasing number of school dropouts among secondary school girls and despite various government efforts to curb the problem, there is a steady increase in the phenomenon in Tabora Municipal.

The study aimed to examine the challenges that have stubbornly continued to prevent social welfare officers from effectively preventing teenage pregnancies, as one of the causes of school dropout. The findings revealed that social welfare officers are challenged with poor working environments, little recognition of their competencies, a lack of awareness of their roles, and a limited budget set for their various activities. The study recommends an intensive campaign to create awareness of the role and competencies of social workers to prevent teenage pregnancies in secondary schools in Tanzania. The study focused on only challenges facing social welfare officers on one cause of school dropout among girls (teenage pregnancies) in Tabora Municipal Council, therefore, this study shall focus on challenges facing social welfare officers on general causes of school dropout among students regardless of their sex and cause of their school dropout in Igunga District Council.

Finally, in 2013, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare conducted the mapping of social welfare providers in Tanzania and came up with general conclusions that social welfare services provided are of poor quality, limited in outreach, and not comprehensive in meeting all the most vulnerable groups, also lack of incentives to social workers: The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) is not properly recognised

by local government authorities. Hence Social welfare services in the local government agencies are often provided by unqualified personnel. In addition Training of social workers is not tailored to specific client groups; there was also Lack of coordination of social welfare services at the sub-district level caused by the overwhelming shortage of social welfare officers in the districts and further down to the communities.

The study did not include the absence of social welfare officers at the school staffing level in public schools as one of the challenges limiting effective implementation of their duties, including challenging their efforts in reducing school dropout among secondary school students. This oversight may have significant implications for the overall effectiveness of educational policies aimed at retention. Without adequate support from social welfare officers, schools might struggle to address the diverse needs of at-risk students, ultimately hindering their academic success. This devalues the significance of social welfare officers' role in the reduction of school dropout among secondary school students. Therefore, the current study included the absence of SWOs in education settings as a challenge.

2.5 Research Gap

The existing studies conducted by Huxtable (2022), NASW (2017), Sherman (2016), Soni (2023), and Winston (2018) revealed that around the world, especially in the first and second-developed countries from Europe, America, Asia and a few from Africa, social workers have been placed in educational settings and legislation have been passed engaging them in implementing various strategies of reducing student dropout. These studies ignored underdeveloped countries like Tanzania, where social

welfare officers are not involved in education settings. In addition, those studies failed to assess whether social welfare officers apply various strategies to reduce student dropout. Therefore, the current study was conducted in the council where social welfare officers are not placed in education settings to investigate their role in reducing dropout in secondary schools.

Furthermore, previous studies pointed out that in developed countries, social welfare officers have been employed to work in educational settings to recognise and address student problems, including dropouts, and they are responsible for counselling students, conducting student psychosocial assessments, conducting home visits, and consulting with parents and teachers. (Sherman 2016, Huxtable 2022, Soni 2023, and Bulanda & Jalloh 2019) These studies focused on examining the engagement of social welfare officers, but ignored examining at what level social welfare officers have been engaging in reducing school dropout among secondary school students.

Therefore, the present study aimed to fill the existing gap by examining the level of SWO engagement in reducing secondary school dropout. The Nguyen et al. (2022) study focused on social welfare officers' engagement in high schools (advanced secondary schools) and left out the engagement level of social welfare officers in junior schools (ordinary secondary schools). To fill a gap in the Nguyen et al. (2022) study, the current study was conducted in both ordinary and high schools to identify the level of social welfare engagement that reduces student dropouts.

Huxtable's (2022) study, concentrated on identifying the barriers facing social welfare officers in reducing dropout among secondary school students that emerged

at the workplace and the ignored obstacles found at the family and society levels. Therefore, the present study aims to fill the existing gap by identifying both barriers facing social welfare officers found at the workplace and those that emerge from society and students themselves.

Finally, MoHSW (2013), Tukudzwa (2022) & Alotaibi et al. (2020) pointed out various challenges, such as insufficient allocations of budget funds, low wages, working long hours, and carrying heavy caseloads. However, the study overlooked social welfare officers at the school staffing level in public schools as one of the challenges limiting effective implementation of their duties, including challenging their efforts in reducing school dropout among secondary school students. Thus, the current study was conducted to address the absence of SWOs in education settings as a barrier for reducing dropouts in both public and private secondary schools.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows a brief assumption of the role of social welfare officers in reducing secondary school dropouts in the Igunga District Council. A framework is broken down into three sections: (independent, determinants, and independent variables); the first section (independent variable) comprises strategies of SWOs, levels of effective engagement of SWOs, and the perceptions of SWOs on the barriers in reducing dropout in reducing secondary school dropouts. The second section (determinant) shows government willingness, stakeholder involvement, and family/community awareness/participation, highlighting how these factors positively affect SWOs in reducing dropout. The third section (dependent) of this conceptual framework involves reducing dropouts.

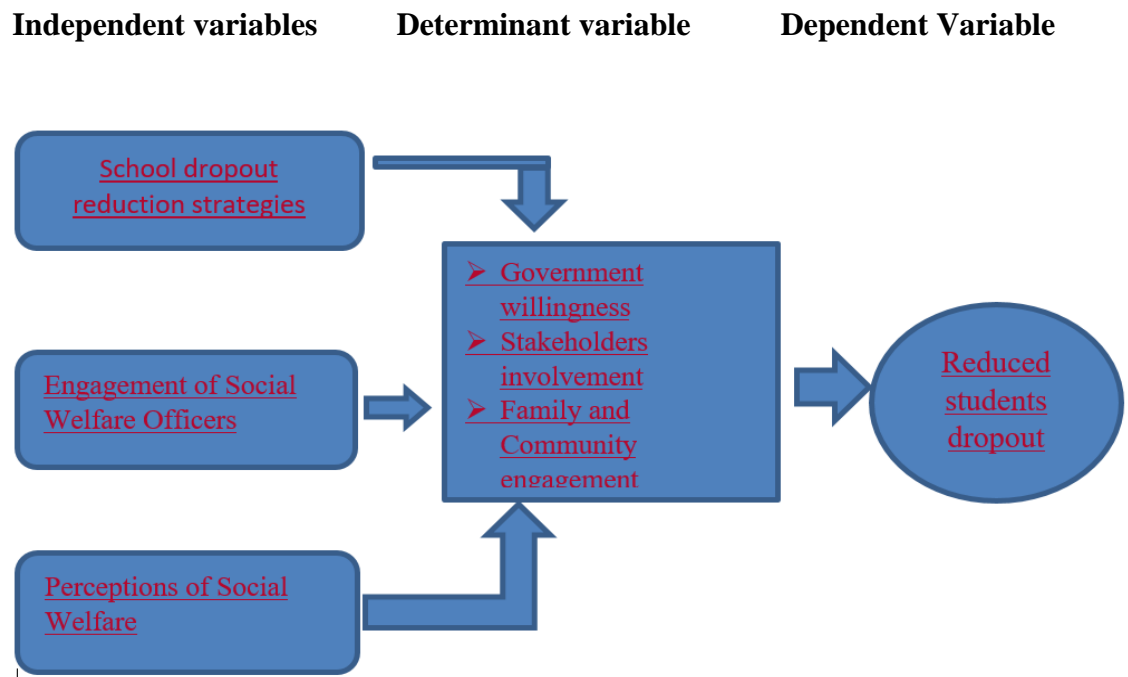


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter included the following parts: research approach, research philosophy, research design, study area, study population, sampling techniques, sample size, data collection and analysis methods, validity and reliability, and research ethics.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about knowledge development, which provides the means, procedures, and methods for collecting, defining, and analyzing ideas and data in the area of study. Research philosophy relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Although there are many different research philosophies, Rashid (2023) and Gemma, (2018) distinguished three: constructivism, pragmatism, and positivism. Positivism originated in the natural sciences which based on the belief that scientific knowledge should be derived from empirical observation and objective measurement.

