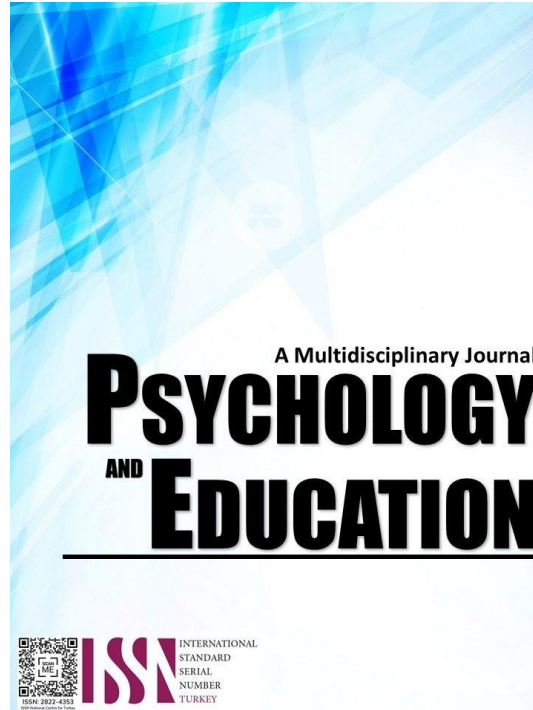


# STUDENT DROPOUT RATES IN MORONG NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL: A TREND ANALYSIS



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## Student Dropout Rates in Morong National High School: A Trend Analysis

Julian James R. Torbeles, \* Janel Y. Flores, Kate Lynn Love G. Benitez, Leigh Angelo R. Marcelino, Jing S. Catangay, Jeanne Paul S. Raymundo

For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

### Abstract

World authorities and educators have taken attention to the issue of student dropout rates, which is a global concern. The rising dropout rates at all educational levels are mostly caused by financial difficulty. Consequently, Morong National High School confronts the same challenge. Because of this, the researchers look into the rates of dropouts from Morong National High School as well as the causes behind them in order to identify patterns and propose strategies to lower the dropout rate. A qualitative method was used in this study. The dropout rate was analyzed, four Grade Level Coordinators (GLCs), one LIS, and selected teachers participated in interview sessions regarding the reasons and their suggestions for all dropout students. The findings showed that Morong National High School (MNHS) has a varied dropout rate in each timeline (pre-pandemic, during pandemic and post-pandemic). The study found that pre-pandemic has the most drop out rate while the post-pandemic has the least student drop out rate. Based on the study, implementing particular guidelines into place may help decrease Morong National High School's dropout rate. Grade level advisers suggest offering financial aid to students and holding quarterly parent and student orientations. It is suggested that the school keep offering programs and solutions to deal with these issues, alongside encouraging teacher collaboration with parents to motivate students to attend courses.

**Keywords:** *dropouts, student, education, grade level*

### Introduction

The concern over student dropout rates is a global issue that has garnered attention from administrators and educators worldwide. According to a comparative study by AI, Latif. (2015) High dropout rate not only affects individual students but also institutions and societies, leading to slower economic growth, diminished human capital, and reduced support for education. These consequences highlight the importance of addressing dropout rates both internationally and locally.

According to UNESCO (2015), the Philippines has struggled with a significant dropout problem since 2005, with statistics showing high percentages of students failing to complete various grade levels. The issue extends into high school, impacting millions of Filipinos and affecting those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

According to Article XIV, Section 1, of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, which states, "The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all." Despite this legal framework, many Filipinos encounter barriers to enrolling in and completing formal basic education. Due to a combination of internal factors affecting individuals and external challenges related to accessibility of educational institutions.

One of the significant national problems that affect student dropout rates in the Philippines is the prevalence of poverty among Filipino families. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2017), almost ten percent of the estimated 39 million Filipinos are out of school due to financial difficulties, such as the inability to afford tuition fees, school supplies, foods and transportation. This economic challenge significantly contributes to the increasing dropout rates across all different levels of education across the country.

The reasons for student dropout rates in Philippine education are diverse and complex, involving both personal and institutional aspects. One of the leading causes of student dropout is a lack of academic and social integration into the educational system. Consequently, Morong National High School confronts the same challenge. The consequences of high dropout rates are far-reaching and demand attention at both local and international levels. Yadav and Mehta

(2018) identifies socioeconomic factors, parental support, family education levels, student absenteeism and other variables as contributors to dropout rates.

