



Article

School Dropout: Intentions, Motivations and Self-Efficacy of a Sample of South Africa Youth

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Abstract: There is strong evidence that dropping out of school has short-term and long-term effects for the individual, the family, the community, and other strata in society. In South Africa, learners dropping out of school has increased. The link between intention, motivation, and self-efficacy to drop out of school is an understudied area of research. The study aimed to determine the relationship between learners' intention, motivation, and self-efficacy to drop out of low and high socio-economic schools. A quantitative methodological approach with a cross-sectional design was utilised. Participant's selection included high school learners in Grades 9 and 11, at both high and low socio-economic public schools in the Western Cape, in South Africa. Most participants were female (51.2%), with a mean age of 16 years, attending schools in resource-constrained communities (50.1). Data was analysed using an independent *t*-test to assess a significant difference between learners in low and high socio-economic communities. Findings showed that many learners in high socio-economic schools hardly considered dropping out of school, whereas the opposite was true for learners in resource-constrained schools. Family challenges were often cited as a major reason for dropping out of school. The differences between the two groups of learners were significant.

Keywords: learners; schools; school dropout; intention; motivation; self-efficacy; socio-economic conditions; teachers; parents



Citation: Roman, N.V.; Davidse, P.E.; Human-Hendricks, A.; Butler-Kruger, L.; Sonn, I.K. School Dropout: Intentions, Motivations and Self-Efficacy of a Sample of South Africa Youth. *Youth* **2022**, *2*, 126–137. <https://doi.org/10.3390/youth2020010>

Academic Editor: Giulio D'Urso

Received: 9 March 2022

Accepted: 30 March 2022

Published: 11 April 2022

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1. Introduction

Education has long been seen as the cornerstone of nation building and economic progress for all countries [1]. More particularly, [2] emphasises that education is central to the democracy of any country and, at the very least, the acquisition of a basic education is crucial for the advancement of citizen's wellbeing [2,3]. Primary and secondary education creates opportunities for learners to acquire not only content knowledge of subjects such as mathematics, geography, and history, but simultaneously allows for the achievement of skill development. These skills include; reading, writing, counting, and knowledge-seeking behaviours (which often develops into critical thinking and research skills), as well as the development of confidence, self-efficacy and competence to ask questions to the extent that they seek solutions, and in the process, become change agents transforming communities and society [4]. The acquisition of these skills is developmental, taking place across the life course of attending school. Furthermore, these skills become intrinsically inherent so that the adult can use their acquired education, knowledge and skills in later stages of life [5]. It is therefore paramount that children complete their basic education and refrain from dropping out of school.

There is sufficient evidence to show that dropping out of school has significant and often long-lasting ramifications across various strata in society, especially impacting the

future development of a country [6]. In terms of the individual, these consequences may include: low self-esteem and decreased motivation; difficulty finding and maintaining employment; earn a lower income; become an inactive labour force participant; higher criminal activity and incarceration rates; live a life of poverty; vulnerable to abusive relationships, single parenting, and teen pregnancy/parents; more likely to draw on public funds for health care and welfare; less liable to contribute to tax revenues over their lifetime; and a financial burden to society [7–11]. Furthermore, when there are challenges with education, the education system, and increasing dropout rates, a domino-effect will be seen with the high dropout rate in schools on the economy, potentially stunting economic and social growth [7,12,13]. While dropping out of school is a global phenomenon, it is especially prevalent in low socio-economic, poverty-stricken developing countries [14,15]. Ref. [16] (p. 1) suggest that dropping out of school is potentially a public health concern because ‘education is one of the strongest predictors of health’. In that, those with lower levels of education often have compromised health, access to poor health care systems, and succumb to premature death, as compared to those who have completed school or attained higher levels of education. Increased dropout rates create larger inequalities in society, fractured societies, reduced social cohesion, engagement in risk activities, unstable families, and also perpetuates the cycle of poverty [8–11,13,17]. Thus, education plays a crucial role in human development, the wellbeing of the individual, and the wellbeing of a country [4,14].