Positivists value the reliability and replicability of quantitative research, as it allows for precise measurement and comparison. Interpretivism, also known as constructivism, emphasises the subjective nature of human experience and focuses on understanding social phenomena through the meanings and interpretations that individuals assign to them. Interpretivists believe that social reality is socially constructed and context-dependent and that it cannot be reduced to objective laws or generalizations. Finally, Pragmatism philosophy emphasizes the practical

consequences of knowledge and encourages researchers to adopt a flexible and problem-solving approach. Pragmatists believe that the value of knowledge lies in its usefulness and its ability to address real-world problems.

Elgeddawy & Mahmoud Abouraia (2024) revealed that the focus of a pragmatist is to generate practical knowledge that is actionable, viable and relevant to real-world challenges and provides guidance to decision-makers. Pragmatism allows researchers to integrate various methods, gaining a comprehensive understanding of research phenomena; In addition, it allows research to acquire the correct and proper information and a workable solution to the problem (Saunders et al., 2009).

Hence, any studies related to addressing real-world problems always use the pragmatism concept. This is because it aims to close the gap between positivism and interpretivism by addressing each philosophy's weaknesses while employing its strengths. In the context of the current research, pragmatic philosophy was employed to integrate the strategies used by SWOs, the level of their engagement and barriers facing social welfare officers in reducing dropout among secondary school students from their perspective.

3.3 Research Design

Research design, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), is a set of formal procedures for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data such as those found in a quantitative experiment or qualitative case study. Thakur (2021) identified three, namely; exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. In the context of this study, descriptive design was employed to investigate the two variables (roles of social

welfare and reduction of secondary school dropout) at the same time to meet the meaning of the two variables. The current study applied descriptive research because the study was based on social work research, and descriptive research describes a characteristic of a sample and allows the gathered data within a particular field of study, and its method in the current study included data collection, analysis, and presentation. In addition, it provides a picture of the situation as it occurs in a natural setting. Final descriptive research describing the topic that is the subject of the research and is applied to case studies, realistic observations, surveys. Rubin & Babbie (2011).

3.4 Research Approach

According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), a research approach is a plan and the procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. In addition, Creswell and Creswell (2018) identified three research approaches: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The research process includes developing questions and methods, gathering data in the participant's environment, analyzing the data inductively to move from specifics to general themes the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data.

However, its findings are not easily generalizable and can be subjective. Quantitative research is an approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables can then be measured, usually using tools, allowing statistical processes to be applied to the collected data. A quantitative

approach helps a researcher generalize findings and implications of the researched issues to the whole population because it involves collecting data from many participants. The method may not allow for the exploration of new ideas or unexpected findings. (Hafsa, 2019).

A mixed methods research technique gathers both quantitative and qualitative data, combines the two types of data, and employs unique designs that may integrating post positivism and interpretivism philosophical frameworks (Dawadi et al., 2021). Mixed methods research integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena. Additionally, both quantitative and qualitative approaches have the best chance of answering research questions by combining two sets of strengths while at the same time compensating for the weaknesses of each method (Dawadi et al., 2021). Therefore, the study employed mixed methods because of the natures of the study needed to give a better understanding with sufficient depth and breadth of the roles of SWOs in the reduction of student dropout by assessing the strategies applied in reducing dropout, assessing the SWOs engagements and its barriers facing them in reducing student dropout by employing both qualitative and quantitative methods.

3.5 Study Area

The study was conducted in the Igunga District Council, one of the seven districts in the Tabora region of Tanzania. It shares borders with the Shinyanga Region to the north, the Singida Region to the east, the Uyui District to the south, and the Nzega District to the west. Igunga's latitude is -4.356215, and its longitude is 33.617577. Its coordinates are 4° 21' 22.374 " S and 33° 37' 3.2772" E (Country Coordinate, 2024).

The reason for conducting the present study in the Tabora region is that it is among the top five regions with the highest number of students dropping out of school at 9.1 percent. Another reason is Tabora being the largest region in Tanzania by area, covering 76,151 square kilometres. (Tabora Regional Secretariat Office 2022) According to the Basic Education Data (2023), Tabora region has 212 schools, which are scattered with at least more than 15 kilometres from one school to another. Igunga District Council was chosen because it recorded a higher school dropout rate than other councils in the region for three consecutive years from 2020 to 2023. (URT 2021, 2022&2023)

3.6 Study Population

According to Shukla (2020), the term population in research is defined as the set or group of all the units on which the findings of the research are based. The target population comprised the District Executive Director of Igunga DC, experts from the planning office, social welfare office, secondary education office and head teachers or mistresses of 41 secondary schools.

Table 3.1: Targeted Population of the Study

Sn	Participants	Number
1	District Executive Office	1
2	Office of District Planning Officers	4
3	Office of District Secondary Education	5
4	Office of Social Welfare Officers	5
5	Head Master/Mistress	41
6	Directors of NGOs worked with SWOs	7
7	Students	16,636
	Total	16,699

Additionally, data was gathered from 16636 students in 41 secondary schools as well as 41 headmasters/mistresses, 4 planning officers, 5 council education officers, 5

social welfare officers and 2 directors working with SWOs involved in various interventions for reducing student dropout rates. Therefore, the total pollution under the study was 16699 as indicated at specific groups (table 3.1).

3.7 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

This section provides readers with the sampling procedures used to obtain a representative sample for the study, as well as the sample size and distribution.

3.7.1 Sampling Procedures

According to Kothari (2004), a sampling procedure is a design the researcher applies to select a sample from a given population. The study used simple random and purposive sampling procedures to select a sample from the targeted population.

3.7.1.1 Purposive Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling is a technique in which the researcher selects sample participants based on predetermined characteristics before the study. This technique is very useful in situations where the researcher needs relevant information to the research question about a specific target group (Stockemer, 2019). Moreover, Rubin and Babbie (2010) noted, in purposive sampling, a sample is selected based on our judgements. In the context of this study, purposive sampling was employed to select DED, SEO, SWO, PO, Head Masters/Mistresses, and stakeholder representatives from non-governmental organisations who worked with SWOs in child rights to investigate in depth the roles of SWOs, especially in identifying barriers facing social welfare officers in reducing dropout among secondary school students from their perspective.

3.7. Simple Random Sampling Procedure

In this type of probability sampling, each member included in the sample has an equal chance of being selected by the researcher (Singh, 2020). Simple random sampling is a broadly utilized sampling method in studies with large number of participants and easily to generalize finding (Noor *et al.*, (2022). In this context, the study employed simple random sampling due to its large number of participants, a total of 16,636 and the information gathered was generalized to understand the actual situation in the study.

Considering that form two is the one with the highest number of students dropping out of school (PORALG 2024), a sample of students was taken from that class. The number of student samples was 375 from 41 schools. The researcher calculated that 375 divided by 41-equaled 9 and each school provided 9 students of form two class. To select 9 participants, pieces of paper equal to the number of students in two form classes were prepared; 9 pieces of paper had the word "yes" written on them, while the remaining pieces had the word "no." All of the papers with the words "yes" and "no" written on them were then distributed to the students in their respective classes and 9 students who chose the pieces of paper with the word "yes" participated in providing information in the study.

3.7.2 Sample Size

A sample or items can be selected from the universe (Kothari, 2004). This study selected samples according to the representativeness, variety, and respondent knowledge of the population residing in the study area. The targeted Population of study was 16699 as indicated at specific groups. The sample size under the study

was determined by using Raosoft (2004) sample size calculator. The reason for using Raosoft (2004) is that the targeted population is determined and known in numbers.

Raosoft® Sample size calculator

What margin of error can you accept? %
5% is a common choice

What confidence level do you need? %
Typical choices are 90%, 95%, or 99%

What is the population size?
If you don't know, use 20000

What is the response distribution? %
Leave this as 50%

Your recommended sample size is **376**

The margin of error is the amount of error that you can tolerate. If 90% of respondents answer yes, while 10% answer no, you may be able to tolerate a larger amount of error than if the respondents are split 50-50 or 45-55. Lower margin of error requires a larger sample size.

The confidence level is the amount of uncertainty you can tolerate. Suppose that you have 20 yes-no questions in your survey. With a confidence level of 95%, you would expect that for one of the questions (1 in 20), the percentage of people who answer yes would be more than the margin of error away from the true answer. The true answer is the percentage you would get if you exhaustively interviewed everyone. Higher confidence level requires a larger sample size.