Understanding the complex web of causes why teenage students drop out is a multidimensional task driven by a variety of circumstances. As a result, the purpose of this study is to investigate the dropout rates of Morong National High School students and their reasons for dropping out to identify trends and propose strategies to reduce the number of dropouts.

### Research Questions

The study aims to analyze the dropout rates and determine the factors that impact each grade level in Morong National High School across different timelines, including pre, during and post-pandemic. Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of dropout students in Morong National High School in terms of:
  - 1.1. sex; and

- 1.2. grade level?
2. What is the dropout rate in Morong National High School with respect to the following timelines:
  - 2.1. pre-pandemic;
  - 2.2. during pandemic; and
  - 2.3. post-pandemic?
3. What are the documented reasons that contributed to student dropout based on each timeline?
4. What are the teachers' perceived reasons for the increase and decrease of dropout rates for each timeline?
5. What suggestions can be taken to address and lessen the issue of high dropout rates?

## Literature Review

Selda (2014) stated that the term "school dropout" has not yet been defined by researchers in a way that is universally agreed upon. According to some researchers, "school dropout" is defined as a learner's inability to finish the level of education in which they are currently enrolled for a variety of reasons (Dekkers & Claassen, 2014). Some researchers defined this issue as failing to attend class for two weeks in a row in one admission, while some defined this as failing to enroll in school despite having reached the mandatory school age (Selda, 2014).

According to Kadil (2017), in the Philippines, the dropout rate is certainly one measure used to assess an educational system. In fact, proponents of the new DepEd K-12 curriculum have claimed that by decongesting the old 10-year curriculum and spreading what needs to be taught over 12 years, there would be fewer students feeling behind or unable to keep up with the learning. Seeing that the dropout rates are increasing is, therefore, not good news for DepEd.

The school dropout rate and absence rate are indicators of a country's educational system's effectiveness. They are major predictors of current and future challenges in the country's education system. The first step in avoiding student dropouts is to understand the underlying causes. Based on Mouton et al.'s (2020) report, many factors influence student dropouts in Germany. Often the reason is a combination of several factors. Mouton et al. used latent class analysis to identify dropout students. The results show why students drop out due to relationships with study programs or universities, socioeconomic factors, student performance, academic self-concept, and intention to drop out. Ortiz-Lozano et al. (2018) observed the factors influencing student dropouts in Spain based on sociodemographic and academic variables. The reason for choosing this variable is not clearly explained, but the research results show that this variable has a significant effect.

In 2023, Parreño conducted a study focusing on school dropouts in the Philippines, with the goal of pinpointing the primary causes of dropout rates across all regions. The study identified expensive education and student employment as the main drivers of dropout rates in both 2008 and 2013. Building upon this research, Banaag, Sumodevilla, and Potane (2024) expanded the scope by considering factors such as family dynamics, school environment, lack of counseling, social influences, individual characteristics, and socioeconomic status, all of which contribute to student dropout behavior.

Fabre et al. (2015) explored gender disparities in dropout rates specifically in Iligan City, revealing that males exhibited a relatively higher dropout rate of 11.29% compared to females at 9.41%. The top identified reasons for males, as documented were family problems, lack of interest/distractions, and peer influence. While females cited family problems, transfer of residence, and illness.

According to reports, 3.8 million Filipinos, or 1 in 10 of those between the ages of 6 and 24, did not go to school in 2016. 53% of the 3.3 million people in this age group, who should already be in senior high school or college, come from the poorest families. They are between the ages of 16 and 24 (Golez, 2018). As of 2018, it was noted that 18% of junior high school learners did not proceed to senior high school, compared to roughly 8% of sixth-grade pupils who do not graduate and enter seventh grade (Cervantes, 2018).

According to the study by Butawan (2020), the top three common causes of dropouts are a family problem Rank No.1, followed by Rank No.2 lack of interest, and employment Rank No.3. The family is the key factor in the learner's success in their chosen career and they are also the one who turns the life of their child into a miserable situation. One factor also is the financial status of the child and family. Instead of studying, they choose to work in benefit to bring food home and to help their parents with their household chores.

Also, Orion et al. (2014) observed that the reason why students dropout of school was the lack of financial resources for the low economic status of a family or the cost of education, which may lead to lesser access to education. However, scholarships and financial aid can lessen the cost of higher education, but many students still find it difficult to make ends meet. Furthermore, students who work and study together could burn out and lose motivation, which might eventually result in dropout. In the Philippines, the study by Bravo (2023) concluded that financial constraints emerged as a common reason for students dropping out, followed by transferring to another institution and health issues. The data implies that despite the Free Tuition Act, students may still face additional financial challenges that lead to dropout.

