



FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH STATUS IN CLUSTERED UPSTREAM BARANGAYS IN EASTERN SAMAR: PERSPECTIVES OF YOUTH, PARENTS, AND TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Out-of-school youth (OSY) remain a continuing educational concern in many geographically isolated and economically disadvantaged communities in the Philippines. This study examined the factors associated with out-of-school youth status in the clustered upstream barangays of Dolores, Eastern Samar from the perspectives of out-of-school youth, parents, and teachers. Specifically, the study explored how school-related, family-related, personal and peer-related, and community-related conditions contributed to educational disengagement among adolescents living in rural upstream communities. A descriptive-survey design was utilized involving 50 out-of-school youth respondents together with selected parents and teachers from the study area. Data were gathered using researcher-developed questionnaires and analyzed through frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, and ranking procedures. Findings showed that many respondents came from low-income households with limited parental educational attainment and agriculture-based livelihoods. Across all respondent groups, personal and peer-related influences emerged as the most significant contributors to school discontinuation. Negative peer influence, declining motivation toward schooling, exposure to community vices, and increasing involvement in non-academic activities were frequently identified as major concerns affecting learner participation. Community-related conditions were also viewed as important influences on adolescents' educational experiences.

Although school-related and family-related concerns were also recognized, these were generally perceived as less immediate compared with social and environmental influences. Differences in perception were likewise observed among out-of-school youth, parents, and teachers, particularly regarding the role of parental support and supervision. The findings suggest that educational disengagement among adolescents in geographically isolated communities develops through the interaction of social, behavioral, familial, and environmental realities rather than through economic hardship alone. The study highlights the importance of localized interventions that strengthen learner support, parental involvement, positive peer environments, and community-based support programs for adolescents in reducing out-of-school youth incidence in vulnerable rural communities.

KEYWORDS: out-of-school youth, Educational Disengagement, Peer Influence, Rural Education, Community Environment

INTRODUCTION

Education continues to play an important role in improving individual opportunities and strengthening community development. Beyond academic learning, schooling helps shape social participation, decision-making skills, and future economic stability. Despite continuing educational reforms and wider access initiatives in the Philippines, many learners from vulnerable communities still experience difficulties in completing basic education. These challenges are often more visible in rural and geographically isolated areas where poverty, limited infrastructure, and unequal access to support services continue to affect educational participation.

The situation of out-of-school youth (OSY) remains a continuing concern within the Philippine educational sector. Although national school participation rates have improved in recent years, many Filipino adolescents still discontinue formal schooling before completing basic education. Reports from the Philippine Statistics Authority (2023) identified financial

difficulty, low educational interest, family-related concerns, and work responsibilities among the common reasons associated with school non-attendance. However, more recent discussions on educational disengagement suggest that leaving school is rarely caused by economic hardship alone. In many cases, adolescents gradually become disconnected from schooling because of overlapping social, behavioral, familial, and environmental experiences occurring within their daily lives.

Contemporary literature now views educational disengagement as a multidimensional process shaped by the interaction of social, behavioral, familial, institutional, and environmental influences. Henry et al. (2020) explained that school withdrawal often develops gradually through weakening learner engagement, declining school attachment, absenteeism, and growing involvement in non-academic social environments. Fredricks et al. (2022) emphasized that learner engagement is shaped by emotional, behavioral, and environmental conditions that influence students' participation



and adjustment within school settings. Similarly, Finn and Zimmer (2021) emphasized that adolescents who experience weak emotional connection to school, limited social belonging, and declining educational motivation become increasingly vulnerable to educational disengagement over time.

Peer relationships and social environment also appear to play a significant role in shaping adolescents' educational participation. During adolescence, learners become highly influenced by peer acceptance, social belonging, and behavioral norms within their immediate environment. Kindermann (2020) noted that peer groups strongly influence learners' academic engagement, attitudes toward schooling, and behavioral choices. In socially vulnerable communities, exposure to peers exhibiting low academic participation or risky behaviors may gradually weaken adolescents' educational aspirations and persistence.