How many people are there to choose your random sample from? The sample size doesn't change much for populations larger than 20,000.

For each question, what do you expect the results will be? If the sample is skewed highly one way or the other, the population probably is, too. If you don't know, use 50%, which gives the largest sample size. See below under **More information** if this is confusing.

This is the minimum recommended size of your survey. If you create a sample of this many people and get responses from everyone, you're more likely to get a correct answer than you would from a large sample where only a small percentage of the sample responds to your survey.

Source: Raosoft (2004).

Considering Forms, two which have the highest dropout rates among all secondary school classes, samples chosen at random, bringing the total sample size to 376 from the 41 secondary schools found in Igunga District Council. Additionally, six participants were selected purposeful to provide in detailed information about the roles of SWOs, especially in identifying barriers facing social welfare officers in reducing dropout among secondary school students from their perspective. These include DED, SWOs, PLO, SEO, stakeholders from NGOs and representative from Head teachers/mistress Therefore, the total sample in the study was 376 as indicated in table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Sample Distribution by Category

Categories	Total	Sample size calculations	Final Sample
DED	1	$(1 \times 376) \div 16699$	0.02
SWOs	5	$(5 \times 376) \div 16699$	0.11
POs	4	$(4 \times 376) \div 16699$	0.09
EO	5	$(5 \times 376) \div 16699$	0.11
Stakeholders	7	$(7 \times 376) \div 16699$	0.20
Head Master/Mistress	41	$(41 \times 376) \div 16699$	0.92
Students	16636	$(16636 \times 376) \div 16699$	374.5
Total			376

Source: Filed Data, 2025.

3.8 Source of Data

Ajayi (2023) noted that gathering data can be accomplished through a primary source or a secondary source. In this study the researcher applied primary data source.

3.8.1 Primary Data Source

Primary data refers to the first-hand data gathered by the researcher directly from the source or surrounding environment. The methods used to collect primary data include surveys, observations, and interviews (Ajay, 2023). This study used questionnaires and interview methods to gather primary data from participants in providing detailed information that assesses the strategies applied by SWOs and their barriers and levels of SWO engagement in reducing secondary school dropout.

3.9 Methods of Data Collection

Data collection refers to strategies employed to gather data from different sources of data, either primary or secondary (Kothari, 2004). Effective data collection methods provide essential information for accurate judgments and relevant results. In this study, the researchers used questionnaires and interview methods to collect data.

3.9.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires consist of a series of written questions that the researcher has prepared. Participants must write their answers to the questions, frequently checking or underlining them (Morgan & Harmon, 2018). In the present study, questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from the participants. To simplify data collection a list of questions were prepared and placed in the *Kobo software*. The use

kobo software permitted the participants to freely explore and collect more information from a large number of respondents in a short period and in a relatively cost-effective way.

3.9.2 Interviews

The interviewer presents a series of questions usually answered orally by the participants. The method is more open-ended, allowing the participant to provide detailed answers (Morgan & Harmon, 2018). In the context of this study, an interview method was employed to go deeper by exploring the participants to provide a deeper understanding of the barriers facing social welfare officers in reducing dropout among secondary school students from their perspective.

Furthermore, data were collected through Kobo tool software that provided the participants with a chance to clarify their opinions. The interviewer used the method of asking questions to DED, PLO, SWO Headmasters/Mistresses, stakeholders, and SEO to obtain relevant information to respond to the research objectives, especially in investigating the strategies and the barriers facing social welfare officers in reducing dropout among secondary school students

3.10 Reliability and Validity of Data

This section, titled "Reliability and Validity of Data," provides readers with interventions made by researchers to improve the acceptability and trustworthiness of the methods and tools applied.

3.10.1 Reliability of Data

Reliability refers to a measurement that supplies consistent findings with similar

values. It measures the consistency, precision, repeatability, and trustworthiness of research. Reliability is used to evaluate the stability of measures administered at different times to the same participants and the equivalence of sets of items from the same test. The better the reliability is, the more accurate the results, which increases the chance of making the correct decision in research (Kumar, 2017). To improve the reliability of the data, the researcher conducted a pilot study before the execution of this study to pre-test the applied measurements.

3.10.2 Validity of Data

Validity is the ability to measure something effectively, efficiently, and accurately. It evaluates whether the conclusions are valid from the participants' perspective (Creswell, 2010). Therefore, validity measures the participants' results and reflects the research question asked by the researcher. In this study, the researcher pre-tested all questionnaires to increase validity before formally distributing them to the participants. In addition, all principles, including explaining the interviews and questionnaire procedures to the respondents, will be considered while generating research findings.

3.11 Qualitative Data Rigor

Qualitative Data Rigor provides various techniques that reflect the influence of realities on qualitative research. These techniques prove the quality of the research findings or data (Darshini, 2023). Under this study, the researchers used the following techniques to ensure the truths and realities of findings in the area of study:

3.11.1 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to how researchers show the quality of their findings, which

may be attained through conformability, dependability, credibility, and transferability (Darshini, 2023). To ensure rigor and trustworthiness, the qualitative researchers consider doing member checking, triangulation, detailed transcription, systematic planning, and coding. (Gunawan 2015). The researcher ensured trustworthiness by applying the triangulation method, whereby more than one method (questionnaire and interview) was used in data collection. In addition, the researcher applied checking members to verify the participants' findings, which are realities.

3.11.2 Dependability

Dependability refers to the extent to which results are consistent over time, an accurate representation of the study population, and an assessment of whether the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology (Darshini, 2023). To promote transparency, rigor, and validation, address biases, and increase the trustworthiness of the research. Dependability can be employed by the following strategies: triangulation of data sources, peer debriefing, reflexivity, member checking, audit trail, and investigator triangulation (Gunawan, 2015).

The researchers used the following techniques to ensure dependability in the study: The researcher installed the Kobo Tools application to gather, document, and save data. Data were shared with other researchers with different backgrounds, expertise, or colleagues to challenge others' interpretations and reanalyze some of the data to ensure that the researcher had analyzed the data correctly and that the study was trustworthy. Sharing data with other researchers and colleagues was also a way of increasing transparency in the study.

3.11.3 Credibility

Credibility involves assessing whether the research measures what it was meant to measure or how truthful the results are (Darshini, 2023). Credibility can be assured by using the different areas of data sources and participants in data collection and research guides (Shufutinsky, 2020). To ensure credibility in the study, the researcher used the interview guides, which directed participants to provide real findings. The study involved various informants, namely social welfare officer, head teachers and ministers, education officers, planning officers, stakeholders, and the district executive directors, to ensure credibility, as well as data collected from 41 different schools found in Igunga Secondary School and four council officers to verify the truthfulness of the data.

3.11.4 Conformability

Conformability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the other participants and not by research bias, motivation, or interest. The main objective of the method is to reduce the study's research bias (Arshini 2023). Other researchers or colleagues can confirm the Findings. Therefore, the researcher used colleagues or experts to review interpretations and findings in the study to reduce the research bias. Also, to reduce bias in the findings, the researcher used a data collector who used Kobo techniques to gather data. Finally, the data were linked with the data collected through interview and questionnaire methods, which were similar, creating conformability.

3.11.5 Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the findings from the research sample can be

applied to a large population. It gives enough information about the context to enable another person to assess whether the context is similar, and therefore, the findings can be applied to the surroundings (Gunawan, 2015). Therefore, findings can be generalized and applied in various settings. In the context of this study, the readers may use the findings to conclude the other studies if they see it as preferable.

3.12 Data Processing, Analysis and Presentation

This section provides readers with research technicalities in processing, analyzing, and presenting data.

3.12.1 Data Processing and Analysis

Data processing involves converting raw data into meaningful information (Huang, 2019). Thus, data processing consists of collecting, recording, organizing, storing, and adapting or altering to convert the raw data into useful information. According to Bhatia 2017, Data analysis combines and analyzes large amounts of data to identify trends and improve decision-making. The main objective is to convert the existing, disorganized data into a format that facilitates decision-making processes and makes it easier to read, conclude, and understand. The researcher used Kobo Collect to process and collect data.