## Methodology

### Research Design

The study used a qualitative research approach, with secondary data obtained from Morong National High School's Learning

Information System Coordinator. The primary goal of the study is to analyze the trends and reasons for student dropouts over the academic year 2017-2018 to 2023-2024. A qualitative approach using open-ended interviews explored teachers' experiences and perceptions of student dropout. This approach provided deeper insights and understanding of the problem (Tenny et al., 2022). This data was further enriched through the use of document analysis, comparative analysis, and content analysis. The study provided a thorough and in-depth description of viewpoints of teachers on student dropouts in each timeline (pre-pandemic, during pandemic, post-pandemic) by utilizing this qualitative design. The derived from this design will guide future planning by pointing out trends and factors that influence student dropout rates as they provide strategies to reduce dropout rates.

### **Respondents**

A total of twenty-six (26) teachers, four (4) from Grade Level Coordinators of each grade level, and twenty-two (22) selected teachers from Morong National High School participated. And other data collected from the Learning Information System Coordinator. The selection of participants was done through purposive sampling because of the specific participants who possessed certain characteristics or met the specific criteria. To collect data, an in-depth interview was conducted with the Grade Level Coordinator (GLC), selected teachers, and the Learning Information System Coordinator. To facilitate the interview process, the participants were given interview questions in person. All interviews were digitally recorded to facilitate the transcription process.

### **Procedure**

The data for this study has been gathered via interview and from the official records of the school. To strengthen the validity and credibility of the research findings, a multifaceted approach combining document analysis, comparative analysis, content analysis, and interviews was employed. In-depth interviews were conducted to specific participants, enabling the researchers to gain deeper understanding of the dropout phenomenon. The interview was answered by the advisers and coordinators from each grade level at Morong National High School and was divided into two parts: factors contributing to student dropout and suggestions to address and lessen dropout rates. This determined and showed the reasons, observations, experiences, and other factors that contributed to the students' dropping out during that timeline.

To ensure the smooth data collection and validity, the researchers obtained approval from the school's Learner Information System Coordinator to have access to the existing documents containing the rates and number of student dropouts in Morong National High School. The data collected was used to provide a deeper understanding on the student dropout rates. Additionally, the researchers conducted a Document Analysis by reviewing the documented reasons and number of dropouts within a certain timeline.

During the data collection phase, the researchers visited each grade level's faculty to interview each Adviser and their Grade Level Coordinator, to obtain an in-depth understanding of each teachers' perspectives and ideas, all of the interview data that was transcribed was collected and analyzed using Content Analysis which initiates with multiple readings of the interviews to guarantee a thorough comprehension while upholding a precise alignment with the research objective.

### **Data Analysis**

After collecting the participants' responses, the study moved into the analysis phase, using Content Analysis as the selected method. As outlined in the African Journal of Emergency Medicine (2017), the transcribed interviews were carefully reviewed and analyzed using Content Analysis methodology. This process begins with repeated readings of the interviews to ensure a deep understanding while maintaining a clear focus on the research aim, which is to explore teachers' perceived reasons for the increase and decrease in dropout rates and their suggestions to address and lessen the high dropout rates.

The transcribed interview data were completely gathered and interpreted to gain a deep understanding of teachers' insights and perceptions. Specific attention was given to comparing the participants' responses to assess similarities.

Additionally, the study involved Document Analysis of relevant documents from the school's Learner Information System (LIS). Document Analysis was used to determine the profile of students who dropped out based on their sex and grade level. This approach involved researchers carefully studying materials to grasp their significance and relevance to the research topic. Aimee Grant (2022), who further elaborated on the significance of document analysis, emphasized its flexibility and how it enabled researchers to uncover insights and patterns within the data.

After gathering the appropriate document, the data undergo scanning, close reading, and interpretation to enhance understanding of patterns, aiming to uncover trends and provide more profound insights into the data.

To identify trends regarding student dropout rates at Morong National High School, Comparative Analysis was used to examine the data on dropout rates from multiple periods, giving a comprehensive understanding of the long-term patterns in dropout rates.

### **Results and Discussion**

This section presents the interpretation of data obtained from the selected participants of the study and data from the Learner Information System (LIS). The presentation is organized based on the order of problems in the statement of the problem.