In terms of the capabilities approach, education is a key driver of human flourishing and wellbeing [3,18]. Learners who drop out from school may not have the freedom to participate in opportunities to improve their situations and the conditions in which they live because they have limited choices for wellbeing that negatively impact on their ability to flourish. They are unable to be active members of society and productive members of the economy. The aim of enhancing the capabilities of people is to ensure that they have the freedom to be and do anything, choosing a life of dignity. Focusing on developing the capabilities of learners will ensure that they acquire the ability to reason in engaging with others, creating subsequent respect, understanding, and empathy but above all, as [3] states, within education the learner has the ‘freedom of the mind to engage critically with tradition . . . to imagine citizenship in both national and world terms . . . to reach out in imagination, allowing another person’s experience into oneself’. In order to achieve and participate in this functioning, it would mean developing the learner’s capabilities to do so. In contrast then, when learners drop out, they become what may be described as ‘capability-deprived’.

The learners’ intentions not to complete their high school career is not just an educational problem but is considered a major social problem as well [4,8–11]. In that, it has enormous social, psychological, economic consequences as well as intensifying income inequality affecting the economic growth and development of the country [11,19]. Additionally, there is compelling evidence in terms of research that learner dropouts may undergo a loss of self-esteem, turn to drugs, and become a financial burden to society’ [11,17,20].

Learners who drop out of school seem to have no desire to carry out the academic tasks required of them and lack the tenacity to complete their schooling [21–23]. The absence of academic motivation can lead to feelings of frustration, discontentment, and unproductivity [22–27]. According to [24 p. 11], ‘motivation is a process or a force that maintains, directs and sustains behaviour towards a goal’. Linked to motivation, self-efficacy can have a powerful effect on learners’ school and academic performance [28].

Self-efficacy is a person’s belief that he or she is capable of successfully initiating and completing a particular task [29–31]. Similarly, [32,33] self-efficacy is an individual’s belief in what they can do and not what they will do. Self-efficacy is therefore the fuel behind personal achievement, personal well being, motivation, and perseverance [29,31,33]. It could also be the supportive basis for motivation and therefore the intention to remain or leave school. According to [30], when perceived self-efficacy is high, more ambitious challenges are pursued and a greater goal commitment is applied, but when self-efficacy is low or absent, then failure is viewed as a likely outcome [33]. Learners who are most

detached from school have little belief in their academic ability [31,34,35] and they attribute their academic difficulties to their low perceived competence [34,36,37].

The Present Study

A recent report by Statistics South Africa indicated that South Africa is one of the most disparate countries in the world [38]. Learner retention and dropout rates in the country's high schools represent a significant problem that affects thousands of children each year. Additional statistics confirm that school retention has consistently been problematic, with a 50% drop in the retention rate over the last decade in South African schools [39,40]. Clearly, the impact of dropping out of school has both short- and long-term implications for the person, the family, and society in general, based on the previous arguments presented. The possible reasons for the gradual dropout rate in South African schools can only be speculated as there is not enough research to pinpoint exactly why learners fail to complete their senior year at school. Dropping out of school is an understudied phenomenon that needs to be further developed, especially in a developing country such as South Africa with resource constraints and high levels of inequality and poverty. There is a very real possibility that South Africa will not meet the requirements of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 which aims "to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". This study therefore aimed to assess and compare intention to drop out of school, motivation, and the self-efficacy of learners in high and low socio-economic schools.

2. Materials and Methods

A cross-sectional comparative study was conducted to assess learners' intention to drop out of school between low and high socio-economic schools. The population of participants for the study were learners in Grades 9 and 11, and their teachers. The reason for focusing on these grades is because learners in this bracket have significant decisions to make regarding subject choice in order to progress to Grade 10 and whether or not to exit at the end of Grade 9. There are eight education districts in the Western Cape. For this study, Metro North (43 schools) and Metro East (42 schools) were identified as an accessible sample. Five schools were randomly selected from each district (10 schools). The schools were identified by either a high socio-economic status or low socio-economic status (refer to Table 1). Quintile 1 schools from low socio-economic schools were identified. Quintile 1, also known as 'no fee' schools, receive extra state support where contributions in the form of school fees are not possible [41]. The class lists were used as a sampling frame to invite learners to participate in the study once their parents had provided permission. The final sample consisted of 625 Grade 9 and Grade 11 learners and 111 teachers (352 learners in Metro East and 273 learners in Metro North).