The researcher employed the Kobo tool to process and demonstrate data analysis because it is a modern approach to data handling that allows for rapid processing speeds, vast storage capabilities, and easy data retrieval (Huang, 2019). The qualitative data were collected using an interview guide and analyzed through thematic analysis to provide new knowledge and understanding of the problems

under investigation. Quantitative data were collected by using a questionnaire and analyzed through the Scientific Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0 software.

3.12.2 Data Presentation

According to Huang (2019), data presentation means arrangement and visualization to facilitate readability and understandability of the processed data or valuable information. In presenting the findings, this study used textual, tabular this study and graphical methods where necessary. The researcher chose to apply textual, tabular, and graphical methods, which were necessitated in the arrangement and visualization of the findings of this study because of compatibility and effectiveness in conveying the intended meanings of the research findings to the readers.

3.13 Research Ethical Consideration

The researcher observed all ethical guidelines necessary for conducting the research during the field investigation. The researcher adhered to all protocols to gather data for the field study, including obtaining an Igunga District Council authorization letter and research approval from the Open University of Tanzania. The researcher adhered the guidelines and rules that the administrative office provides. The researcher adhered to the regulations and principles provided by the administration office. The researcher maintained privacy and anonymity for the Participants by disclosing their information, such as their names.

Additionally, the information collected from the respondent remained confidential. As the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2017) noted, to maintain

anonymity, the researcher must create participant identification codes rather than reveal the names of research participants active in research activities. As a result, the survey identified Participants using numbers rather than names. SWOs should never give sensitive information to a third party without the client's consent (URT 2020). Within the predetermined academic field of applicability, this study treated information received confidently and guaranteed the participants privacy. Social workers must communicate the goals, procedures, terms, and conditions of the services clients receive (NASW, 2017). According to this requirement, the researcher asked Participants to join the study after explaining its goal to gauge their willingness to participate.

To maintain the do-nothing principle, the researcher, in collaboration with the respondent (s), assessed the possible risks and developed a risk management plan to protect Participants from harm whenever needed. Social workers who engage in evaluation or research should carefully consider possible consequences and follow guidelines to protect evaluation and research participants (NASW, 2017). When using electronic technology to facilitate evaluation or research, social workers should ensure that participants provide informed consent for using such technology (NASW, 2017). The researcher assesses whether participants can use the technology and, when appropriate, offers reasonable alternatives to participating in the evaluation or research.

According to NASW (2017), social workers should educate themselves, their students, and their colleagues about responsible research practices. The researcher kept searching for new knowledge whenever a need arose. From the earliest steps in

developing this dissertation proposal to now, the researcher has written this dissertation report by reviewing research-related materials on the Internet, seeking consultations from peers and alumni, and going back to seek technical assistance from my research supervisors.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Overview

This chapter presents the demographics of the research participants, data analysis, and discussion of the findings and their implications in the study based on the specific research objectives.

4.2 Data Presentation and Analysis

The presentation and discussion of the findings were guided by the three research-specific objectives: i.e. strategies applied by social welfare officers in reducing school dropout among secondary school students, level of engagement of social welfare officers in reducing school dropout among secondary school students and identifying barriers facing social welfare officers in reducing dropout among secondary school students from their perspective.

4.2.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section provides aggregated demographic information on the respondents regarding age, sex, and occupation.

4.2.2 Age of Respondents

The study wanted to know the ages of the respondents who participated in this study. In any study, the age of the respondents has implications, as the responses differ based on demographic characteristics, including age. 376 respondents participated in this study; the results in Table 4.1 concerning ages show that 28.4% of respondents were between the ages of 12 and 16 years, those who were between 16 and 19 years

were 56.9%, those who were between 20 and 423 years were 14.4%, and those who were 24 and above were 0.3%. The results indicated that the majority of respondents aged 16 to 19 years who provided information were of school age. This implies that this study has collected hard evidence from victims of the situation and complied with the notion of social action that needs interpretative meaning of people who are attached to their actions rather than using outsiders' perspectives to judge the situation.

Table 4.1: Respondents by Age Group

Age	Frequency	Percent
12-15	107	28.4
16-19	214	56.9
20-23	54	14.4
24+	1	0.3
Total	376	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2024

4.2.3 Respondents by Sex

In responding to this study, gender inclusion is crucial across the study population. According to the findings in Table 4.2, the respondents comprised 46% females and 54% males. The higher percentage of male respondents, particularly among the students, implies that there is still a gender gap in the education sector. The data also means that a gender gap among the students might be due to the high rate of school dropouts among females, as most of the schools have a high number of males compared to females.

4.2.4 Respondents by Occupations

The results in Table 4.2 show that 99.6% of respondents were students, and other groups, equal to 0.4%, were five participants from each of the following cadre

representations: district executive director, social welfare officer, education officer, planning officer, representative of head teachers/mistresses, and stakeholders. This implies that a lot of information was collected from students who are the main victims of dropping out of school.

Table 4.2: Respondents by Sex and Occupation

Respondents	Female	%	Male	%	Total	%
Social Welfare Officer	0.11	0.03	0	0	0.11	0.03
District Executive Director	0.02	0.01	0	0	0.02	0.2
Head Masters/Headmistress	0	0	0.92	0.2	0.92	0.2
Planning Officer	0	0	0.09	0.02	0.09	0.02
Education Officer	0.11	0.03	0	0	0.11	0.03
Directors from NGOs	0.10	0.03	0.10	0.03	0.20	0.06
Students	172.5	45.9	202	54.25	374.5	99.6
Total	172.84	46	203.11	54	376	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

4.3 Strategies Applied by Social Welfare Officers in Reducing Dropout among Secondary School Students

The first specific objective of the study was to assess the strategies applied by SWOs in reducing dropout among secondary school students. Views of respondents were obtained using questionnaires and interviews. The researcher asked respondents to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements presented to express their views on the study and any other views that respondents were able to provide. The results were collected and analysed as indicated in Table 4.3

First, the results in Table 4.3 reveal that 43.9% of respondents strongly disagreed that one of the strategies used by SWOs to reduce secondary school student dropout rates was identifying early signs of student dropout. Only 2% agreed strongly that SWOs used early signs of student dropout in reducing student dropout. These

findings differ from reports provided by Zippia (2024), who reported that there are over 142,288 school social workers currently employed in the United States to identify the early signs of student dropout. In contrast, in Tanzania, SWOs have not been employed and hence are not able to identify early signs of dropout. These results indicate that if the government implemented a policy to deploy SWOs in our schools, they would fully utilize the role of identifying early signs as one of the strategies to reduce dropout rates.

Table 4.3: Strategies applied by SWOs in reducing dropout among Secondary School Students

Strategies	% strongly agree	% agree	% uncertain	% disagree	% Strongly Disagree
The identification of early signs of student dropout	2.7	16.5	14.6	22.3	43.9
Home Visit for Student and Family Assessment	3.2	15.7	17.3	26.3	37.5
Application child protection system (child protection and safety desk inside and outside the school).	2.7	18.1	12	25.5	41.8
Advocacy Programs (through visiting education settings and promoting that advocate interests of children.)	2.1	16.8	12.2	22.6	46.3
Crisis Intervention	6.3	12.5	21.2	20.2	39.8

Source: Field Data, 2024

Next, the results in Table 4.3 show that 37.5% of respondents strongly disagreed, while 22.3% agreed that home visits for student and family assessment are among the strategies applied by SWOs in reducing student dropout rates. Only 3.2% of the respondents agreed strongly, while 15.7% agreed that SWOs conduct home visiting and family assessment as a strategy for reducing student dropout, and 17.3% remain uncertain. A SWO narrated as follows:

"Social welfare officers are failing to conduct home visits and family assessments for children with various challenges, including dropping out of school due to shortages, especially at ward levels, and a lack of transportation to reach their homes. (Social welfare Officer 2024)

These results differ from the findings of the research conducted by Kinnarney, K, S (2024) at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania with the title "School Social Workers Conducting Home Visits: Practice and Perceptions" revealed that SWOs aren't conducting home visits to all families with children at risk of dropping out of school to identify the challenges that are driving these children to drop out. In addition, Rushwaya (2022) noted that social welfare officers in Europe, America, and Austria are well-equipped and financially capacitated to carry out home visits. The reason SWOs can conduct home visits is that they are recruited in large numbers and are recruited in schools, and provided with transportation to visit households.