Family and community conditions further complicate the realities experienced by vulnerable learners. Although poverty remains an important educational concern, recent studies suggest that family support, parental involvement, emotional guidance, and household stability may influence learner persistence as strongly as financial capability itself (Benner et al., 2021). At the same time, adolescents residing in geographically isolated communities often face additional challenges involving transportation difficulties, limited youth opportunities, environmental vulnerability, and restricted access to educational support systems. Similar concerns were observed by Tarrayo and Anudin (2021), who found that learners in geographically isolated and disadvantaged communities in the Philippines often experience educational difficulties associated with limited infrastructure, transportation barriers, and uneven access to educational support. These conditions may intensify educational disengagement when learners perceive limited opportunities associated with continued schooling.

International educational organizations have likewise expressed concern regarding increasing educational vulnerability among disadvantaged learners following the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Reports from UNICEF (2022), UNESCO (2023), and the World Bank (2022) emphasized that marginalized learners experienced greater risks of prolonged educational disruption, learning loss, and disengagement due to unequal access to educational support, unstable learning environments, and socioeconomic pressures during the recovery period. These challenges became even more pronounced in rural and geographically isolated communities where educational resources and institutional support systems were already limited prior to the pandemic.

Within the context of Eastern Samar, geographically isolated upstream barangays continue to experience socioeconomic and environmental conditions that may affect learners' educational participation. Although official dropout statistics may not always fully reflect the realities within rural communities, local observations and coordination with schools and barangay officials indicate the continuing presence of adolescents and young adults who have already disengaged from formal schooling at different educational stages. In many cases, educational withdrawal appears connected not only to financial hardship but also to peer influence, family conditions, community exposure, and declining educational motivation.

Despite the growing body of literature on educational disengagement and dropout behavior, limited studies have examined out-of-school youth status specifically within geographically isolated upstream communities in Eastern Samar. Existing Philippine studies frequently focus on broader national trends, urban poverty contexts, or institutional educational concerns, while comparatively fewer investigations examine how school-related, family-related, personal and peer-related, and community-related factors interact within rural upstream barangays. Moreover, many studies primarily focus on either learner or institutional perspectives alone, with limited attention given to the combined perspectives of out-of-school youth, parents, and teachers.

The present study addresses these gaps by examining the factors contributing to out-of-school youth status in the clustered upstream barangays of Dolores, Eastern Samar. Specifically, the study seeks to examine how school-related, family-related, personal and peer-related, and community-related conditions influence educational disengagement from the perspectives of out-of-school youth, parents, and teachers. Through this multi-perspective approach, the study aims to provide a more contextualized understanding of educational disengagement among adolescents residing in geographically isolated rural communities and contribute to the development of localized educational interventions and learner support strategies.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the factors contributing to out-of-school youth status in the clustered upstream barangays of Dolores, Eastern Samar, based on the perspectives of youth, parents, and teachers.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of out-of-school youth in the clustered upstream barangays of Dolores, Eastern Samar in terms of:
 - a. age;
 - b. sex;
 - c. highest educational level attended;
 - d. number of siblings;
 - e. household monthly income;
 - f. parents' highest educational attainment; and
 - g. parents' occupation
2. To what extent do school-related, family-related, personal and peer-related, and community-related factors contribute to out-of-school youth status as perceived by the
 - a. out-of-school youth?
 - b. parents?
 - c. teachers?
3. How do the perceptions of out-of-school youth, parents, and teachers compare in terms of the contributing factors to out-of-school youth status?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Out-of-School Youth as an Educational Concern

Educational disengagement among adolescents continues to pose a significant challenge in many developing



countries, particularly in communities affected by poverty, geographic isolation, and social inequality. Although educational participation rates have improved globally over the past decades, a substantial number of young people remain excluded from formal schooling or discontinue education before completing basic academic requirements. International educational reports consistently emphasize that school dropout and educational exclusion remain closely associated with long-term socioeconomic vulnerability, reduced employment opportunities, and intergenerational cycles of poverty (UNESCO, 2023).

