



Extent of the Factors Contributing to the Dropout Rate of Mindanao Children's Library Foundation Incorporated (MCLFI) Scholars

Norai Mae Sumac¹, Emilou N. Gallardo²

^{1,2} College of Education, Arts and Sciences, University of Southern Mindanao, Kidapawan City Campus, Philippines

Article Info

Article history:

Received Oct 12, 2025

Revised Apr 30, 2026

Accepted May 27, 2026

Online First May 31, 2026

Keywords:

Dropout Factors

MCLFI

Scholars

ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: The study seeks to determine the extent of the factors contributing to the dropout rate of scholars at the Mindanao Children's Library Foundation Incorporated (MCLFI) in Barangay Manongol, Kidapawan City, during the second semester of the academic year 2023–2024. It specifically aims to examine the influence of family, personal, academic, peer, and environmental factors on dropout cases. Furthermore, it identifies the most common factor compelling MCLFI scholars to leave school and discontinue their educational pursuits.

Methodology: A descriptive-quantitative design was employed to investigate the factors contributing to dropout. Fifty former MCLFI scholars were randomly selected as respondents. Data were gathered using a self-made survey questionnaire, validated by three research experts, covering family, personal, academic, peer, and environmental factors. Results were tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistics to measure the extent of influence and determine the most prevalent reasons for scholar dropout.

Main Findings: The results reveal that personal factors significantly influence scholar dropout, ranking highest among the categories measured. Issues such as lack of motivation, discipline, and self-related challenges hindered scholars from pursuing their education. On the other hand, environmental factors were identified as the least influential in shaping dropout decisions. Overall, the findings suggest that while external pressures matter, the internal struggles of learners exert greater influence on their persistence in completing academic requirements.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study is distinctive as it focuses on dropout cases within a foundation-based educational program, the MCLFI, a context rarely explored in dropout-related literature. Most research on academic attrition emphasizes public and private schools, while this study highlights the struggles of scholars supported by a non-governmental organization. By establishing that personal factors are more influential than family, peer, or environmental pressures, the research underscores the need for tailored interventions that address individual student challenges. It contributes to designing context-sensitive strategies that promote retention and reduce dropout among foundation-supported learners.

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Corresponding Author:

Norai Mae Sumac

University of Southern Mindanao, Kidapawan City, Cotabato, Philippines

Email: nmssumac@usm.edu.ph

1. INTRODUCTION

Dropping out of school remains one of the most persistent educational challenges globally, undermining the progress of both individuals and societies. Defined as the premature discontinuation of formal schooling,

Journal homepage: <http://cahaya-ic.com/index.php/JSKE>

dropout has long-term consequences on employability, productivity, and social mobility [1]-[3]. It not only wastes government and institutional resources but also perpetuates cycles of poverty and inequality [4]. In the Philippines, dropout rates have consistently affected basic and higher education, with marginalized learners being the most vulnerable [5]. For organizations like the Mindanao Children's Library Foundation Incorporated (MCLFI), which provides scholarships and educational support to underprivileged students, the issue is particularly concerning: despite receiving financial assistance, some students still leave school. This paradox raises the need to closely examine the factors driving dropout among foundation-assisted scholars.

Global research highlights multiple drivers of dropout, ranging from individual-level factors such as motivation and health, to broader systemic influences such as poverty, school quality, and policy gaps [6], [7]. International studies emphasize that social support interventions—including counseling, mentoring, and financial assistance—can significantly reduce dropout rates when properly implemented [8]. Yet, their effectiveness depends heavily on contextual responsiveness: a program may work in one setting but fail in another if underlying issues like family instability, peer influence, or socio-economic hardship remain unaddressed [9].

In Southeast Asia, school dropout has also been identified as a persistent issue tied to poverty, rural isolation, and social inequities. In Indonesia, studies reveal that economic hardship and limited access to educational resources remain the strongest predictors of dropout, particularly in rural and marginalized areas [10], [11]. In Vietnam, Trinh et al. [12] highlights that parental involvement, teacher support, and school environment significantly influence students' likelihood to persist in school. Similarly, research in Thailand and Cambodia shows that despite government subsidy programs, factors such as child labor, early marriage, and cultural expectations continue to push students out of the education system [13]-[15]. These findings illustrate that financial aid alone is insufficient, and comprehensive interventions addressing both economic and non-economic barriers are necessary. This regional evidence underscores the relevance of exploring dropout factors in the Philippines, especially within foundations like MCLFI, where contextualized challenges may mirror those faced by neighboring Southeast Asian countries.