The above was different from the study area and Tanzania as a whole, where SWOs did not effectively fulfil their responsibility of conducting home visits to student families facing various problems, including dropout. This situation may be caused by various challenges, including a shortage of social welfare officers, financial problems, and lack of transport to conduct home visits to identify and resolve challenges that hinder children from continuing their studies. This statement is in agreement with the Law Reform Commission of Tanzania (2018) noted that SWOs fail to conduct their duties, including home visiting, due to inadequate budget, shortage of SWOs, especially at the ward level, and lack of transport means.

On the other hand, the results in Table 4.3 show that 41.8% of respondents strongly disagreed. In contrast, 25.5% agreed that SWOs applied various child protection

systems (child protection and safety desk inside and outside school) as a strategy for reducing student dropout rates among secondary students. However, 2.7% of respondents strongly agreed, although 18.1% agreed and 12 % were uncertain that SWOs apply a strategy in reducing student dropout. This implies that many schools have not established a child protection and safety desk inside and outside the school, which is responsible for defending children's rights, including ensuring that the child completes school by helping to identify the challenges that cause a student to drop out of school. SWO narrated as follows:

"To strengthen child protection in schools, Social welfare officers need the existence of a child protection and safety desk inside and outside the school and a child protection team. However, the committees are inactive, and many schools lack desks because the government has not provided funding to organize the committees and set up these desks in schools. This situation leads to poor implementation of this strategy in reducing dropout rates and other student protections. (Social welfare Officer 2024)

PO-RALG (2024), reported that in the whole of Tanzania, there were 1393 child protection and safety desk inside and outside school from 25626 primary and secondary schools, equivalent to 5.4% of the desks established, and only 9 desks, equivalent to 4.3%, were established from 212 secondary schools in Tabora region. This report reflects the results from the respondents who strongly disagreed that SWOs applied a child protection system to reduce student dropout due to the lack of child protection systems in all schools.

Moreover, 46.3% of respondents in Table 4.3 strongly disagreed, while 22.6% disagreed that advocacy programs (through visiting in education setting and commemoration that advocate interests of children) was among the strategies employed by SWOs in reducing student dropouts. Likewise, 2.1% of respondents

strongly agreed, while 16.8% and 12.2 % were uncertain that SWOs agreed that advocacy was among the strategies employed in reducing student dropouts. A SWO agreed that limited resources prevent them from conducting advocacy campaigns and narrated as follows:

"Due to the limited resources we receive from development partners, we visit a few schools and conduct international commemorations such as 16 days of activism to end violence against women and children and the International Day of the African Child to encourage students to finish school; therefore, it is not enough to advocate for the issue of dropout". (Social welfare Officer 2024)

The findings presented above are similar to those of the study conducted by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (2012), which stated that the biggest demand for social welfare officers is at the ward level, where 2,687 social welfare assistants are needed in the same number of wards nationwide. According to Rushwaya (2022), SWOs from Sub-Saharan Africa face various challenges, including insufficient allocations of budget funds for social services, limited SWOs, lack of transport means, that hinder them to fulfil their responsibility of promoting child welfare, including visiting educational settings and commemoration that encourage students to complete their secondary education. This implies that the absence of SWOs at the ward level is the main reason for not visiting schools to advocacy the reduction of student dropouts in the area of study and Tanzania in general;

Likewise, SWOs at the council level do not have the budget to hold various commemorations that advocacy students need to complete their education cycle. Finally, the results in the table 4.3 show that 39.8% of respondents strongly disagreed, while 21.2% disagreed, that crisis intervention is among the strategies applied by SWOs in reducing secondary student dropout. Likewise, 6.3% of

respondents strongly agreed, while 12.5% and 21.2% were uncertain that SWOs apply crisis intervention as a strategy employed in reducing student dropouts. This study's findings differ from the findings of the work done by Huxtable (2022), who noted that school social welfare officers conduct crisis intervention by providing immediate support to students during crises such as death in the family, abuse, homelessness, neglect, or sudden life changes that threaten a student's ability to stay in school.

Ideally, school social welfare officers practice within a multi-disciplinary team to address wide-ranging barriers to education and participate in preventive programs for all students. These findings justify that the absence of SWOs among the cadres in school staffing levels is likely to be the main reason for the under-implementation of crisis intervention as a strategy to reduce dropout in various secondary schools, contrary to developed countries that have employed SWOs in the education system to fully implement this strategy.

4.3.1 Relevance of Structural Functionalism Theory to Strategies Applied by SWOs in Reducing School Dropout among Secondary School Students

Structural functionalism theory emphasizes the role that social institutions (like schools, families, and peer groups) in maintaining social stability. The theory also examines dysfunctions of the structure when a part of the system fails to contribute to social stability and order (Beck & Grayot, 2021). Therefore, Structural functionalism theory emphasizes the need for the government to prepare strategies applied by social welfare to reduce secondary school dropout. The results above demonstrate that SWOs rarely use various strategies to reduce dropout among

secondary school students. The government and other stakeholders are responsible for preparing and launching various strategies for SWOs. The results above demonstrate that SWOs rarely use various strategies to reduce dropout among secondary school students. These strategies included identification of early sign student dropout, conducting home visiting and family assessment, application of child protection system, advocacy and crisis intervention. In this context, the government and other stakeholders are dysfunctional in creating suitable environments for SWOs to implement the strategies mentioned above for reducing school dropout, for failing to allocate funds, and for implementing strategies to reduce school dropout.

4.4 Level of Social Welfare Officers' Engagement in Reducing School Dropout

The second objective of the study was to examine the level of engagement of social welfare officers in reducing school dropout among secondary school students in the Igunga District Council. By using questionnaires and conducting interviews, the opinions of the respondents were gathered in the area of study. The respondents were asked to express their views by indicating if they are engaged in interventions to reduce dropout rates, either at high or low levels, with the statements presented while providing additional opinions, if any. The results were collected and analyzed as indicated in Table 4.4

First, 46.3 % of respondents in Table 4.4 revealed that SWOs are very lowly engaged in various school programs for reducing school dropout, such as back-to-school programs and creating self-awareness in students, while 22.6% and 12.2%, respectively, said that they are low and minimal. Likewise, 16.8% of respondents

stated that SWOs were highly engaged in school programs for reducing school dropout rates, compared to just 2% who stated that SWOs were highly engaged.

.Table 4.4: Level of Social Welfare Officers' Engagement in Reducing School Dropout

Level of SWOs' engagement in reducing dropout	% Very low	% low	% Minimal	% high	% Very high
Engagements of SWOs in various school programs for reducing school dropout (i.e., Back-to-school, free programs, and Creating Self-awareness in Students)	46.3	22.6	12.2	16.8	2.1
Engagements of SWOs in reviewing school attendance	48.7	16.8	12.8	18.6	3.2
Engagements of SWOs in education Settings to deal with student problems, including dropout.	48.4	19.1	15.2	16.8	0.5
SWOs engaged in low enforcement to deal with those who cause and drop students from school	31.3	20.5	17.3	23.0	7.9
Engagement of SWOs in providing counselling and guidance to students with the early signs of dropout	35.1	9.3	23.7	30.1	1.8

Source: Field Data, 2024.

These findings differ from a study conducted by Huxtable (2022) in Ghana, which showed that SWOs were highly involved in various campaigns, including the back-to-school program. These findings show that Ghana's government instituted a program where SWOs are involved in back-to-school activities, according to Huxtable (2022). In addition, the findings differ from a study conducted in India by Soni (2023) titled “School Dropouts and Role of Social Worker”. The study recommended that social welfare officers, with the collaboration of education

officers, be involved in implementing the programs of free education, increasing scholarships at the primary and secondary levels, lowering the cost of private schools, increasing student and parent awareness, preventing early marriage of girls, and ensuring equal access to education. All these programs aimed to reduce the problem of students dropping out of school.