## Profile of Dropout

Table 1. Profile of Dropout on each timeline

Grade Level	Pre-pandemic						During pandemic						Post-pandemic					
	2017-2018		2018-2019		Total		2019-2020		2020-2021		Total		2021-2022		2022-2023		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
7	42	15	34	11	76	26	42	8	4	2	46	10	3	2	11	8	14	10
8	47	25	26	12	73	37	49	23	6	5	55	28	8	2	10	5	18	7
9	48	20	21	14	69	34	28	15	2	1	30	16	5	3	13	7	18	10
10	20	12	5	15	25	27	16	13	5	2	21	15	3	2	31	18	34	20
Total	157	72	86	52	243	124	135	59	17	10	152	69	19	9	65	38	84	47

The study analyzed the profile of dropouts provided across different grade levels from the school year 2017–2018 to the school year 2022–2023. It can be seen on table 1.1 that male students have consistently had higher dropout rates than female students in all grades except Grade 10 in the School Year 2018-2019 with 5 males and 15 females. It means that male students are more prone and dominant to leaving school.

Similar to the findings, the study by Fabre et. al (2015) found higher dropout rates among males compared to females across all periods. This suggests the need for targeted interventions to address the specific needs or challenges faced by male students that influence their higher dropout rates.

The findings suggest that there are significant patterns in which the dropout rates occur, particularly higher among male students. This demonstrates that in order to address the difficulties that students face and provide targeted interventions, more understanding and comprehension of the challenges they face should be implemented.

However, grade 8 shows the highest dropout, with 218 students leaving. This suggests that something significant happens at this stage that influences more students to leave compared to other grade levels. Dropout in Grades 7, 8, 9, and 10 significantly decreased as a result of the pandemic. The numbers following the pandemic indicate a rise but not a return to pre-pandemic levels. Pre-pandemic dropouts were lowest in grade 10, but after the pandemic, there was a notable increase in dropout rates, maybe as a result of consequences that were delayed or occurred in earlier years.

Similar to the study of UNESCO (2015) mentioned that the Philippines has grappled with a significant dropout issue since 2005, with statistics revealing that 26% of primary school students failed to complete the sixth grade and 23% did not finish the eighth grade, extending into high school.

The findings imply that in Grade 8, this is a critical period requiring focused attention. Implementing targeted academic and social support programs for students in these grades could help mitigate the factors that lead to higher dropout rates. This might include mentorship, counseling, academic tutoring, and engagement initiatives aimed at keeping students motivated and connected to their education.

## Dropout Rates

Table 2. Dropout Rates on each timeline

Grade Level	Pre-pandemic			During pandemic			Post-pandemic		
	2017-2018	2018-2019	Total	2019-2020	2020-2021	Total	2021-2022	2022-2023	Total
7	57	45	102	50	6	56	5	19	24
8	72	38	110	72	11	83	10	15	25
9	68	35	103	43	3	46	8	20	28
10	32	20	52	29	7	36	5	49	54
Total Number of Dropped Out	229	138	367	194	27	221	28	103	131
Total Number of Enrollees	3225	3094	6319	3309	3142	6451	3169	2945	6114
Percentage of Dropped Out	7.10%	4.46%	5.81%	5.86%	0.86%	3.43%	0.88%	3.50%	2.14%

The table 2 shows the dropped-out rate at Morong National High School in the pre-pandemic, during pandemic, and post-pandemic. The school’s drop-out rate declined from pre-pandemic with an average of 5.81% (f=367) compared to post-pandemic rate of 2.14% (f=131). On the other hand, the dropped-out rate during pandemic is 3.43% (f=221). During pandemic, the drop-out rate in School Year 2019-2020 (5.86%) is significantly higher than School Year 2020-2021 (0.86%) given the transitional year from pre-pandemic to during pandemic. Among the data presented, School Year 2020-2021 has the least dropped out rate of 0.86% (f=27). On the contrary, School Year 2017-2018 has the highest drop-out rate of 7.10% (f=229).

This result is supported by the study conducted by Xavier and Meneses (2020) that pointed out that the likelihood of a student getting a degree, their employability, and their sense of self-worth are all impacted by dropout costs. Hence, Behr et al. (2020) asserted that

the significance of lowering the dropout rate and raising students’ academic success, in other words, of recognizing the factors behind lagging academic performance among undergraduate students ahead of time, has become increasingly important from the perspectives of policymakers, higher education institutions, and students.