In recent years, discussions surrounding out-of-school youth (OSY) have gradually shifted from purely economic explanations toward more multidimensional perspectives. Earlier studies frequently associated school discontinuation primarily with poverty and limited access to educational resources. However, more recent literature suggests that educational disengagement develops through the interaction of academic, behavioral, psychosocial, familial, and environmental influences operating simultaneously within the lives of adolescents. Henry et al. (2020) explained that dropout behavior is often preceded by prolonged disengagement from school, weakening academic participation, and increasing attachment to non-academic social environments. Their findings suggest that educational withdrawal is rarely a sudden event but instead evolves gradually through repeated experiences of disconnection from schooling.

The role of learner engagement has also become increasingly prominent in contemporary educational research. According to Finn and Zimmer (2021), adolescents who experience weak emotional attachment to school, declining academic motivation, and poor social belonging become more vulnerable to absenteeism and eventual withdrawal from formal education. This perspective highlights that learners' relationships with peers, teachers, and school environments significantly shape their educational persistence. In many cases, disengagement begins long before learners officially leave school, often reflected through declining participation, reduced interest in academic activities, and increasing involvement in external social influences.

Within the Philippine context, educational disengagement continues to affect vulnerable learners despite ongoing reforms aimed at improving access to education. National data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (2023) indicate that financial hardship, lack of personal interest, family concerns, and employment-related responsibilities remain among the leading reasons for school non-attendance among Filipino youth. However, Philippine educational realities also reveal that school discontinuation cannot be explained solely through economic deprivation. In many rural communities, learners face overlapping social and environmental pressures that influence educational participation beyond household income alone.

Recent Philippine-based studies likewise emphasize the importance of family processes, social environment, and learner behavior in shaping educational outcomes. Alampay et al. (2021) found that adolescents from low-income Filipino communities who experience limited parental support and weak educational monitoring are more likely to encounter academic disengagement and reduced school persistence. At the same time, learners residing in geographically isolated communities

often experience additional challenges related to transportation, environmental vulnerability, limited youth opportunities, and weak institutional support systems. These conditions may intensify learners' susceptibility to educational withdrawal, particularly when peer environments and community conditions do not strongly reinforce educational participation.

International organizations have also highlighted the growing concern regarding educational recovery and learner retention following the disruptions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Reports from UNICEF (2022) and the World Bank (2022) emphasized that vulnerable learners from disadvantaged communities experienced greater risks of prolonged educational disruption, learning loss, and eventual disengagement from formal schooling. Adolescents from economically and socially marginalized households were particularly affected due to limited educational support, digital inequality, and unstable community conditions during periods of educational disruption.

Despite the growing body of literature on educational disengagement, limited studies have focused specifically on geographically isolated upstream communities in Eastern Samar. Existing Philippine literature often centers on urban poverty, national dropout statistics, or generalized educational barriers, while fewer studies examine how peer dynamics, community exposure, and environmental realities interact within rural upstream settings. Moreover, many studies primarily examine dropout behavior from either institutional or learner perspectives alone. Comparatively limited attention has been given to the combined perspectives of out-of-school youth, parents, and teachers in understanding the factors contributing to educational disengagement within rural communities.

The present study addresses this gap by examining out-of-school youth status in the clustered upstream barangays of Dolores, Eastern Samar using a multi-perspective approach. By integrating the perceptions of out-of-school youth, parents, and teachers, the study seeks to provide a more contextualized understanding of how school-related, family-related, personal and peer-related, and community-related factors interact in shaping educational disengagement among vulnerable adolescents in geographically isolated communities.

School-Related Factors

School-related experiences play an important role in shaping learners' educational participation and persistence. Although educational disengagement is often associated with economic and social conditions outside the school environment, contemporary research increasingly recognizes that learners' experiences within the classroom and school community may either strengthen or weaken their attachment to formal education. Academic difficulties, negative school climate, weak teacher-student relationships, bullying, and limited instructional support have all been identified as factors associated with declining learner engagement and eventual school withdrawal.

Earlier educational literature frequently emphasized academic failure and poor school performance as major predictors of dropout behavior. However, more recent studies suggest that the relationship between schooling experiences and educational disengagement is more complex than academic difficulty alone. Henry et al. (2020) argued that school



disengagement develops gradually through declining participation, absenteeism, reduced classroom involvement, and weakening emotional attachment to school. Learners who consistently experience frustration, isolation, or low academic confidence may eventually perceive schooling as less meaningful or unattainable.