Table 1. List of schools in Metro-North and East.

School	SES	Males	Females	Total
Metro North	1 & 2	Grade 11: 46	Grade 11: 54	Grade 11: 100
		Grade 9: 150	Grade 9: 202	Grade 9: 352
Metro East	1 & 2	Grade 11: 77	Grade 11: 98	Grade 11: 167
		Grade 9: 146	Grade 9: 127	Grade 9: 273

TOTAL SAMPLE OF LEARNERS = 625.

Self-reported questionnaires were used to collect the required data from the participants. A battery of assessments was collated into a questionnaire. The questionnaires for the learners consisted of: (1) Demographic information (such as age, gender, race, home language, school, and grade); (2) motivation; (3) self-efficacy; and (4) intention to persist in school. All measures were in English in order to maintain validity.

2.1. Measures

2.1.1. Demographic Information

Learners were asked to indicate their gender, age, school, name, race, home language, living arrangements, and marital and employment status of parents.

2.1.2. Motivation

Motivation for Learners and the Perceived Locus of Causality Scale [42] were used to measure the motivation of learners. The questionnaire begins with: 'The reason I go to school. . .', and provides a list of 20 different reasons to go to school, each with its own 1–4 response scale. Each motivational regulation contains four items. Subscales in the questionnaire are: intrinsic motivation (e.g., 'Because I enjoy learning new things'); identified regulation (e.g., 'Because I think that a high school education will better prepare for the career I have chosen'); introjected regulation (e.g., 'To show myself that I am an intelligent person'); external regulation (e.g., 'Because I need at least a high school certificate in order to find a high paying job later on'); and amotivation (e.g., 'I can't see why I go to school and frankly I can't care less'). In the current study, the Cronbach Alpha was 0.648 for motivation.

2.1.3. Self-Efficacy of Learners

In measuring self-efficacy beliefs, individuals were presented with items portraying different levels of task demands, and they rated the strength of their belief in their ability to execute the requisite activities [43]. Participants recorded the strength of their efficacy beliefs on a 4-point scale, ranging from 1 ('Not at all true') to 4 ('Very true'). In the current study, the Cronbach Alpha was 0.854 for self-efficacy.

2.1.4. Learners' Intentions to Persist in School

Learners' intentions to persist in school measured with intentions to persist in, versus drop out of, high school were assessed using the three-item scale from [44]. The items were: 'I sometimes consider dropping out of school'; 'I intend to drop out of school'; and 'I sometimes feel unsure about continuing my studies year after year'. Responses were on a 4-point Likert-type scale (1 = 'not at all true' to 4 = 'very true'). This scale might predict the actual dropout behaviour one year later [45] and is sensitive to participants' motivational states [44]. In the current study, the Cronbach Alpha for intention to drop out of school was 0.843.

2.2. Data Analysis

The raw data collected from the research was entered into the Statistical Program for Social Science V25 (SPSS). Subsequently, the data was then coded, cleaned, and checked for errors. The data was analysed by using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Furthermore, the data was also analysed by using frequencies and means to describe the data. An independent *t*-test was conducted to test for significant differences between the two groups for socio-economic status.

3. Results

The majority of learner participants were female [322 (51.2%)], Coloured [215 (34.4%)], Afrikaans speaking [349 (55.8%)] with a Mean_{Age} of 16.01 (SD = 1.41) years, attending schools in low [313 (50.1%)] socio-economic communities (see Table 2).

Table 2. Demographics of learners.