The data implies that the drop-out rate at Morong National High School had significant changes through the previous six (6) school years across different periods, particularly during pre-pandemic, pandemic, and post-pandemic periods. Furthermore, the data shows a significant drop in the drop-out rate from school year 2019-2020 to school year 2020-2021. Following that is an increase in the drop-out rate from school year 2021-2022 to school year 2022-2023 which suggests an increase of reasons that impacted students to drop out. The findings indicate that addressing the factors that contribute to drop-out rates is important in order to implement interventions to ensure students’ education and well-being

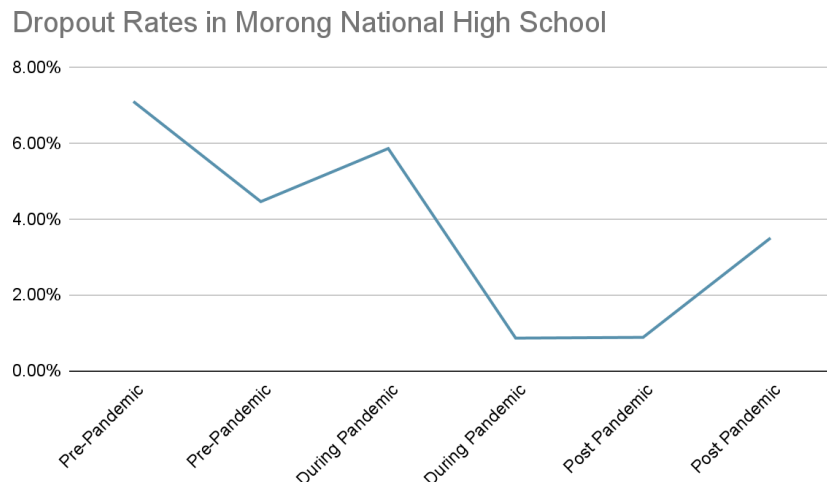


Figure 1. Graph of Dropout Rates on each timeline

The figure 1 presents the trends in the dropout rates within Morong National High School over different periods. The data indicates a decrease in dropout rates throughout the pre-pandemic period, with rates falling from 7.10% in the 2017–2018 school year to an estimated 4.46% in the 2018–2019 school year. Following that, dropout rates escalated in the school year 2019–2020 and subsequently decreased with a percentage of 0.86 in the 2020–2021 school year. Consequently, in the school year 2021–2022, the dropout rate increased by 0.02% to 0.88%. Lastly, the dropout rate increased to 3.5% in the 2022–2023 school year.

This result is supported by the study conducted by Cervantes (2018), it was noted that 18% of junior high school learners did not proceed to senior high school, compared to roughly 8% of sixth-grade pupils who do not graduate and enter seventh grade (Cervantes, 2018).

The findings imply that the drop-out rates at Morong National High School had significant changes through the previous six (6) school years across different periods. Moreover, the data shows a significant drop in the drop-out rate from school year 2019-2020 to school year 2020-2021. Thereafter the dropout rate escalated from school year 2021-2022 to school year 2022-2023. The data gathered underscores the importance of investigating which factors in students’ life contribute to drop-out rates in order to provide them with proper guidance and early interventions to prevent students from dropping out.

**Documented Reasons**

Table 3.1. Grade 7 Documented Reasons

Reasons	Grade 7						Total
	Pre-pandemic		During pandemic		Post-pandemic		
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	
Family problems/feuds	31	20	24	1	2	4	82
Lack of Interest/Distractions	21	20	25	4	2	13	85
Early Marriage/Pregnancy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Distance Between Home and School	5	5	1	1	1	2	15
Total	57	45	50	6	5	19	182

The data presented in table 3.1 describes the documented reason for the dropout of Grade 7 students at Morong National High School. Among the listed reasons, the primary cause appears to be a lack of interest and distractions, with a frequency of 85. On the other hand, early marriage and pregnancy are reported as nonexistent factors in this grade level. Family issues or conflicts follow as the second most common reason, with 82, while the distance between home and school ranks third, with a frequency of 15.

According to Amir-ud-Din R. (2021), In 2017, approximately 23% of the students in Pakistan left school primarily due to lack of



interest in their studies. The lack of clarity surrounding this disinterest makes it challenging for stakeholders to effectively address the issue of school dropout rates. This research aims to uncover the factors contributing to students' lack of interest in schooling, thereby providing insight into potential solutions for reducing dropout rates.

The data in Table 3.1 about the documented reasons why Grade 7 students at Morong National High School dropout supports the findings made by Amir-ud-Din R. (2021). With a frequency of 85, it suggests that distractions and a lack of interest were in reality the main causes of dropouts, which is consistent with the overall trend seen in Pakistan in 2017. This consistency emphasizes how important it is to deal with students' disinterest in order to successfully reduce dropout rates.