The quality of teacher–student relationships has likewise emerged as a significant influence on learner persistence. Supportive classroom environments and positive teacher interactions often contribute to stronger learner motivation, academic confidence, and school attachment. In contrast, learners who perceive teachers as unapproachable, unsupportive, or overly punitive may become less engaged in classroom participation over time. Fredricks et al. (2022) emphasized that learner engagement is shaped not only by individual motivation but also by emotional, behavioral, and environmental experiences within the school setting.

Bullying and social exclusion within schools have also been associated with educational disengagement among adolescents. Learners who experience humiliation, peer conflict, or repeated negative interactions within school environments may gradually develop avoidance behaviors that weaken educational participation. International educational reports continue to identify school safety and inclusive learning environments as important factors affecting learner retention and well-being (UNESCO, 2023). In vulnerable communities, where learners may already experience socioeconomic and emotional pressures outside school, negative school experiences may further intensify feelings of disconnection from education.

Limited instructional support and learning resources may likewise contribute to learner frustration and declining educational interest. The disruptions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic further exposed inequalities in access to learning materials, teacher support, and educational technologies, particularly among disadvantaged learners in rural communities. According to the World Bank (2022), learners from marginalized backgrounds experienced greater learning loss and reduced academic participation due to unequal educational support systems during and after the pandemic period.

Within the Philippine setting, school participation among vulnerable learners is also shaped by broader institutional and structural conditions. The Department of Education (2023) acknowledged that learner retention remains a continuing concern in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas where educational access, instructional resources, and learner support systems remain uneven. Rural learners may face additional challenges related to transportation, distance from schools, irregular attendance, and limited academic assistance, all of which may gradually weaken educational persistence.

At the same time, some studies suggest that school-related factors alone may not fully explain educational disengagement among adolescents. In many rural and economically constrained communities, learners continue schooling despite limited facilities and academic difficulties when strong family support, positive peer relationships, and community encouragement are present. This implies that school experiences interact closely with social and environmental

conditions rather than functioning as isolated determinants of dropout behavior.

The reviewed literature suggests that school-related factors contribute to educational disengagement not only through academic performance but also through learners' emotional experiences, sense of belonging, and overall interaction with the school environment. Understanding how learners perceive their schooling experiences therefore remains important in examining the broader process of educational disengagement among out-of-school youth in geographically isolated communities.

Family-Related Factors

Family conditions remain among the most widely discussed influences associated with learners' educational participation and persistence. Across many educational contexts, the home environment serves as one of the earliest and most influential spaces shaping children's attitudes toward schooling, motivation, and long-term educational aspirations. However, contemporary literature increasingly suggests that the influence of family-related factors on educational disengagement extends beyond economic deprivation alone and includes emotional support, parental involvement, household stability, and educational guidance.

Earlier studies commonly emphasized poverty as the dominant family-related cause of school dropout among vulnerable learners. Financial hardship continues to affect learners' access to educational resources, transportation, school materials, and daily academic needs. In low-income households, adolescents may also experience pressure to contribute to family income or household responsibilities, reducing the time and motivation available for schooling. National data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (2023) identified financial difficulty and employment-related responsibilities among the leading reasons for school non-attendance among Filipino youth.

More recent research, however, argues that economic hardship alone does not fully explain educational disengagement. Benner et al. (2021) emphasized that parental involvement and emotional support significantly influence adolescents' educational persistence regardless of socioeconomic status. Learners who experience consistent guidance, encouragement, and monitoring from parents are generally more likely to remain academically engaged despite financial difficulties. In contrast, weak parental supervision and limited educational involvement may gradually reduce learner accountability and attachment to school.

Family structure and household stability also appear closely associated with learner participation and educational continuity. Adolescents exposed to family conflict, unstable living conditions, or prolonged parental absence may experience emotional stress that affects concentration, motivation, and classroom participation. In many rural communities, economic migration and unstable employment conditions may further limit parents' ability to provide consistent supervision and educational support. Such conditions may increase learners' vulnerability to absenteeism and eventual withdrawal from school.