Variables		Learners	
		<i>n</i> = 625	%
Gender	Male	303	48.5
	Female	322	51.5
Race	White	201	32.2
	Black African	207	33.1
	Coloured	215	34.4
Language	English	81	13.0
	Afrikaans	349	55.8
	isiXhosa	180	28.8
Socio-Economic Status	Low	313	50.1
	High	312	49.9
Mean _{Age}		Learners	SD
		16.01	1.41

3.1. Learners' Intention to Drop Out of School (High Socio-Economic Groups in Parentheses)

The reasons learners provided for considering dropping out of school are given in Table 3. The majority of participants reported that 'I hardly consider dropping out' ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.15$). For learners attending schools in low socio-economic environments, the majority reported 'When things are not well at home' ($M = 2.42$, $SD = 1.78$). In high socio-economic environments, the majority reported 'I hardly consider dropping out of school' ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 1.23$). This item was also significantly different for learners in low socio-economic environments ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 1.231$); $t(623) = -5.302$, $p = 0.000$.

Table 3. Reasons contributing towards learners intending to drop out of school.

Variables	<i>n</i>	M	SD	<i>n</i>	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
When I feel stressed	625	1.96	0.97	313 (312)	2.19	0.947	5.962	0.620
When I am not supported by my teachers	622	1.93	0.92	311 (311)	2.22 (1.63)	0.905 (0.832)	8.490	0.171
When things are not well at home	625	2.10	1.00	313 (312)	2.42 (1.78)	0.941 (1.008)	4.483	0.179
When my results are poor	625	2.05	0.98	313 (312)	2.22 (1.88)	0.916 (1.008)	4.483	0.179
I hardly consider dropping out	623	2.56	1.15	313 (310)	2.32 (2.80)	1.019 (1.231)	-5.305	0.000

Responses were on a Likert scale of 1 = Not at all true, 2 = Untrue, 3 = True, 4 = Very True.

The results presented in Table 4 show that within the dimension of 'intention to drop out of school', the majority of the participants reported that they 'Would love to finish grade 12 but cannot handle the pressure' ($M = 2.08$, $SD = 1.07$). This was similar for learners in both low and high socio-economic school and home environments. This item was not, however, significantly different between the two groups. Significant differences were found between learners attending schools in low and those attending schools in high socio-economic environments. Significant differences were found in terms of the following: learners attending schools in the low socio-economic environments were more specific in terms of their timelines when they intended dropping out of school: 'At the end of the term' ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 0.778$); $t(623) = -8.590$, $p = 0.000$; 'At the end of the year' ($M = 1.81$, $SD = 0.862$); $t(621) = -9.417$, $p = 0.000$; 'As soon as I have the chance' ($M = 1.77$, $SD = 0.846$); $t(623) = -8.369$, $p = 0.000$; 'Immediately' ($M = 1.79$, $SD = 0.890$); $t(620) = -9.501$, $p = 0.000$; 'Not sure if I would persist to grade 12' ($M = 1.97$, $SD = 0.945$); $t(622) = -9.282$, $p = 0.000$.

Table 4. Timeframe considerations learners communicated dropping out of school.

Variables	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
At the end of the term	625	1.48	0.71	313 (312)	1.71 (1.24)	0.778 (0.548)	8.590	0.000
At the end of the year	623	1.54	0.79	312 (311)	1.81 (1.26)	0.862 (0.589)	9.417	0.000
As soon as I have the chance	625	1.52	0.79	313 (312)	1.77 (1.27)	0.846 (0.635)	8.369	0.000
Immediately	622	1.51	0.79	311 (312)	1.79 (1.23)	0.890 (0.547)	9.501	0.000
Not sure if I would persist to grade 12	624	1.66	0.09	313 (311)	21.97 (1.35)	0.945 (0.720)	9.282	0.000
Would love to finish Grade 12 but cannot handle the pressure	624	2.08	1.07	312 (312)	2.43 (1.73)	1.012 (1.013)	8.618	0.343

Responses were on a Likert scale of 1 = Not at all true, 2 = Untrue, 3 = True, 4 = Very True.