The school's data indicates that family issues and conflicts rank as the second most frequent reason, which is consistent with the complexity of the factors involved.

Table 3.2. Grade 8 Documented Reasons

Reasons	Grade 8						Total
	Pre-pandemic		During pandemic		Post-pandemic		
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	
Family problems/feuds	27	19	32	4	1	3	86
Lack of Interest/Distractions	41	18	38	3	6	11	119
Early Marriage/Pregnancy	1	0	1	1	3	1	4
Distance Between Home and School	1	1	1	3	1	0	9
Total	72	38	72	11	10	15	218

The table 3.2 illustrates the documented reasons for the dropout behind Morong National High School grade 8 students. The main reason, with a frequency of 119, is lack of interest and distractions. Early marriage and pregnancy are the least common, with only 4. Family problems come next, with a frequency of 86, and distance between home and school with a frequency of 9.

Similar findings with Amir-ud-Din et. al (2021) In 2017, around 23% of students who left school in Pakistan did so because they were not interested in their studies. The confusion around this lack of interest frequently confuses stakeholders regarding how to effectively control school dropout rates.

The findings suggest that this widespread issue of lack of interest creates confusion among stakeholders, such as educators and policymakers, who struggle to find effective strategies to reduce dropout rates. The causes of disinterest are complex, possibly involving factors like curriculum, teaching methods, socioeconomic conditions, and psychological issues.

Table 3.3. Grade 9 Documented Reasons

Reasons	Grade 9						Total
	Pre-pandemic		During pandemic		Post-pandemic		
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	
Family problems/feuds	36	18	22	1	1	5	83
Lack of Interest/Distractions	29	15	19	1	5	12	81
Early Marriage/Pregnancy	2	1	1	0	1	1	6
Distance Between Home and School	1	1	1	1	1	2	7
Total	68	35	43	3	8	20	177

The data presented in table 3.3 describes the documented reason for the dropout of Grade 9 students at Morong National High School. Family problems as the leading cause of Grade 9 student dropouts, total of 83. Following closely behind is lack of interest, with 81.

On the other hand, early marriage and pregnancy are the least common reasons with 6 in this grade level while the distance between home and school ranks third, with a frequency of 7. In this grade, family issues are more pressing than lack of interest, unlike in other years. This indicates a change in circumstances or challenges specific to this

According to the study by Butawan (2020), the top three common causes of dropouts are a family problem Rank No.1, followed by Rank No.2 lack of interest, and employment Rank No.3.

All of these factors have been recognized as the primary causes of student dropout rates in both situations. The data presented from Morong National High School's Grade 9 documented reasons and Butawan's study emphasize how common family-related problems and lack of interest are when students drop out of school. This similarity shows how crucial these components are to understanding and lowering dropout rates in schools.

The collected data suggests that students encounter a range of challenges leading to their decision to leave school. Particular problems, such as lack of interest, family problems, and early marriage/pregnancy, are prevalent within the school. Understanding every student's particular situation and difficulties is essential to addressing dropout rates in a successful way. In order to prevent more dropouts, it is essential that sufficient guidance and support are provided.



Table 3.4. Grade 10 Documented Reasons

Reasons	Grade 10						Total
	Pre-pandemic		During pandemic		Post-pandemic		
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	
Family problems/feuds	13	8	10	2	2	8	43
Lack of Interest/Distractions	16	9	16	4	1	34	80
Early Marriage/Pregnancy	2	2	2	0	1	2	9
Distance Between Home and School	1	1	1	1	1	5	10
Total	32	20	29	7	5	49	142

The data from Table 3.4 shows the documented reasons for the dropout of Grade 10 students at Morong National High School. Lack of interest and distraction is the primary reason for grade 10, with a frequency of 80, followed by family problems and feuds with 43, and the distance between home and school ranks third with a frequency of 10, and the least reason is early marriage and pregnancy with 9.

This supports research by Katulkar (2018), who noted similar trends among dropout students across the country, especially in communities that scavenge. Katulkar identified "man nahi lagana" ( lack of interest) as the main cause of dropout, which is in line with Table 3.4's data. The comparison highlights how crucial it is to address problems with student interest and engagement in order to successfully reduce dropout rates.

The data suggests the need for educational institutions to prioritize strategies that enhance student engagement and motivation, such as innovative teaching methods and support services. Policymakers should also focus on systemic changes to address underlying issues contributing to students' disengagement.