Parental educational attainment has likewise been associated with educational participation among adolescents. Studies suggest that parents with limited educational



backgrounds may encounter difficulties in assisting learners academically or monitoring educational progress effectively. Alampay et al. (2021) found that Filipino adolescents from low-income communities who experienced limited parental educational support were more vulnerable to weakened academic engagement and reduced educational aspirations. Their findings highlight the importance of family processes and home-based educational encouragement in sustaining learner persistence.

At the same time, literature also indicates that some learners continue schooling despite difficult family conditions when strong peer support, positive school experiences, and supportive community environments are present. This suggests that family-related influences do not operate independently but interact with broader social and environmental conditions affecting learners' educational experiences. In geographically isolated communities, adolescents may encounter overlapping pressures involving household responsibilities, social influences, and limited educational opportunities, making educational disengagement a multidimensional rather than purely family-based issue.

The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified the educational challenges experienced by many families, particularly those residing in disadvantaged and rural communities. Reports from UNICEF (2022) emphasized that vulnerable households experienced increased educational disruption due to financial instability, limited digital access, and reduced learning support during periods of school closure. Families already struggling with economic and social pressures often found it more difficult to sustain learner participation during and after the pandemic period.

Despite the continuing importance of family-related factors in educational research, recent studies increasingly caution against viewing parents or households as the sole cause of school discontinuation. Educational disengagement often develops through the interaction of family realities, peer environments, school experiences, and community conditions operating simultaneously within adolescents' lives. Understanding these interconnected influences is therefore important in examining how family-related conditions contribute to out-of-school youth status in geographically isolated communities.

Personal and Peer-Related Factors

Personal and peer-related influences have become increasingly prominent in recent educational discussions concerning learner engagement and school persistence. While earlier studies on educational disengagement frequently focused on poverty and institutional limitations, contemporary literature now recognizes that adolescents' attitudes, motivation, social relationships, and behavioral experiences significantly shape their participation in formal education. During adolescence, peer interaction and personal identity development become central components of learners' daily experiences, making them highly sensitive to social acceptance, belongingness, and environmental influence.

One of the most consistently identified personal factors associated with educational disengagement is declining learner motivation. Adolescents who gradually lose interest in academic activities often exhibit reduced participation, absenteeism, and weaker emotional attachment to school.

Fredricks et al. (2022) emphasized that learner engagement is shaped by emotional, behavioral, and environmental conditions that influence students' participation and adjustment within school settings. According to Finn and Zimmer (2021), learner engagement involves emotional, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions that collectively influence educational persistence. When learners begin experiencing disconnection from school activities or perceive limited relevance of education to their future goals, educational participation may weaken over time.

Henry et al. (2020) further explained that school disengagement often develops gradually rather than occurring suddenly. Their study described educational withdrawal as a process characterized by declining academic involvement, weak school attachment, behavioral disengagement, and increasing participation in non-academic activities. Learners experiencing repeated frustration, poor academic confidence, or limited social belonging may eventually become more vulnerable to dropout behavior, particularly when external support systems are weak.

Peer influence likewise plays a significant role in shaping adolescent educational behavior. Kindermann (2020) emphasized that peer groups strongly affect learners' academic attitudes, classroom participation, and educational motivation. Adolescents often adapt behaviors and perspectives that align with the norms of their social groups in order to maintain acceptance and belongingness. In communities where peers demonstrate low academic engagement or normalize absenteeism and school withdrawal, learners may gradually adopt similar attitudes toward education.

At the same time, peer influence is not always negative. Several studies suggest that supportive peer environments may strengthen learner motivation, improve academic confidence, and encourage educational persistence. Positive peer relationships may help adolescents cope with academic difficulties and emotional stress, particularly in communities where access to formal support systems is limited. This suggests that peer dynamics can either strengthen or weaken educational participation depending on the prevailing social environment surrounding learners.

Behavioral exposure outside school also contributes to adolescents' educational experiences. Learners who become increasingly involved in recreational distractions, risky social activities, or early work responsibilities may gradually reduce their academic participation and long-term educational focus. In geographically isolated and economically constrained communities, adolescents may face additional pressures related to livelihood involvement, social vulnerability, and limited developmental opportunities. Such conditions may intensify disengagement when learners perceive greater social or economic value in activities outside formal schooling.