In the Philippine context, dropout has been linked to poverty, family responsibilities, academic struggles, and lack of school engagement [16]-[18]. Although government programs such as the Alternative Learning System (ALS) and Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) provide educational and financial support, studies show they do not fully address deeper psychosocial and environmental barriers [19], [20]. Furthermore, most research emphasizes secondary and higher education, leaving less attention to non-mainstream, foundation-supported learners who face unique vulnerabilities. Local studies in Mindanao, for instance, report that students in rural and marginalized communities drop out due to transportation difficulties, cultural expectations, and limited parental support [17]. These highlight the complexity of the problem and the need for more contextualized inquiry.

While global and national studies have extensively documented the causes of dropout, there remains a gap in literature examining learners who already benefit from direct educational assistance. Prior studies tend to concentrate on large-scale educational systems or university-level students [21] but fewer have addressed why scholars in foundations like MCLFI—who theoretically have reduced financial burdens—still discontinue schooling. This gap suggests that beyond economic factors, there may be deeper personal, family, academic, peer, and environmental dimensions influencing dropout. To address this, the present study investigates the extent of these contributing factors among MCLFI scholars in Kidapawan City, with the objectives of (1) identifying the extent to which each factor contributes to dropout, and (2) determining the most dominant factor affecting students' decision to leave school.

This research is significant for multiple stakeholders. For scholars, it provides awareness of potential risks and challenges that may hinder their academic journey, thus equipping them to adopt proactive strategies to remain in school. For MCLFI, the findings offer an evidence-based foundation to refine their scholarship programs and tailor interventions that directly address scholars' needs. Policymakers, particularly the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), can use the insights to enhance program design for disadvantaged learners, ensuring that assistance programs are not only financial but also holistic, incorporating psychosocial and community-based support [22], [23]. Finally, the study enriches academic literature by providing localized, empirical evidence on dropout within the context of foundation-supported scholars in Mindanao. It contributes to broader discussions on equity in education, serving as a reference for future researchers in developing more inclusive and effective interventions [24], [25].

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive research design, which is appropriate for examining the extent of factors contributing to dropout among Mindanao Children's Library Foundation Incorporated (MCLFI) scholars in Barangay Manongol, Kidapawan City. Descriptive research enables the systematic collection and presentation of data to describe characteristics of a population and explore relationships between variables [26], [27]. By

applying this design, the study aims to provide a clear understanding of how personal, family, academic, peer, and environmental factors influence the dropout decisions of scholars.

The research is conducted at the MCLFI Compound in Barangay Manongol, Kidapawan City, North Cotabato. The foundation provides educational assistance to disadvantaged students, making it a relevant context for exploring dropout issues. Coordination with the scholarship head and foundation leadership ensures access to records of scholars who discontinued schooling.

The participants of this study consist of 50 dropout scholars from MCLFI. These respondents provide direct insights into their lived experiences and the factors that influenced their decision to leave school. A simple random sampling technique is employed to ensure that every dropout scholar has an equal chance of being included in the study. Random sampling minimizes bias and enhances the representativeness of the sample, thereby improving the reliability of results [28], [29].

Data are collected using a researcher-made survey questionnaire, which includes items categorized under personal, family, academic, peer, and environmental factors. The instrument undergoes content validation by research experts from the University of Southern Mindanao–Kidapawan City Campus to ensure relevance and accuracy. A 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) is used to measure the degree of influence of each factor, consistent with best practices in educational and social research. Permission is formally sought from the foundation’s leadership. After approval, questionnaires are distributed to identified respondents. Completed surveys are retrieved, tallied, and systematically organized for analysis.

