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Household structure and secondary school dropout in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Introduction:

Context: South Africa still faces dire conditions of poverty and these conditions may be traced back to the Apartheid system. To cope with these conditions, many people formulate new living structures in the form of households. Due to the legacy of Apartheid, many parents are migrant labourers and leading to a decline of nuclear families and the rise in formulation of extended households for an adolescent to reside in. Extended households are well established in South Africa and are more common amongst African families even though there are fewer studies embarked on the educational outcomes of adolescents in different households in a South African context. Many households experience economic strain that may be a push factor to adolescents dropping out of school.

The first objective was to describe the levels and secondly to identify differences in secondary school dropout rates by socio-demographic and household factors in South Africa and the third objective were to investigate the association between household structure and secondary school dropout. The results are presented according to the objectives of the study.

Methods: Secondary data from the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) National Income Dynamic Study (NIDS) wave 5 2017 is used with the sample size of 4, 956, 115 adolescents aged 13-18 years. Three levels of analysis are employed: univariate: frequency and percentage distribution tables, bivariate: Chi-square (2) and binary logistic regression.

Results: fifty-five percent of adolescents reside in nuclear households; 26% in a single-mother household, 7% in single father households and 12% reside in extended household. The study found that 1% of adolescents are dropouts. The research found out that prevalence of school dropout is highest amongst adolescents from nuclear household (52.08%) and those who reside in extended household (6.25%) have lowest prevalence of school dropout. The prevalence of school dropout is highest amongst females' adolescents at (58.33%). The odds of concurrently school dropout were higher for adolescents residing in nuclear households and lower for extended household. There is thus an association between household structure and secondary school dropout amongst adolescents in South Africa. The unadjusted odds ratio shows that adolescents residing in single-mother households have higher odds (1.64) of dropping out of

school compared to other nuclear household structures [OR=1.64; CI 1.609- 1.667]. Subsequently, when controlling for other variables, the results show that the adjusted odds ratios show that 18-year old adolescents have higher odds [AOR= 20.06; CI 19.568- 21.680] of dropping out of secondary school compared to 14-year olds.

Conclusion: This study found a positive association between household structure and school dropout. The findings revealed that, contrary to concerns that external household has an impact on an adolescent's decision to drop out, they have a better chance of staying in school. Adolescents residing in nuclear households have higher odds of dropping out of secondary school in South Africa. It is thus imperative to focus on the experiences from living conditions such as poverty and household structures that adolescents belong to, for a better understanding of the obstacles they face, and they experience they encounter before taking a decision to drop out. To understand these obstacles and experiences they encounter may assist in outlining hinders towards initiatives taken towards youth education and South Africa reaping its benefits of demographic dividend.