The results indicated in Table 5 suggest that a large number of learners consider dropping out of school ($M = 2.12$, $SD = 0.66$) rather than intend dropping out of school ($M = 1.63$, $SD = 0.67$). Significant differences were found between learners in low and high socioeconomic environments. Learners attending schools in low socio-economic environments scored higher on intention to drop out of school ($M = 1.91$, $SD = 0.68$); $t(616) = -11.71$, $p = 0.000$ and the overall intention to drop out of school ($M = 2.07$, $SD = 0.56$); $t(611) = -10.55$, $p = 0.039$.

Table 5. Drop out intention.

Variables	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Consider dropping out of school	620	2.12	0.66	311 (309)	2.27 (1.96)	0.65 (0.63)	6.02	0.098
Intending to drop out of school	618	1.63	0.67	309 (309)	1.91 (1.34)	0.68 (0.52)	11.71	0.000
Overall intention to drop out of school	613	1.85	0.58	307 (306)	2.07 (1.62)	0.56 (0.50)	10.55	0.039

3.2. Learners' Motivation and Self-Efficacy (High Socio-Economic Groups in Parentheses)

Overall, the results depicted in Table 6 suggest that most participants scored the highest on academic achievement within self-efficacy ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 0.56$). The lowest score was regular school attendance for motivation ($M = 1.62$, $SD = 0.61$). Significant differences between learners attending schools in high and low socio-economic environments were found for most of the variables except for overall self-efficacy and social resources. Learners in low socio-economic schools scored higher on motivation than learners in high socio-economic schools $t(611) = 6.83$, $p = 0.000$. In terms of self-efficacy, learners in low socio-economic schools scored lower on overall self-efficacy ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 0.38$), leisure ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 0.50$) and academic achievement ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 0.53$) compared to learners in high socio-economic schools. Learners in low socio-economic schools scored higher than learners in high socio-economic schools on parental and community support ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 0.65$) and self-regulated learning ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.51$).

Table 6. M and SD scores of Learner Motivation and Self-efficacy in Low and High SES.

Variables: Subscales	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Regular school attendance	623	1.62	0.61	311 (312)	1.72 (1.51)	0.62 (0.57)	4.48	0.000
Activities	620	2.89	0.55	311 (309)	2.99 (2.78)	0.50 (0.57)	4.84	0.000
Overall motivation	618	2.46	0.40	309 (309)	2.57 (2.35)	0.36 (0.41)	6.83	0.000
Social resources	624	2.81	0.57	312 (312)	2.86 (2.79)	0.69 (0.61)	1.36	0.174
Academic achievement	621	3.11	0.56	310 (311)	2.89 (3.13)	0.53 (0.56)	−5.57	0.000
Self-regulated learning	618	2.85	0.58	308 (310)	3.07 (2.64)	0.51 (0.57)	9.96	0.000
Leisure	616	2.80	0.51	309 (307)	2.68 (2.91)	0.50 (0.49)	−5.82	0.000
Parental and community support	620	2.79	0.69	310 (310)	2.87 (2.49)	0.65 (0.68)	7.08	0.000
Overall self-efficacy	602	2.83	0.39	299 (303)	2.82 (2.85)	0.38 (0.40)	−0.853	0.394

4. Discussion

The aim of the study was to assess and compare intention to drop out, motivation, and self-efficacy of learners (Grades 9 and 11) in low and high socio-economic schools. Overall, the findings showed significant differences between these two groups of learners, specifically regarding intention to drop out, motivation, parent and community support, leisure, self-regulated learning, and academic achievement, with learners in low socio-economic schools scoring lower than learners in higher socio-economic schools on most of the variables.

In the current study, more learners in low socio-economic schools considered and intended to drop out of school. These learners come from families who are more than likely to live in low socio-economic communities [46]. ‘Dropping out’ means leaving school or a group for various reasons, necessities, or disillusionment with the system from which the individual in question leaves [8,9,11]. The term ‘dropout’ is defined as any learner who has left the school system before successfully completing the final or highest grade in school [47]. Ref. [48] call this the ‘silent epidemic’.