The collected data are analyzed using frequency counts and mode to determine the most and least significant factors influencing dropout. These descriptive statistics allow for straightforward interpretation and highlight the dominant patterns within the dataset [30].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Factors contributing to dropout rate of Mindanao Children’s Library Foundation Incorporated (MCLFI) scholars

Family Factors

Table 1 presents the extent of the factors contributing to the dropout rate of Mindanao Children’s Library Foundation Incorporated (MCLFI) scholars. The overall mode for the family factor is 1 (Not Important), indicating that, in general, family-related reasons are not perceived as primary contributors to student dropout. This suggests that most parents in the context of MCLFI are supportive of their children’s education and encourage them to remain in school.

However, a closer look reveals significant variation across specific indicators. Among the five items, the statement “I had to work to support my family” recorded the highest mode of 5 (Very Important). This demonstrates that economic necessity, particularly the need to contribute financially to the household, emerges as the most critical family-related factor influencing student dropout. This finding supports the argument of Buzan and Sheehy-Skeffington [31] that financial burdens often push students to prioritize work over education. Similarly, Graham et al. [32] highlight that children from low-income households in Southeast Asia frequently assume work responsibilities to help their families survive, thereby increasing their risk of leaving school prematurely.

In contrast, other statements such as babysitting younger siblings, parental separation, parental decision to stop schooling, and parental directive to seek work all obtained the lowest mode of 1 (Not Important). These results imply that parental influence or household disruptions were not significant causes of dropout in this case. Instead, parents of MCLFI scholars appear to uphold education as a priority, offering encouragement and resisting the notion of withdrawing their children from school. This aligns with Pholphirul and Teimrad [33], and Shaeffer [34], who found that despite economic struggles, parents in Thailand emphasize academic achievement and provide as much educational support as possible.

The implications of these findings are noteworthy. While parental support is present, economic pressures remain a powerful deterrent to school continuity. Thus, interventions to address dropout must not only reinforce family engagement but also provide socioeconomic assistance—such as livelihood programs, stipends, or part-time work opportunities—that allow students to balance educational commitments with financial realities. As Miller [35] emphasize, family support in the form of emotional encouragement, communication with teachers, and fostering a positive learning environment remains critical. Still, without addressing structural financial barriers, the risk of dropout persists.

In conclusion, the study reveals that although family support generally reduces dropout risk, the necessity of working to support one’s family remains a decisive factor. This underscores the importance of integrated support systems that combine educational assistance with economic empowerment strategies, ensuring that students can pursue their studies without sacrificing their families’ immediate needs.

Table 1. Family Factors

Statements	5	4	3	2	1	Mode	Interpretation
1. I had to work to support my family.	16	15	10	3	6	5	Very Important
2. I am babysitting my younger brother/sister instead of going to school.	1	9	8	14	18	1	Not Important
3. I follow the decision of my parents to stop schooling.	5	7	5	13	20	1	Not Important
4. I dropout because my parents got separated.	7	4	4	16	19	1	Not Important
5. I dropout because my parents want me to look for a job to sustain the needs of our family.	4	11	6	9	20	1	Not Important
General Mode	33	46	33	55	83	1	Not Important

Legend:

Range	Scale	Description
4.20 – 5.00	5	Very Important
3.40 – 4.19	4	Important
2.60 – 3.39	3	Moderately Important
1.80 – 2.59	2	Slightly Important
1.00 – 1.79	1	Not Important

Personal Factors

Table 2 presents the extent of *personal factors* contributing to the dropout rate among the Mindanao Children's Library Foundation Incorporated (MCLFI) scholars. The general mode of 3, interpreted as Moderately Important, indicates that personal factors play a significant role in influencing students' decisions to discontinue schooling. This result suggests that the students' personal circumstances, such as motivation, self-efficacy, and economic needs, considerably affect their persistence in education and their ability to balance academic and personal responsibilities.

Among the five (5) statements under personal factors, the statements "I often think about dropping out" and "I had to work to support myself" both received the highest response frequency of 13, reflecting a strong association between students' internal decision-making and their financial struggles. This finding implies that students' contemplation of leaving school often translates into an actual decision to withdraw, especially when financial necessity compels them to work. This aligns with Bernardo et al. [36] who emphasized that the thought process leading to dropout varies between students — with new students being influenced by motivation and social adjustment, while continuing students are affected by academic stress and life perceptions. Similarly, Rumbley et al. [37] identified employment-related motives and lack of academic interest as key personal reasons for student attrition across higher education institutions in Europe.