The educational disruptions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic also affected learners' motivation and social engagement. International reports from UNICEF (2022) and UNESCO (2023) highlighted that prolonged school closures, social isolation, learning difficulties, and reduced learner interaction negatively affected adolescents' educational participation and emotional well-being. Vulnerable learners from disadvantaged communities experienced greater risks of disengagement due to limited educational support and unstable learning conditions during the recovery period.



Within the Philippine context, personal and peer-related influences appear particularly relevant in rural communities where adolescents spend substantial time within close social networks and shared community environments. Learners residing in geographically isolated barangays may become highly influenced by local peer culture, recreational patterns, and environmental exposure. In settings where educational opportunities appear limited or uncertain, some adolescents may gradually perceive schooling as less meaningful compared with immediate social or livelihood realities.

The reviewed literature suggests that personal and peer-related factors contribute to educational disengagement through complex interactions involving learner motivation, social belonging, behavioral influence, and environmental exposure. These influences do not operate independently from family, school, and community conditions but instead interact continuously within adolescents' everyday experiences. Examining these factors therefore remains essential in understanding the broader process of educational disengagement among out-of-school youth in geographically isolated communities.

Community-Related Factors

Where young people live can influence how they view education and whether they remain in school. In many remote communities, daily experiences outside the classroom become part of the learner's educational reality. Conditions within the community—such as poor transportation, unsafe surroundings, limited opportunities, and exposure to harmful activities—can slowly affect students' motivation and participation in school.

For adolescents living in geographically isolated areas, educational support is often limited compared with urban communities. Some barangays have few youth programs, inadequate recreational spaces, and limited academic assistance for struggling learners. Because of this, some adolescents begin to feel disconnected from school and uncertain about the value of continuing their studies. Morrow (2021) explained that adolescents living in socially and economically vulnerable communities often experience reduced educational opportunities due to overlapping conditions involving poverty, social exclusion, and limited institutional support. UNESCO (2023) noted that learners from marginalized communities commonly experience weaker institutional support and fewer opportunities that encourage long-term educational participation.

Physical distance also becomes a practical problem for many learners in rural areas. Some students travel several kilometers just to attend classes, while others deal with rough roads and unreliable transportation. During heavy rains or bad weather conditions, attending school regularly becomes even more difficult. These situations may eventually affect attendance patterns and learner motivation. According to the World Bank (2022), infrastructure limitations continue to contribute to unequal educational experiences among learners from disadvantaged communities.

The social environment within the community may also influence adolescent behavior. In some places, young people are exposed early to gambling, drinking sessions, substance use, or other risky activities. Constant exposure to these situations can weaken learners' focus on schooling. Henry

et al. (2020) explained that educational disengagement is often connected with growing involvement in non-academic social activities and reduced attachment to school. For some adolescents, social acceptance outside the classroom gradually becomes more important than academic participation.

Still, not all community influence is negative. There are communities where local leaders, churches, youth groups, and civic organizations help encourage young people to stay in school. These support systems sometimes provide guidance and motivation that learners may not consistently receive elsewhere. Community programs that promote youth involvement and educational awareness may help adolescents maintain interest in schooling despite personal or financial difficulties.

In rural Philippine settings, family livelihood also affects educational participation. Adolescents from farming households are often expected to help with agricultural work or other income-related activities. While these responsibilities are necessary for family survival, they may also interfere with study time and school attendance. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2022) observed that economically vulnerable families may unintentionally place schooling at risk when adolescents are required to assist in livelihood activities at an early age.

The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed the difficulties experienced by learners in disadvantaged communities. Many students from remote barangays struggled with poor internet connection, lack of devices, and limited access to learning materials during school closures. Reports from UNICEF (2022) showed that vulnerable learners experienced greater educational disruption during the pandemic, especially in areas where educational resources had already been limited even before the health crisis.