Within the South African context, 26 years into democracy new and innovative measures have been employed to improve the curriculum as well as access to basic education, as the eminent high school dropout rate of approximately 50% cannot be ignored anymore [49]. As one of the stronger economies in Africa, South Africa has reached the stage where the possibility of learners dropping out of school is greater than learners who started school 12 years earlier. Statistics show that little more than 50% of learners in South Africa who started Grade 1 in 2002 managed to complete their grade twelve year in 2014. Educationists argue that the ‘dangerous’ dropout figures mean these learners are exacerbating the unemployment levels in the country, perpetuating poverty, and increasing the crime rate [50]. Furthermore, dropouts are much more likely than their peers who have completed their education to be unemployed, living in poverty, receiving public assistance, in prison, unhealthy, divorced, and single parents with children who have dropped out of high school themselves [48,51,52].

These results indicate that dropping out of school is not just an impulsive, spur of the moment decision by learners, but a process that progresses over a period of time, culminating in them dropping out. The duration of the dropout process may vary for each learner due to their unique challenges. While most learners do consider at some stage to drop out, the least number of learners actually act on the intention of terminating their high school career [46].

The results of this research study show that the motivation of learners in low socio-economic schools is higher than the motivation levels of learners in high socio-economic schools. This may be that learners attending low socio-economic schools may be more motivated to achieve goals other than academic goals. Globally, learners tend to be more extrinsically motivated. This means that they do not engage in activities for personal satisfaction or because they enjoy the activity itself (which refers to intrinsic motivation), but instead pursue an activity for external affirmation and recognition (extrinsic motivation) [53]. Intrinsic motivation usually leads to more creativity, curiosity, superior quality of learning and a greater sense of achievement. In an environment where intrinsic motivation is usually low, it is important to explore the factors that enhance it or under-mine it [54]. These factors range from parenting and/ teacher practices, the home environment, the school environment, which include the education system as a whole [54]. When engaging in activities because of a learner's intrinsic motivation, certain innate psychological needs (competence, autonomy and relatedness) are being satisfied [55,56]. When learners engage in tasks that provide an optimal challenge, leading to a positive causal effect without receiving disparaging appraisal would lead to a greater probability to facilitate intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, feelings of competence (self efficacy) as well as a sense of autonomy together will enhance intrinsic motivation, according to Cognitive Evaluation Theory, a substructure of Self Determination Theory (SDT) [57]. For relatedness to be satisfied, the learner would need to experience a sense of belonging. If these three psychological needs (competence, autonomy and relatedness) are not met in the school or home environment, the learner's intrinsic motivation will be hindered. Moreover, the learners in low socio-economic schools scored higher on parental and community support and self-regulated learning too. Despite the higher motivation, parental and community support and self-regulated learning, the learners from the low socio-economic schools scored lower on self efficacy, leisure and academic achievement, indicating that they may be experiencing a decreased sense of competence, autonomy and relatedness (sense of belonging).

Learners' lack of motivation can be ascribed to their ability beliefs, effort beliefs, value placed on tasks, and characteristics of the tasks [58]. [59] found that alienated learners felt that acquiring an education was not personally important to them, and that they also had a low perception of competence and adherence. In addition, they were also more likely to be passive in class, feign illness, and be absent from school frequently. Similarly, [60] when observing British school children found that amotivation resulted from learned helplessness beliefs and manifested in their non-attendance, low involvement in class, and low intention and self-determination to pursue educational goals. All these factors may be an indication of an overall state of alienation and helplessness [61]. In addition, the dimensions of amotivation may be negatively correlated with teacher-in-school effort and class setup, perhaps directly associated with the class environment [58]. Even though positive changes have been made to the South African education policies and systems and an effort made to create equal opportunities between the low and high socio-economic schools, the disparities are still evident in learner's experiences. From the results of this study, learners from both low and high socio-economic schools indicated that they "would love to finish school but cannot handle the pressure" at the school and home environment. An important question to ask is: is the education system producing or adding to the sense of helplessness and demotivation because it is unable to provide sufficient support to the educators and learners?