The results from this study reflect similar trends observed in developing contexts where poverty and self-sustenance needs heavily influence educational continuity. Also, Hameed et al. [38] found that students from low-income families are more likely to prioritize earning income over completing school, highlighting economic survival as a major determinant of dropout behavior. Moreover, Hameed et al. [38] explained that early employment or work engagement among students can weaken school commitment and increase dropout tendencies, particularly when job opportunities provide immediate financial gratification compared to the delayed rewards of education.

Conversely, the lowest-rated item, "I was engaged in an early relationship having boyfriend/girlfriend," with 7 responses, indicates that romantic relationships are less influential in students' decisions to drop out. This may suggest a strong awareness among students of the possible negative academic consequences of early relationships or effective parental and institutional guidance. A redsearch srtudy Ashraf et al. [39] noted that while strict parenting can increase adolescent risk-taking, balanced parental control and open family communication reduce the likelihood of premature romantic involvement and its potential academic consequences.

Overall, the general mode of 3 (Moderately Important) implies that *personal factors moderately contribute* to the dropout rate of MCLFI scholars. These findings highlight the need for schools and foundations to provide *psychosocial and financial support systems*—such as counseling services, livelihood programs, and mentorship initiatives—to help students navigate personal and economic challenges. This aligns with Videnović and Lazarević [40], who identified personal factors as one of the three major causes of student dropout, alongside family and institutional factors. Addressing these personal struggles is therefore essential in sustaining student engagement, motivation, and retention within scholarship programs.

Table 2. Personal Factors

Statements	5	4	3	2	1	Mode	Interpretation
1. I often think about dropping out.	7	11	13	11	8	3	Moderately Important
2. I often feel isolated at the school.	3	9	9	17	12	2	Slightly Important
3. I was engaged in an early relationship having boyfriend/girlfriend.	7	17	7	11	8	4	Important
4. I had to work to support myself.	15	10	13	5	7	5	Very Important
5. I don't have interest in studying.	1	8	12	11	18	1	Not Important
General Mode	33	55	54	55	53	3	Moderately Important

Legend:

Range	Scale	Description
4.20 – 5.00	5	Very Important
3.40 – 4.19	4	Important
2.60 – 3.39	3	Moderately Important
1.80 – 2.59	2	Slightly Important
1.00 – 1.79	1	Not Important

Academic Factors

Table 3 presents the extent of *academic factors* contributing to the dropout rate among the Mindanao Children's Library Foundation Incorporated (MCLFI) scholars. The general mode of 2, interpreted as Slightly Important, suggests that academic factors have a limited but noticeable influence on students' decisions to discontinue schooling. While academics may not be the primary reason for dropout among MCLFI scholars, challenges in learning, assessment, and performance remain significant stressors that shape students' educational persistence.

The statement "I have failed to meet the academic requirements as the reason for grade repetition" obtained the highest weighted mean of 2.64 and was rated as Moderately Important. This result indicates that inability to meet school requirements and the experience of grade repetition play a notable role in students' academic disengagement. Some students perceive grade repetition as punitive or discouraging, which undermines their motivation to continue studying. A research of Dupéré et al. [41] supports this, emphasizing that grade repetition often leads to feelings of humiliation, reduced academic self-efficacy, and an increased likelihood of dropping out. Furthermore, students struggling with course requirements—whether due to economic hardship or lack of academic confidence—often experience cumulative academic failure, which heightens dropout risks.

Additionally, the statement "I have difficulties in understanding the lesson and the subject" received the highest mode of 3 (Moderately Important), reflecting that learning difficulties significantly affect students' academic engagement. This finding implies that many students experience comprehension problems that limit their ability to succeed academically. A study of highlighted that comprehension instruction and metacognitive strategies—such as teaching students to monitor their understanding—can improve learning outcomes. Similarly, Gossner et al. [42] emphasized that weak reading and comprehension skills often correlate with academic underperformance, which in turn contributes to school withdrawal. Hence, effective teacher support and differentiated instruction are critical in addressing these gaps.