Researchers also point out that community conditions alone cannot fully explain why adolescents leave school. Educational disengagement usually develops from several overlapping experiences involving peer influence, family conditions, school environment, and personal motivation. Looking at the broader community context remains important, however, because it helps explain the realities surrounding adolescents who eventually become out-of-school youth in rural communities.

Theoretical Framework

The present study draws support from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which explains that human behavior and development are shaped by constant interaction between individuals and the environments around them. Rather than viewing development as something influenced only by personal traits or individual choices, the theory emphasizes the role of social relationships, daily experiences, and environmental conditions in shaping human outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). In educational studies, this framework is often used to understand how learners are affected not only by school experiences but also by family life, peer relationships, and community conditions.

In recent years, many researchers have used ecological perspectives in examining why some adolescents gradually disengage from school. Current literature no longer treats dropout behavior as the result of a single problem alone. Instead, educational withdrawal is often described as a gradual



process influenced by several overlapping experiences involving academic struggles, weak social support, behavioral issues, and environmental pressures. Henry et al. (2020) explained that learner disengagement usually develops over time through declining participation, poor school attachment, and increasing involvement in activities outside the academic environment. This idea closely reflects Bronfenbrenner's argument that development is continuously shaped by interaction with surrounding social systems.

The theory identifies several environmental systems that influence individual development. The first is the microsystem, which refers to the learner's immediate surroundings. This includes direct interaction with parents, siblings, teachers, classmates, and friends. In the present study, factors such as parental supervision, peer influence, family problems, learner motivation, and teacher-student relationships fall under this level because they directly affect the adolescents' day-to-day educational experiences. Existing studies have shown that supportive relationships at home and positive peer environments may encourage learners to remain engaged in school, while weak supervision and negative peer influence may contribute to educational disengagement (Benner et al., 2021; Kindermann, 2020).

Another important layer is the mesosystem, which involves the connection between different parts of the learner's immediate environment. One example is the relationship between home and school. Communication and cooperation between parents and teachers may affect how early learning difficulties or absenteeism are addressed. When coordination between families and schools is weak, learners experiencing academic or behavioral problems may receive less support and intervention. Because of this, collaboration between home and school environments remains important in sustaining learner participation.

The exosystem includes conditions that indirectly affect adolescents even if they are not directly involved in those settings. Community conditions are part of this level. Access to transportation, availability of youth programs, local governance, livelihood opportunities, and exposure to community vices may all influence learners' educational experiences. Adolescents living in geographically isolated communities may encounter limited support systems and fewer opportunities that encourage educational participation. Reports from the World Bank (2022) and UNESCO (2023) emphasized that learners from disadvantaged communities continue to face educational inequality linked to broader social and environmental conditions outside school.

The macrosystem refers to wider cultural and socioeconomic realities that shape people's perspectives and life experiences. Poverty, social inequality, cultural expectations, and limited economic opportunities may affect how families and adolescents view formal education. In some rural communities, immediate livelihood concerns become more urgent than long-term educational goals. Because of these realities, some adolescents may gradually place greater importance on work responsibilities or family survival than on continuing their schooling.

Bronfenbrenner also introduced the chronosystem, which considers the effect of time and changing life circumstances on development. Educational disengagement often does not happen instantly. It may develop slowly through

repeated absences, declining motivation, family difficulties, peer influence, and changing social experiences. The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified many of these educational challenges. Long periods of school closure, reduced learner interaction, and unstable learning environments affected many vulnerable learners, particularly those living in disadvantaged and remote communities. According to UNICEF (2022), the pandemic significantly disrupted learning participation among adolescents who already had limited educational support prior to the health crisis.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is relevant to the present study because it allows out-of-school youth status to be examined from a broader social perspective. The theory supports the idea that educational disengagement is not simply the result of individual decisions or academic difficulty alone. Instead, it develops through the interaction of family conditions, peer relationships, school experiences, and community realities that continuously shape adolescents' educational participation in the clustered upstream barangays of Dolores, Eastern Samar.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive-survey approach in examining the factors associated with out-of-school youth (OSY) status in the clustered upstream barangays of Dolores, Eastern Samar. The design was considered appropriate because the study focused on describing the perceptions and experiences of respondents regarding the conditions contributing to educational disengagement within geographically isolated communities.