Next, Table 4.4 reveals that 48.7% of respondents reported SWOs were very low engaged in reviewing school attendance to identify early signs of students' dropout, followed by low engagement (16.8%) and minimum engagement (12.8%). On the other hand, only 3.2% of respondents reported that SWOs reviewed student attendance at a very high level, while 18.6% of respondents stated that SWOs reviewed student attendance at a high level. The findings are dissimilar from the findings of the work done by Huxtable (2022), titled “A Global Picture of School Social Work in 2021”, noting that in Britain and Nordic countries such as Finland, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland, SWOs employed in schools are highly involved in reviewing school attendance to identify students who exhibit truancy patterns and signs of dropping out of school, intending to identify and resolve the challenges they face so that they can continue their studies.

These findings show that the governments in the areas mentioned above have enacted laws directing SWOs to review school attendance to identify students who are absent and take various measures to prevent absenteeism, which is a sign of dropping out of school. The situation is different in the area of study, as there is no law requiring SWOs to carry out that role in Tanzania. The findings above show that very few SWOs review school attendance, even when they receive a referral

from the school to help students with absenteeism.

Table 4.4 also shows the engagement level of social welfare officers (SWOs) in educational settings to deal with student problems, including dropout. Almost half of the respondents, 48.4%, indicated responded very low engagement; 19.1% responded low, and 15.2% responded minimally. This is in contrast to 16.8% who reported that SWOs engaged at a high level and 0.5% who reported that SWOs were engaged in an educational setting at a high level. One head teacher narrated as follows:

“He has been seeing social welfare officers visiting schools very rarely, especially when there is a campaign for preventing violence against children and providing awareness to prevent girls from getting pregnant while they are studying. Therefore, I advise that welfare officers be appointed and deployed in schools to help monitor school dropouts.” (Head teacher 2024)

These findings are in line with Nguyen et al. (2022), who showed that coordination between social welfare personnel and educational forces in high schools was very low and inconsistent degree across activities of SWOs, including reviewing of school attendance that identifies the early sign of dropout. The study recommended that institutions must perfect the organisational structure of their operations, management, and social welfare divisions.

These findings justify that the absence of laws or policies directing schools to employ SWOs is the reason for the low engagement in supporting students in educational institutions. Then the above results are different from the study conducted by Huxtable (2022), who pointed out that social workers are employed and involved in schools in an educational setting, focusing on reducing absenteeism

by improving school attendance and providing counselling and guidance in Australia and Nordic countries. Also in Asian countries, especially in the United Arab Emirates, where the Ministry of Education and Youth had placed 994 social workers in 744 schools, averaging 1.34 social workers per school since 1972, to deal with the reduction of student dropout.

Moreover, 31.3 % of respondents in Table 2.4 revealed that SWOs are very lowly engaged in law enforcement to deal with student dropout, while 20.5% and 17.3%, respectively, said that they are lowly and minimally engaged. In addition 23.0 % of respondents revealed that SWOs were highly engaged in law enforcement to deal with those who cause and drop students from school, compared to only 7.9 % who revealed that SWOs were highly engaged. The same findings were also presented by Himdad (2022) in Erbil, Iraq, at the University of Salahaddin, who showed very low involvement of SWOs in law enforcement against parents who drop their children from school, prevent child labour, and enforce the law on compulsory education. The possible reasons for the low level of participation of social welfare officers in enforcing the law against the parents whose children drop from school may be their lack of presence at the schools and ward levels to enforce the laws throughout the community.

Lastly, Table 4.4 shows that 35.1% of respondents said SWOs were very lowly engaged in counselling and guiding students who were showing signs of dropping out, followed by low engagement (19.3%) and minimal engagement (23.7%). In contrast, 10.1% of respondents said that SWOs provided counselling and guidance at a high level, while just 1.8% said that SWOs provided counselling and guidance to

students at a very high level. Similar results were noted by the School of Mental Health (Kelly et al., 2010), which noted that SWOs are being discriminated by education officials to work in the education systems and this situation led to few school social workers (7.4%) being engaged at a very low level in providing counselling or therapeutic services to students with the early sign of dropping out. Therefore, the two study above indicate that the absence of School Welfare Officers (SWOs) from the education authorities is responsible for their very low engagement in providing counselling to students facing various challenges, such as dropouts.

4.4.1 Relevance of Structural Functionalism Theory on SWOs

The structural functionalism theory emphasizes laws and policies that contribute to the specialization and balance among parts of society (Beck & Grayot, 2021). The structural functionalism theory argues that the government is responsible for making laws or policies that direct the engagement of SWOs in reducing student dropouts. The above findings demonstrate that the levels of SWOs' engagement in reducing secondary school dropout are very low. In this context, The structural functionalism argued that the government has failed to enact laws or policies, resulting in very low participation of SWOs in reducing student dropout. Therefore, according to the structural functionalism theory and following the results of this study, the government should enact laws and regulations that direct the recruitment of Social Welfare Officers in schools and implement the duties of reducing dropout rates. This will increase the engagement in reducing dropout significantly.

4.5 The Barriers Facing Social Welfare Officers in Reducing Dropout

The third specific objective of the study was to identify the barriers facing social

welfare officers in reducing dropout among secondary school students from their perspective. Interview methods were used to get the opinions of the respondents who were gathered in the area of study. Number of barriers were identified and are described below,

4.5.1 Limited Resource Allocation as a Barrier

Through the use of qualitative data, participants, including SWO indicated experiencing limited resources such as scarcity of financial resources, transport problems, and shortage of social welfare officers to implement the strategies of reducing secondary school dropout within their jurisdiction. One of the SWO narrated as follows:

"Social welfare officers lack sufficient financial resources and transportation to implement various interventions and strategies to prevent students from dropping out. A shortage of SWOs at ward levels for reducing student dropout, especially visiting schools to identify students with signs of dropout." The planning office allocates small funds from internal revenue to implement social welfare interventions, including reducing school dropouts." (Social Welfare Officer 2024)

More narrative, another respondent (District Executive Officer) said

"Igunga District Council has the challenge of the presence of SWOs, especially at the ward level, and they have a small budget. Therefore, there is a need to increase the budget of the Social Welfare Department, which is sufficient to carry out their duties, especially participating in eliminating student dropout." (District Executive Officer, 2024)

Also a Planning Officer narrated that:

A planning department recognizes the challenges faced by SWOs, so the Council will increase the budget for SWOs in the annual budget plan so that they can carry out their responsibilities to reduce student dropout. Likewise, various child rights stakeholders have a role to

play in helping to increase the budget for the Social Welfare Unit so that it can carry out its responsibilities as planned. (A council Planning Officer, 2024)

The above results are similar to the report on the Challenges faced by social workers dealing with victims and survivors of natural disasters conducted in South Africa by Kotetso et al., (2021) which also pointed to insufficient allocations of budget funds to the department of SWOs to carry out their duties. This means the social welfare department lack basic supplies like offices, telephones, computers and transport for home visits. The absence of the above supplies hindered the intervention, reducing dropouts, such as conducting home visits and other campaigns. The possible reason for allocating an insufficient budget might be that the government has not prioritized the activities of SWOs.