Conversely, statements such as "I got a lot of failing grades," "I have a lot of absences," "I have failed to meet the academic requirements," and "I have poor performance in school" obtained the lowest mode of 2 (Slightly Important). Although rated low, these findings still suggest that persistent academic struggles and absenteeism subtly contribute to dropout tendencies. Chronic absenteeism often stems from poverty, poor health, or lack of motivation, all of which hinder consistent school attendance and performance. According to Gossner et al. [42], financial constraints limit students' capacity to afford school-related expenses, leading to disengagement and missed learning opportunities—especially in rural settings where resources are scarce.

Overall, the general mode of 2 (Slightly Important) indicates that academic factors are not the primary causes of dropout among MCLFI scholars but remain relevant to understanding the broader context of educational disengagement. Academic underperformance, comprehension difficulties, and repetition-related discouragement all signal the need for targeted academic support mechanisms. Schools and scholarship programs should strengthen *remedial programs, academic mentoring, and formative assessment practices* to reduce the academic burden and sustain students' motivation.

This conclusion aligns with Dupéré et al. [41] who affirmed that academic struggles—such as poor grades, low engagement, and dissatisfaction with academic experiences—are central contributors to dropout behavior. Interventions that address these academic dimensions holistically can enhance student retention and educational success, particularly for scholars navigating socioeconomic and personal challenges.

Table 3. Academic Factors

Statements	5	4	3	2	1	Mode	Interpretation
1. I got a lot of failing grades.	4	8	9	15	14	2	Slightly Important
2. I have a lot of absences.	5	9	9	16	11	2	Slightly Important
3. I have difficulties in understanding the lesson and the subject.	5	10	15	10	10	3	Moderately Important
4. I have failed to meet the academic requirements as the reason for grade repetition.	3	11	11	15	10	2	Slightly Important
5. I have poor performance in school.	2	12	10	15	11	2	Slightly Important
General Mode	19	50	54	71	56	2	Slightly Important

Legend:

Range	Scale	Description
4.20 – 5.00	5	Very Important
3.40 – 4.19	4	Important
2.60 – 3.39	3	Moderately Important
1.80 – 2.59	2	Slightly Important
1.00 – 1.79	1	Not Important

Peer Influence

Table 4 presents the extent of peer influence factors contributing to the dropout rate among the Mindanao Children’s Library Foundation Incorporated (MCLFI) scholars. The general mode of 2, qualitatively described as Slightly Important, indicates that while peer influence is not the primary determinant of student dropout, it still exerts a subtle yet meaningful effect on learners’ school engagement and persistence. Peer influence often operates indirectly, shaping students’ academic behavior, motivation, and school belongingness.

Among the five (5) statements, three items — “I am influenced by my classmates,” “I feel uncomfortable towards my teacher because our relationship is not good,” and “I skipped classes with my friends and went somewhere just to relax or to free from school activities” — obtained the highest mode of 2 (Slightly Important). This suggests that social interactions with peers and the quality of teacher-student relationships moderately affect students’ attitudes toward school attendance. When peer groups normalize class skipping or disengagement, students may develop permissive attitudes toward absenteeism and academic neglect. According to Zingora et al. [43], peer groups significantly shape adolescents’ attitudes and behaviors — both positively and negatively — depending on the group’s dominant norms. Similarly, Mendoza and King [44] found that students surrounded by disengaged peers tend to mirror similar academic avoidance behaviors, which gradually weaken their educational aspirations.

The finding also underscores that strained relationships with teachers can amplify the influence of peers. When students experience discomfort or conflict with teachers, they are more likely to seek validation from their peer group, even if that group encourages counterproductive behaviors such as skipping classes. Also, Álvarez-Turrado et al. [45], and Jin et al. [46] emphasized that positive teacher-student relationships serve as a protective factor against peer-induced academic disengagement, while negative relationships magnify vulnerability to dropout tendencies [47].