Table 3.5. Summary of Documented Reasons

Reasons	Summary								
	Pre-pandemic			During pandemic			Post-pandemic		
	2017-2018	2018-2019	Total	2019-2020	2020-2021	Total	2021-2022	2022-2023	Total
Family problems/feuds	107	65	172	88	8	96	6	20	26
Lack of Interest/Distractions	109	62	171	98	12	110	14	70	84
Early Marriage/Pregnancy	5	3	8	4	1	5	2	3	5
Distance Between Home and School	8	8	16	4	6	10	6	10	16
Total	229	138	367	194	27	221	28	103	131

Table 3.5 presents the reasons for Morong National High School students dropping out of school. Among the four reasons, the most common is lack of interest and distractions (f=365) while the least is early marriage and pregnancy (f=18). On the other hand, family problems/feuds is the second common reason with a frequency of 294 and distance between home and school is the third reason for dropping out of school with a frequency of 42.

Karacabey and Boyacı (2021) stated that secondary students had to drop out of school due to financial problems, failure, absenteeism, enrolling to open education, family problems, disliking the school, having problems with teachers and administrators, studying for university entrance exam, health problems, marriage, the idea that attending the school is unnecessary, migration, having to take care of parents in need, and disciplinary penalties, suggesting that students have varying reasons to drop out. Butawan (2020), the top three common causes of dropouts are a family problem Rank No.1, followed by Rank No.2 lack of interest, and employment Rank No.3.

The data gathered implies that there is a variety of struggles that students face which causes them to drop out of school. Particular problems, such as lack of interest, family problems, and early marriage/pregnancy, are prevalent within the school. A comprehensive understanding of students' situations and problems should be applied in order to implement proper guidance and support, and to avoid further dropouts.

**Teachers’ perceived reasons for the increase and decrease of dropout rates**

The respondents shared their insights on the factors that they believed contributed to the increase and decrease of the number of dropouts in Morong National High School in each timeline. These were categorized into the primary reasons for the increase of dropout and factors that contributed to the improvement of dropout rates.

**Teachers’ perceived reasons for the increase in dropout rates**

**Themes:**

**Family-Related Challenges Motivational Issue**

The Family-Related Challenges was a major theme discussed by the teachers in terms of the primary reason for the increase of dropout

rates in Morong National High School. According to one of the respondents “Primary reasons in the increasing rates of dropout are financial problems and negligence of parents especially when it comes to helping their children in studying and complying to requirements needed.” This indicates that family problems such as financial issues, lack of communication between parents and children, and their way of parenting affects student's performance which somehow leads to dropout. On the other hand, a respondent added Child Labor as another primary reason for the increase of dropout commonly in higher grade levels. This aligns with Subra et. al's (2019) findings, highlighting low socioeconomic status and lack of parental commitment to children's education caused students to drop out of school.

Another visible theme was the Motivational Issue, which emphasizes students' lack of interest in studying that contributes to an increase of dropout rates. One of the respondents states “The primary reason for the increase in dropout is lack of interest in schooling caused by gadget addiction.” while others associate these motivational issues with family-related challenges. According to a respondent “It is because of lack of interest of the learners and sometimes without the proper guidance of the parents.”

The findings support the study of Butawan (2020), emphasizing that family challenges, followed by lack of interest, are the factors leading to a high dropout rate. This aligns with the documented reasons of dropout rates in Morong National High School, where family problems and lack of interest are the principal reasons contributing to the increase of dropout rates. It showed the significant influence of families over a students academic journey and emphasized the importance of a supportive family environment to promote educational attainment.

### **Teachers' perceived reasons for the improvement in dropout rates**

#### **Themes: Collaboration and Support**

##### **Early Interventions**

In the analysis interview of the respondents, the theme of collaboration and support emerged. One respondent mentioned “Proper and harmonious relationship between teachers and parents” as a factor contributing to the improvement of dropout rates. Similarly, another respondent stated “It is due to the coordination of teachers and parents.” This indicates that collaboration and support between teachers and parents play an important role in improving dropout rates. Furthermore, this highlights the importance of parents' involvement. Afia et al. (2019) state that parents play a crucial part in encouraging students to persist in school and are also important in preventing high school dropout. The proper coordination of parents and teachers in addressing both academic and non-academic needs of students will greatly contribute to students' academic success.