4.5.2 The Knowledge Ability of Social Welfare Officers to Implement Strategies

The qualitative findings from the respondents on the capacity of the social welfare officer to implement the strategies for reducing student dropout show that SWOs have sufficient knowledge of various implementing interventions because they are well-trained on child protection and child development issues, and are utilized in some programs to reduce dropout. One of the SWO narrated as follows:

“My fellow social welfare officers and I have been trained on the child protection system, such as how to conduct home visits and crisis intervention for students with problems, including the signs of dropping out. However, we do not have resources like financial resources, and there is no allocation of funds to implement the strategies for reducing dropouts.” (Social Welfare Officer 2024)

Another participant (stakeholder) commented on the capacity of the social welfare officer to implement the strategies for reducing student added that:

"Stakeholders have been funding various trainings to empower Social Welfare officers in the child protection system and are knowledgeable about strategies to reduce secondary school dropouts, but the problem is that the government is allocating insufficient funds to support interventions to reduce student dropouts." (Stakeholder 2024)

The findings above were similar to the report from the PORALG, in collaboration with the UNICEF project partner, which has provided capacity building on the child protection system for Social Welfare Officers from 184 councils (URT, 2024). The success of capacity building may be the interest of stakeholders in protecting children from violence and their rights, such as the right to complete primary and secondary education. The possible reason for this similarity is that child stakeholders have an interest in the area of child rights and helped the government provide such training. Therefore, the conclusion is that SWOs have great capacity to implement the strategies for reducing student dropout, but they have implemented the strategy to a very limited extent because the government has not created conducive environment for them to implement the strategies

4.5.3 Traditional Practices A Gender

Harmful traditional practices in the area of study, such as early marriage and forced labor, hinder SWOs from implementing various strategies for reducing dropout in various secondary schools. The Headteacher said:

"Parents are forcing to drop their children to drop out of school and get them married because of the bride price. Then parents forcing their male children to drop out of school to work in the fields of rice, tobacco, and mines. To know whether parents influence these problems, there is a need for the government to allocate SWOs at the ward level to create links between the student and their family." (The head master, 2024)

Also, another participant “social welfare Officer” added.

"When a girl enters puberty, her parents take her to auction places so that young men can choose her to marry. This is very common in rural areas of Chagulaga is the name of this custom. Many females, particularly those from Sukuma, have started marrying and quitting school as a result of this harmful custom. " (Social Welfare Officer, 2024)

These findings match a study conducted in Brighton by Birchall (2018), which revealed that parents in Asia and Africa force their daughters to get married when they are in school. Additionally, similar findings come from a study conducted in Tabora Region by the International Labour Organization (2017), which showed that parents force their children to withdraw from school, especially during the rainy season to help them with agricultural activities and other activities in their households, including livestock activities. Therefore, in contrast to the previous study that only examined barriers at the workplace, this study reviewed barriers found in families and societies, such as harmful traditional beliefs and a lack of cooperation, and how they affect the working conditions of social welfare in reducing dropout.

4.5.4 Absence of SWOs in Educational Settings

The participants indicated that education settings, lack experts in the field of social welfare services for identifying student problems, including dropouts. Also participants indicated that the absence of SWOs in education services hinder the provision of counseling and guidance services that help students with indicators of dropping out of school to continue with their studies. One of the SWO narrated as follows:

"The absence of social welfare officers in schools causes students to lack counseling and guidance services. In addition, schools lack social welfare officers for identifying student challenges, including dropouts, and making assessments. (Social Welfare Officer 2024)

Another participant (Head teacher) commented by adding that:

"SWOs are not employed in schools, which is a major challenge, the government needs to hire SWOs in secondary schools to work with us teachers to identify students with signs of truancy and start tracking them beyond their families and provide various services such as counseling services through outreach programs and communicating with parents." (Head Teacher 2024)

The above result was similar to the report from the International Journal of School Social Work, which showed that in southern Asia and most African countries, school social workers are not employed to deal with student problems in educational settings (Huxtable, 2022). The possible reason for the above result may be the absence of a government policy to employ SWOs in educational settings.

4.5.5 Inadequate Enforcement of Child Protection Laws

The participants stated that there is poor enforcement of laws against parents who drop their children from school for various reasons, such as marrying female and male children to work in fields, mines, and livestock activities, resulting in students dropping out. In the line with the foregoing participant (Social welfare Officer) narrated as that:

"The government has enacted education laws and policies that direct students to complete school, but social welfare officers have not fully implemented them due to their limited numbers, especially at the ward level. Furthermore, the participant continued to say that there is a need for the full council to enact by-laws to govern parents to ensure that they supervise their children to complete school." (Social welfare Officer 2024)

Another respondent (Council Education Officer) commented that:

"Ward and village leaders still need to implement bylaws that help prevent students from dropping out of school for various reasons. So the leaders, including SWOs, should fulfil their responsibility of implementing bylaws to punish those parents who are dropping out of school for various reasons, such as forcing their daughters to be married at a young age and dropping out of school, and employing their children in mines and livestock activities." (Council Education Officer 2024)

Similar findings were presented by Himdad (2022) in Erbil, Iraq, at the University of Salahaddin, who showed the weakness of the SWOs in enforcing the law against parents who drop their children from school. The weakness in enforcing the child welfare law discourages the strategies of preventing child labour and compulsory education. These results indicate that the absence of law enforcers such as SWOs and lawyers in educational institutions and at the ward level is the reason for the weak implementation of the law against those parents who drop their children from school for various reasons, such as forcing their daughters to be married at a young age or finding jobs for their children in agricultural areas and mines to earn money.

4.5.6 Relevance of Structural Functionalism Theory on the Barriers Facing Social Welfare Officers in Reducing Dropout among Secondary School Students

Structural functionalism theory emphasizes society's consensus and order, focusing on social stability and shared public values (Beck & Grayot, 2021). Structural functionalism theory emphasizes the roles of the government and other stakeholders in planning, meeting the needs of the institution. The findings show that the following barriers of which limit social welfare officers role of reducing school dropout among secondary school students include: lack of funding, transportation issues, absence of SWOs in education setting, low enforcement of the law against

parents who dropout their children for various harmful traditional practices such as early marriage and forced labor, and an insufficient number of social welfare officers.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study's key findings, general inferences, and recommendations.

5.2 Summary

The study's general objective was to investigate the role of social welfare officers in reducing school dropout among secondary school students using a case of Igunga District Council. Specific objectives that guided the study included to assess the strategies applied by social welfare officers in reducing school dropout among secondary school students, to examine the level of engagement of social welfare officers in reducing dropout among secondary school students and to find out the barriers facing social welfare officers in reducing dropout among secondary school students in Igunga District Council. The study was guided by structural functionalism theory to justify the study. The study employed a descriptive approach, and data were collected through interviews and questionnaires.

Both quantitative and qualitative techniques were applied in this study. Under the first specific objective, the study found that SWOs rarely use the following strategies to reduce dropout among secondary school students: the identification of early signs of student dropout, home visits for student and family assessment, the application of child protection systems, advocacy through visiting educational settings, commemoration that advocates interests of children and crisis intervention. As for the second specific objective, the researcher found that in the area of study (Igunga DC), the level of SWOs' engagement in reducing the student dropout rate in

secondary school is very low, particularly in the engagement of the following areas: the engagements of SWOs in various school programs (i.e., back-to-school and free programs) and the engagements of SWOs in education settings to deal with student problems, including dropout. In addition, SWOs review school attendance, counselling and guidance for students with the early signs of dropout and law enforcement to deal with those who drop out of school.

In relation to the third specific objective, the study identified the existence of barriers in the workplace and society in general that affect the performance of SWOs in reducing the dropout rate. These include inadequate funds, shortage of social welfare officer, inadequate enforcement of child protection laws, the absence of SWOs in educational settings and harmful traditional practices that are barriers to reducing student dropout.

5.3 Conclusion

This study aimed at investigating the role of social welfare officers in reducing school dropout among secondary school students using a case of Igunga District Council. The identified knowledge gaps were associated with previous studies, conducted in developed countries where SWOs have been placed in educational settings. This study has filled the gap as it was conducted in a place where SWOs were not recruited in education settings. The results concluded that SWOs are not actively implementing the various strategies they can use to reduce student dropout, and their engagement is very low. This is mainly the result of workplace and social context challenges that affect social welfare officers' participation in implementing their strategies to reduce secondary school student dropout as confirmed by the

results of this study. According to the findings these barriers included scarcity of financial resources, (financial resources transport problems and shortage of social welfare officers), low enforcement of child protection laws, the absence of SWOs in educational settings and harmful traditional practices. Furthermore, the results indicated that SWOs have sufficient knowledge that they can use to implement strategies for reducing student dropout.

Finally, findings recommended that the government and other stakeholders should improve the working environments of SWOs by allocating sufficient resources to support the strategies, providing access to transportation, recruiting and assigning SWOs in educational settings and at the ward level to raise the effectiveness of SWOs and implementing various strategies for reducing student dropout rates.