Conversely, the statements “I drop out because of peer pressure” and “I follow what my friends or classmates want me to do, such as cutting classes, to become part of the circle” received the lowest mode of 1 (Not Important). This indicates that overt peer pressure is not a dominant cause of dropout among MCLFI scholars. Instead, these students may have peer circles that offer emotional support or shared accountability that mitigates dropout tendencies. Moreso, Mulaudzi [48] noted that collaborative peer groups can enhance the academic outcomes of low-performing students through cooperative learning and positive reinforcement. This supports the interpretation that, in the MCLFI context, peers may serve more as motivators than as sources of negative pressure.

However, Fehintola et al. [49] argued that in other contexts, peer influence remains one of the strongest external factors shaping dropout decisions, especially when combined with low self-efficacy and weak family or institutional support. The variation across studies implies that the magnitude of peer influence depends on the school culture, students’ resilience, and the nature of their friendships.

Overall, the general mode of 2 (Slightly Important) signifies that peer influence has a limited but perceptible role in the dropout behavior of MCLFI scholars. This finding implies that social belonging and peer relationships should not be overlooked in intervention strategies. Strengthening peer mentorship programs, promoting positive friendship networks, and enhancing teacher-student rapport can mitigate dropout risks by fostering supportive school environments.

In line with Thomas [50], schools that cultivate collaborative peer learning environments and inclusive student communities witness higher retention rates and academic engagement. Therefore, while peer influence is not the leading cause of dropout among MCLFI scholars, it remains an important psychosocial dimension that educational institutions should address to sustain learners’ motivation and persistence.

Table 4. Peer Influence

Statements	5	4	3	2	1	Mode	Interpretation
1. I am influenced by my classmates.	3	8	16	17	6	2	Slightly Important
2. I feel uncomfortable towards my teacher because our relationship is not good.	2	4	7	24	13	2	Slightly Important
3. I skipped classes with my friends and going somewhere just to relax or to free from school activities.	4	9	10	15	12	2	Slightly Important
4. I dropout because of peer pressure.	1	10	12	13	14	1	Not Important
5. I am following of what my friends or classmates wanted me to do just like cutting classes, for me to become part of the circle.	4	10	8	13	15	1	Not Important
General Mode	14	41	53	82	60	2	Slightly Important

Legend:

Range	Scale	Description
4.20 – 5.00	5	Very Important
3.40 – 4.19	4	Important
2.60 – 3.39	3	Moderately Important
1.80 – 2.59	2	Slightly Important
1.00 – 1.79	1	Not Important

Environmental Factors

Table 5 presents the results on environmental factors influencing the dropout rate among the Mindanao Children's Library Foundation Incorporated (MCLFI) scholars. The general mode of 2, qualitatively described as Slightly Important, indicates that environmental conditions have a limited but observable effect on students' decisions to discontinue their studies. While not the dominant factor, the environment surrounding learners—including geographical distance, infrastructure, and school safety—plays a critical role in shaping their persistence in education.

Among the five (5) statements under this category, the items “The geographical location of our house is far from the school” and “Our school lacks building facilities and school materials to use” recorded the highest mode of 3, rated as Moderately Important. This finding suggests that the physical accessibility of the school and the availability of learning resources are key considerations influencing students' attendance and continuity in education. According to Thomas [50], students who live far from school are more likely to experience fatigue, irregular attendance, and eventual withdrawal. Similarly, inadequate school facilities and limited learning materials can demotivate students and compromise the quality of their learning experience. As Koirala [51] emphasized that poor infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient instructional resources hinder student engagement, reduce motivation, and contribute to higher dropout rates, particularly in resource-limited educational settings.

The data further highlight that for many learners, the distance between their residence and the school site poses not only logistical challenges but also safety and economic concerns. Long travel times may increase students' exposure to risks and reduce available time for studying or family responsibilities. In rural areas such as Kidapawan City, where public transportation options are limited, distance becomes a structural barrier to consistent school attendance. As Gubbels et al. [52] noted, the farther a learner resides from school, the higher the likelihood of absenteeism, which eventually leads to academic disengagement and dropout.