The results of this study suggest that the self-efficacy levels of the majority of the learners are high and that most of them feel that they are competent to achieve their academic goals. This was similar overall for learners in both high and low socio-economic schools. According to [30], self-efficacy is the fuel behind personal achievement, personal well being, motivation, and perseverance. Furthermore, [62] believes that self-efficacy refers to an individual's perception of their capabilities to organise, initiate and execute courses of action required to attain designated and desired types of performance. While learners may believe they are capable of certain tasks and may feel motivated on certain aspects,

learners in low socio-economic schools were not sure whether they were going to complete their schooling. Although not particularly focusing on school dropouts, [3,63] strongly emphasise the importance of education, but more specifically—good quality education—for human development and human flourishing for the growth of a country [3,63]. Concerted effort should therefore be made to strengthen education and keep learners in school.

5. Recommendations

This study focused on learners' motivation and self-efficacy by comparing learners in low and high socio-economic schools. In order to support learners and reduce dropout rates, [64] draw attention to the following factors:

1. Individual factors (referring to the learner): lacks future orientation, low academic achievement levels, low attendance, and special learning needs;
2. Family factors: low socio-economic status, low expectations for schooling, mobility of family, and language and literacy levels;
3. School factors: lack of alternatives for learning opportunities, no individual learning plans for learners, unfair behaviour and discipline issues, and retention policies;
4. Community factors: lack of community involvement, lack of support for schools, high levels of violence and drug abuse, and few recreational facilities.

According to [65], a range of strategies may be needed to improve learner retention rates within schools. Especially promising may be quality afterschool and holiday vocational learning programmes. These programmes may assist in increased school attendance, continued academic progress, improved behavioural patterns, the building of self-esteem, and increased matriculation rates [66].

Research reveals a few proven strategies that may improve learner retention rates in high schools. These strategies may involve: (1) After-school initiatives by either the school, community projects, the church, university students, or individuals with a passion to see young people excel; (2) Vocational training such as sport, art, drama, music, and academic tutoring; (3) Learning centres which may be government, private, or publicly funded, working with local schools to match local needs, focusing on mentoring, tutoring, and counselling; (4) after-school programmes that include emotional, social, and academic development components [67].

The solution may well be found with programmes that lean towards supporting the holistic development of learners. These programmes may prove to have a positive impact on learning and may play a key role in learner retention in schools. In a meta-analysis, [67] found that programmes that include emotional, social, and academic development components demonstrated a positive impact in many key areas such as school grades, attendance, self-perception, reduction in problem behaviours, academic achievement (test scores), positive social behaviour, and school bonding. Furthermore, when the help of the family and the community are enlisted to assist in dropout prevention, there is a significant improvement in reducing school dropout.

6. Conclusions

This study emphasised the importance of education, more particularly completing one's secondary education, for personal and national development. Factors inhibiting learners' completion of their final school year were thus considered, namely: intention to drop out, motivation, and self-efficacy. This was done by comparing learners in low and high socio-economic schools in terms of these aspects. Relationships were found between the variables as well as significant differences between learners in low and high socio-economic schools. The results of this study provide valuable insights to consider when developing interventions to reduce learner dropout in schools.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, P.E.D. and N.V.R.; methodology, P.E.D.; formal analysis, P.E.D. and N.V.R.; writing—original draft preparation, N.V.R.; writing—review and editing, P.E.D., I.K.S., A.H.-H. and L.B.-K.; supervision, N.V.R. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This study was supported by grants from the National Research Foundation (NRF) (118581, 115460, 118551, and 129581).

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was approved by the Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Permission for the research was granted by the Senate Research and Ethics Committee at the University of the Western Cape.

Informed Consent Statement: Written informed consent has been obtained from the participants.

Acknowledgments: We would like to thank the participants for their time in participating in this study. Thank you to Kezia October for her help.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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