Early Intervention also emerged as another theme that contributed to the decrease of dropout rates in Morong National High School. As quoted on a respondent's response “If there has been a decrease in dropout rates, it would be because of the efforts given by the teachers in response with project AKAP” The project Anak, Kamusta Ang Pag-aaral (AKAP) is implemented by the School Division Office of Rizal that aims to monitor pupils at risk and having difficulty during the pandemic. Another teacher said “The 4p's program has been a big help. It has provided financial support to those students who are struggling financially.”

The results show the effective collaboration and support, such as the strong bonds between teachers and parents, implementing early intervention programs such as Project AKAP and 4P's program, have significantly contributed to reducing dropout rates in Morong National High School. This emphasized the importance of coordinated actions among stakeholders in meeting students' needs and promoting a supportive educational environment.

The interviews provided valuable insights into the multifaceted reasons behind student dropout at Morong National High School. A comprehensive analysis of the data across the four research questions revealed several key findings. For instance, during the pandemic, male students in lower grade levels exhibited higher dropout rates, which were closely linked to documented reasons such as financial difficulties and lack of interest. However, it's important to note that prior to the pandemic, in the school year 2018-2019, female students in Grade 10 experienced higher dropout rates than male students. This suggests that gender-specific factors may also influence dropout rates.

Additionally, teachers consistently cited factors such as family problems, lack of interest, financial support, health conditions, early pregnancy, and academic challenges as major contributors to student dropout. These perceptions aligned closely with the reasons reported by the school's Learner Information System Coordinator, further emphasizing the impact of these factors. This analysis revealed the factors that contributed to student's dropouts at Morong National High School, emphasizing the urgent need for solutions to overcome these challenges.

### **Strategies to Address and Reduce High Dropout Rates in Education**

The interview with the teachers provided valuable insights to address and reduce the high dropout rates in education. Teachers highlighted specific programs that may help lessen issues regarding dropout rates, including Project AKAP, Project RED, and Project ESCALATE. They also emphasized the importance of parental involvement, achieved through seminars to highlight the importance of education.

In addition to these program-based approaches, they also suggest to monitor students' attendance, home visitation to those students

with high numbers of absences, give options for students who can't go to school because of health and financial stability to go Modular Distance learning.

## Conclusions

The findings revealed that the dropout rate in Morong National High School (MNHS) varied across different periods. The study found that the overall dropout rate before the pandemic was 11.56%. During the pandemic, the dropout rate decreased to 6.72%, and post-pandemic, it further decreased to 4.38%. These figures represent the dropout rates specifically for Morong National High School.

According to the gathered data from interviews and documents of the researchers, family related problems and students personal problems affect the rate of students dropout on each timeline.

The study also uncovered emerging themes regarding the perceptions of teachers on the factors contributing to dropout rates. It was found that providing adequate support to students can help decrease the dropout rate.

The study suggests that implementing certain measures can contribute to a decrease in the dropout rate at Morong National High School. The school implemented different programs that focus on students who are at risk of dropping out. Teachers and parents should strictly monitor students and encourage them to attend school. The school also advised teachers to have regular home visitation to those students with high numbers of absence, especially, during the pandemic era.

Based on the findings, it is advised that the school continue to provide programs and solutions to address the issues. Additionally, the school encourages teachers to collaborate with the parents in order to encourage their children to attend classes. In response to these challenges, the school has implemented Project BUDDY (Bata'y Unawain Dignidad (iangat), Determinasyon (buuin) at Yakapin). This program focuses on the mental health of learners and the willingness to accomplish school tasks while dealing with difficulties. Furthermore, the school has proposed Project AKAP (Anak, Kumusta, Ang Pag-aaral). This program utilizes home visits to decrease dropout rates and improve learning outcomes. Finally, Project ESCALATE and Project RED (Reinforce Elimination of Dropout) is another initiative aimed at reducing dropout rates and improving learning outcomes.

Lastly, it is recommended to conduct follow-up check-ins with both parents and students. School counselors would be well-suited to lead these discussions. These check-ins can assess the effectiveness of the implemented programs, identify any lingering challenges faced by students, and provide continued support to both students and their families.

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### **Affiliations and Corresponding Information**

**Julian James R. Torbeles**

Morong National High School – Philippines

**Janel Y. Flores**

Morong National High School – Philippines

**Kate Lynn Love G. Benitez**

Morong National High School – Philippines

**Leigh Angelo R. Marcelino**

Morong National High School – Philippines

**Jing S. Catangay**

Morong National High School – Philippines

**Jeanne Paul S. Raymundo**

Morong National High School – Philippines