Conversely, the statements “The school environment is not safe and comfortable,” “The social interaction within the classroom is not good anymore,” and “The physical condition of the school is not safe at all” obtained a lower mode of 2 (Slightly Important). This implies that while these conditions exist, they are not perceived by respondents as primary contributors to their decision to drop out. Nonetheless, the importance of maintaining a safe, inclusive, and supportive school climate cannot be overstated. Also, Bibi [53] assert that a child-friendly learning environment fosters strong relationships between students, teachers, and the community—factors that promote retention and reduce dropout tendencies. Likewise, Franklin and Harrington [54] stressed that teachers play a pivotal role in ensuring that classrooms remain engaging, safe, and conducive to learning, which minimizes boredom and improves students' motivation to continue their studies.

Further, Wood et al. [55] argue that environmental factors—particularly those related to school engagement, community support, and institutional safety—account for a significant portion of dropout cases. Students who perceive their school as unsafe, uncomfortable, or poorly maintained often exhibit reduced commitment to learning and are more likely to disengage academically. In the case of MCLFI scholars, although these conditions are not the predominant cause of dropout, they may interact with other variables such as personal or academic challenges to exacerbate school withdrawal.

Overall, the general mode of 2 (Slightly Important) indicates that environmental factors exert a secondary yet influential role in the dropout phenomenon among MCLFI scholars. The findings imply that improvements in school infrastructure, accessibility, and safety—alongside enhanced teacher-student and peer relationships—could further reduce dropout rates. Ensuring that learning spaces are physically safe, emotionally supportive, and logistically accessible aligns with the broader educational development goals of promoting equitable and inclusive quality education (UNESCO, 2021). By addressing these environmental limitations, institutions like MCLFI can strengthen student engagement, academic performance, and overall retention.

Table 5. Environmental Factors

Statements	5	4	3	2	1	Mode	Interpretation
1. The geographical location of our house is far from the school.	7	13	13	9	8	3	Moderately Important
2. Our school lack building facilities and school materials to use.	3	6	16	15	10	3	Moderately Important
3. The school environment is not safe and comfortable.	0	3	9	22	16	2	Slightly Important
4. The social interaction within the classroom is not good anymore.	0	5	6	25	14	2	Slightly Important
5. The physical condition of the school is not safe at all.	0	4	11	18	17	2	Slightly Important
General Mode	10	31	55	89	65	2	Slightly Important

Legend:

Range	Scale	Description
4.20 – 5.00	5	Very Important
3.40 – 4.19	4	Important
2.60 – 3.39	3	Moderately Important
1.80 – 2.59	2	Slightly Important
1.00 – 1.79	1	Not Important

3.2. Common factors that contributes to dropout rate of Mindanao Children’s Library Foundation Incorporated (MCLFI) scholars

The findings of the study for table 6 revealed that *personal factors* are the most significant contributors to student dropout among scholars of the Mindanao Children’s Library Foundation Incorporated (MCLFI), having a general mode of 3, qualitatively described as *Moderately Important*. This suggests that issues rooted in individual circumstances—such as lack of interest in studying, feelings of isolation, financial self-reliance, and involvement in early romantic relationships—are central reasons why students disengage from schooling. These findings align with Kiefe et al. [56] who identified personal factors as one of the three major causes of dropout, emphasizing low motivation, poor attendance, and weak academic performance as key contributors. Students who struggle to balance responsibilities or face emotional burdens tend to lose academic focus, leading to withdrawal from school.

A deeper interpretation of these findings underscores the psychological and motivational dimensions of student persistence. When students experience diminished self-esteem and low academic self-concept, they are more prone to disengagement [57]. Conversely, students who possess a strong sense of self-worth and academic purpose tend to persevere despite challenges. This implies that schools and scholarship programs must implement *student-centered interventions* that strengthen self-efficacy and motivation, such as mentorship programs, counseling, and recognition of academic progress. By fostering emotional resilience and intrinsic motivation, institutions can directly address the root causes of dropout behaviors.

Furthermore, while *family factors* registered the lowest general mode of 1, described as *Not Important*, the qualitative implications are noteworthy. Despite economic struggles, the findings show that parents of MCLFI scholars continue to prioritize their children’s education, often making financial sacrifices to sustain it. This supports Li and Carroll [58] who found that parents frequently resort to loans or other financial means to support college education. In Southeast Asian contexts, such as Indonesia, the cultural notion of “*hutang orang tua*” (parents’ debt) embodies the deep moral obligation of parents to provide education for their children [58]. Similarly, in Islamic educational settings, parental involvement extends beyond financial support to emotional and motivational engagement [59].