5.4 Recommendation

According to the findings of the study, the following recommendations were developed.

5.4.1 Recommendations to the Government

- i. The government should establish a policy of employing SWOs in educational settings, including secondary schools, where their duties will be reviewing student attendance records to identify any students showing early signs of dropout, conducting home visits, providing psychosocial support, counseling, and guidance for all students identified with various problems, including absenteeism. By assigning social welfare officers to manage those duties, the problem of students dropping out of school will be reduced.

- ii. The government should also create regulations instructing the education officer to using SWOs in different interventions to reduce dropout rates at different levels of administration, including at the school, ward, and council levels.
- iii. The government should cooperate with the stakeholders to allocate enough funds that will provide access to transportation means, stationery and allowances and make it easier for SWOs to implement some strategies, such as home visiting in households with students with the early signs of drop out of school.
- iv. The government is to recruit and allocate SWOs in educational settings and at ward levels, the SWOs. This will enable SWOs to be close with the community and simplify the implementation of various responsibilities, including advocacy for reducing secondary dropout.
- v. The researcher recommends that the government, in collaboration with stakeholders, support available programs introduced by SWOs and other government officials to make more campaigns based on creating parental and community awareness to stop harmful traditional practices found in society that deny children the right complete their primary and secondary school education.
- vi. The researcher recommends that the government enact law and by - law that will punish those parents who are dropping out of school for various reasons, such as forcing their daughters to be married at a young age and dropping out of school and employing their children in mines and livestock activities.”

5.4.2 Recommendation for Further Study

This study focused on assessing the role of social welfare officers in reducing school dropout among secondary school students in Igunga District Council. It is

recommended that the same study be done in other councils in Tanzania to assess the roles of SWOs in reducing Dropout among secondary school students. Finally, it was recommended that, through a qualitative approach, the other study should involve parents as participants to get information supporting the assessment of the SWO's role in reducing student dropouts.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Demographic Detail

Please put an appropriate answer by filling and ticking the correct answer

1) What is your gender? <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	5) What is your education level? <input type="checkbox"/> Primary Education <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinary level Secondary Education <input type="checkbox"/> High level Secondary Education <input type="checkbox"/> Diploma level/Certificate <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Post graduate education
2.)What is your age (Years from): <input type="checkbox"/> 12 -15 years <input type="checkbox"/> 31 -35 years <input type="checkbox"/> 16 -20 years <input type="checkbox"/> 36 -40 years <input type="checkbox"/> 21 -25 years <input type="checkbox"/> 41 -45 years <input type="checkbox"/> 26- 30 years <input type="checkbox"/> 46 +	
4. Occupation.....	

Appendix II: In-Depth Interview Guiding Questions

I, Abakos Deodatus, am a student from Open University of Tanzania, pursuing a Master's Degree in Social Work (MSW). I am researching and assessing social welfare officers' roles in reducing school dropouts among secondary school students in Igunga District Council as part of fulfilling my Master's degree in Social Work at the Open University of Tanzania. The research is purely for academic purposes. This interview aims to obtain confidential information that will be used for this study only. Please provide me with information.

In-depth interview guide questions:-

1. What do you know about the strategies applied by SWOs to reduce school dropout among secondary school students in Igunga District Council?
2. Do SWOs implement the strategies for reducing school dropouts?
3. What do you tell me about the perception of SWOs in reducing school dropout (probing for most barriers)?
4. What do you tell me about the levels of engagement for SWOs in reducing school dropout?
5. In your opinion, what should be done to end secondary school dropouts?

Appendix III: Questionnaire for student and teachers guide questions

Specific Objective (1) Strategies Applied by SWOs in reducing secondary school dropout						
S/N	Strategies	strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	strongly agree
2.	The identification of early signs of student dropout					
3.	Home visit for Student and family assessment					
3.	Application child protection system (child protection and safety desk inside and outside school).					
4.	Advocacy through visiting in education setting and commemoration that advocate interests of children.					
5.	Crisis Intervention					
Specific Objective 2: Level of SWOs engagement in reducing dropout among secondary school student						
SN	Levels	Very low	low	Average	high	Very high
1.	Engagements of SWOs in various school programs for reducing school dropout,					
2.	Engagements of SWOs in reviewing school attendance					
3.	Engagements of SWOs in education Settings to deal with student problems including dropout.					
4	SWOs engaged in Law enforcement to deal with those who cause and drop students from school					
5	Engagement of SWOs in providing counselling and guidance to students with the early signs of dropout					

Appendix IV: Research Clearance

THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA



Ref. No OUT/PG202087483

8th April, 2024

District Executive Director (DED),
Igunga District Council

P.O.Box 5,

TABORA.

Dear Director,

**RE: RESEARCH CLEARANCE FOR MR. ABAKOS DEODATUS, REG NO:
PG202087483**

2. The Open University of Tanzania was established by an Act of Parliament No. 17 of 1992, which became operational on the 1st March 1993 by public notice No.55 in the official Gazette. The Act was however replaced by the Open University of Tanzania Charter of 2005, which became operational on 1st January 2007. In line with the Charter, the Open University of Tanzania mission is to generate and apply knowledge through research.

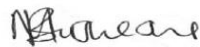
3. To facilitate and to simplify research process therefore, the act empowers the Vice Chancellor of the Open University of Tanzania to issue research clearance, on behalf of the Government of Tanzania and Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology, to both its staff and students who are doing research in Tanzania. With this brief background, the purpose of this letter is to introduce to you **Mr. Abakos Deodatus, Reg. No: PG202087483**), pursuing **Master of Social Work (MSW)**. We here by grant this clearance to conduct a research titled **“Assessing the Role of Social Welfare**

Officers in Reduction of School Dropout among Secondary School Students. A Case of Igunga District Council". He will collect his data at your area from 9th April to 10th May 2024.

4. In case you need any further information, kindly do not hesitate to contact the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) of the Open University of Tanzania, P.O.Box 23409, Dar es Salaam. Tel: 022-2-2668820. We lastly thank you in advance for your assumed cooperation and facilitation of this research academic activity.

Yours sincerely,

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA



Prof. Magreth S. Bushesha

For: VICE CHANCELLOR

Appendix V: Research Acceptance Letter



THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
PRESIDENT'S OFFICE
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
IGUNGA DISTRICT COUNCIL



Telephone: +255 (026) 2650019 (G/L)
+255 (026) 2650021 (D/L)
Fax: +255 (026) 2650242
Email: ded@igungadc.go.tz
website: <http://www.igungadc.go.tz>

Igunga District Council,
P. O. BOX 19,
IGUNGA.

Ref. No. AB.260/307/01/03

08th May, 2024

Open University of Tanzania,
P. O BOX 23409,
DAR ES SALAAM.

**RE: PERMISSION FOR DATA COLLECTION IN RESPECT OF RESEARCH WITH THE
TITLED ASSESSING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WELFARE OFFICERS IN REDUCTION OF
SCHOOL DROPOUT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS.**

Please kindly refer to your letter dated 8th April, 2024. With Ref No.
OUT/PG202087483

2. With this letter I would like to inform you that, your request has been accepted for **Mr. Abakos Deodatus** Undertaking **Master of Social Work (MSW)** to collect data pertaining to his Research/ project.
3. Remember that, there will be no financial implication in our side by accepting him.
4. During his arrival, he is supposed to report to the **District Secondary Education Officer**, for more clarification.


Jackson G. Kutisa

For: DISTRICT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Copy to: **Abakos Deodatus**

**: DISTRICT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
IGUNGA DISTRICT COUNCIL**

District Secondary Education Officer
P.O BOX 19
IGUNGA

*- HM - Igunga DC
for your Cooperation*

Halmashauri ya Wiaya, S.L.P 19, Igunga.Simu: +255 (026)-2650019,+255(026) 2650021.
Nukushi +255 (026)2650242.Barua pepe:ded@igungadc.go.tz Tovuti: <http://www.igungadc.go.tz>

*DSO
8/05/2024*
AFISA ELIMU YA
IGUNGA