These findings suggest that even in economically challenged households, *strong parental support acts as a buffer* against student disengagement and dropout. The implication is that educational institutions should not only focus on student-level interventions but also engage families through capacity-building programs, parental education sessions, and involvement in school activities. Active parental participation—through regular communication with teachers, homework supervision, and emotional encouragement—significantly reduces dropout risk.

The study also reflects the broader, multidimensional nature of dropout causes. Beyond personal and family domains, factors such as emotional instability, low academic achievement, and negative school climates

also contribute to dropout tendencies [60]. This reinforces the importance of addressing *school engagement* as a systemic issue. According to Alfiyanto et al. [61] institutional efforts to strengthen student engagement and support mechanisms can offset the absence of family backing. Similarly, Alfiyanto et al. [61] found that strong family support and positive school experiences jointly contribute to reduced university dropout rates and enhanced student satisfaction.

Building meaningful relationships with mentors, teachers, and peers emerges as another key protective factor. Supportive adults and peer groups serve as social anchors, helping students navigate academic and personal challenges [62]. These relationships foster belongingness—a critical determinant of student retention. As Martinot et al. [63] assert, a safe, inclusive, and high-expectation learning environment significantly enhances students' persistence and success. Moreover, Wood et al. [55] emphasize that social support from peers not only encourages attendance but also enhances motivation and well-being.

The results underscore that dropout prevention in contexts like MCLFI requires a *multilayered intervention approach* targeting personal, familial, and environmental factors. First, strengthening students' psychological resilience through mentorship, guidance counseling, and self-regulation programs can mitigate the personal issues leading to dropout. Second, empowering families through awareness and engagement programs reinforces their role as active educational partners. Lastly, cultivating a positive, safe, and inclusive school environment encourages consistent participation and a sense of belonging among students.

Overall, the findings align with global and regional research emphasizing that dropout is not merely a product of poverty or academic failure—it is a reflection of *interconnected personal, familial, and institutional dynamics*. Addressing these collectively can significantly reduce dropout rates and promote sustained educational attainment among vulnerable learners.

Table 6. The Most Common Factors That Contributes to Dropout Rate of Mindanao Children's Library Foundation Incorporated (MCLFI) Scholars

Factors	General Mode	Interpretation
1. Family Factors	1	Not Important
2. Personal Factors	3	Moderately Important
3. Academic Factors	2	Slightly Important
4. Peer Influence	2	Slightly Important
5. Environmental Factors	2	Slightly Important

Legend:

Range	Scale	Description
4.20 – 5.00	5	Very Important
3.40 – 4.19	4	Important
2.60 – 3.39	3	Moderately Important
1.80 – 2.59	2	Slightly Important
1.00 – 1.79	1	Not Important

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined the factors contributing to the dropout rate among the scholars of the Mindanao Children's Library Foundation Incorporated (MCLFI), focusing on personal, academic, peer influence, environmental, and family factors. The research employed a descriptive design using a self-made survey questionnaire distributed to fifty respondents who had dropped out. Data were analyzed through frequency and mode to determine the degree of importance of each factor influencing student dropout.

The results revealed that personal factors were the most significant contributors to students' decisions to leave school. These include the need to work to support themselves and their families, lack of interest in studying, and involvement in early romantic relationships that often lead to early marriage. These circumstances hinder the students' ability to stay focused on their education and increase the risk of dropping out. On the other hand, family factors were found to have the least contribution, as most parents remain supportive of their children's education despite financial difficulties.

Overall, the findings indicate that student dropout is a complex issue influenced by multiple factors, primarily those that affect students' personal motivation and circumstances. To reduce dropout rates, institutions like MCLFI should strengthen their scholarship support systems, enhance student engagement programs, and provide counseling and livelihood assistance for scholars facing financial and personal challenges. Creating a nurturing and supportive school environment will help scholars remain motivated, resilient, and committed to completing their education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank the participants in this study. Their participation and insightful contributions were invaluable to the research. The authors also thank everyone who supported this research, making its successful completion possible.

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