In educational and social research, descriptive methods are often applied when the purpose of the study is to understand existing situations, perceptions, and observed conditions without manipulating the variables involved (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the present study, the design allowed the researcher to gather contextualized information regarding the experiences and perceptions of respondents within geographically isolated communities.

The study likewise incorporated comparative descriptive analysis to identify similarities and variations in the perceptions of out-of-school youth, parents, and teachers regarding the factors contributing to school discontinuation. However, the study did not aim to establish causal relationships or test statistical differences among groups. Instead, it focused on describing patterns and perceived influences associated with educational disengagement in the study area.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the clustered upstream barangays of Dolores, Eastern Samar, specifically within the communities served by Buenavista Elementary School, Rizal Elementary School, San Pascual Elementary School, San Vicente Elementary School, and Del Pilar Elementary School. These barangays are predominantly rural and agriculture-based communities situated in geographically isolated upstream areas characterized by varying levels of transportation difficulty, limited infrastructure, and restricted access to social services.

The locale was selected due to the observed presence of out-of-school youth within the identified communities and



the relevance of the area in examining educational disengagement in geographically marginalized settings. The socioeconomic and environmental conditions of the clustered barangays provided a suitable context for exploring how social, familial, school-related, and community factors interact in shaping educational participation among adolescents.

Respondents of the Study

The primary respondents of the study were out-of-school youth residing in the clustered upstream barangays of Dolores, Eastern Samar. For purposes of the study, out-of-school youth referred to individuals who had previously enrolled in formal education at the elementary, junior high school, senior high school, or college level but had subsequently discontinued schooling and were no longer attending school during the conduct of the study.

A total of 50 out-of-school youth participated in the study. To provide broader contextual perspectives, selected parents or guardians and teachers were also included as respondents. Parent respondents consisted of individuals directly responsible for or closely associated with the identified out-of-school youth, while teacher respondents included educators who had previous interaction or instructional experience with learners from the study area.

The inclusion of multiple respondent groups allowed the study to examine educational disengagement from different social perspectives and provided a more contextualized understanding of the factors associated with out-of-school youth status within the locality.

Sampling Technique

The study employed purposive sampling in selecting the respondents. This technique was considered appropriate because the study required participants who possessed direct experiences and relevant knowledge regarding educational disengagement within the identified communities.

Out-of-school youth respondents were selected based on the following criteria: (1) residency within the clustered upstream barangays covered by the study, and (2) prior enrollment in formal schooling followed by educational discontinuation. Identification of respondents was facilitated through coordination with school personnel, barangay officials, and community records.

Parents and teachers were likewise selected using criterion-based purposive sampling. Parents included in the study were those with direct involvement in the educational experiences of the identified out-of-school youth, while teacher respondents were selected based on prior interaction with learners from the locality. The use of purposive sampling enabled the researcher to gather information from individuals considered most capable of providing meaningful insights regarding the factors contributing to out-of-school youth status.

Research Instrument

Data were gathered using a researcher-developed questionnaire consisting of separate versions for out-of-school youth, parents, and teachers. The instruments were designed to examine perceptions regarding school-related, family-related, personal and peer-related, and community-related factors associated with educational disengagement.

The questionnaire for out-of-school youth included two major parts. The first part gathered demographic information such as age, sex, educational attainment, household income, parents' educational attainment, family size, and parental occupation. The second part consisted of indicators measuring the perceived influence of various factors contributing to school discontinuation.

Parallel questionnaires for parents and teachers were likewise developed using similar thematic domains while adjusting the wording of statements to suit the perspective of each respondent group. Responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

To establish content validity, the instruments were reviewed by individuals with expertise in educational research and social science. Suggestions regarding clarity, organization, relevance, and alignment with the objectives of the study were incorporated during the revision process.

A pilot test was subsequently conducted among individuals with characteristics similar to the target respondents but who were not included in the actual study. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha produced a coefficient of 0.82, indicating acceptable internal consistency of the instrument.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the study was secured from the appropriate school authorities and local officials. Coordination with barangay representatives and community stakeholders was likewise undertaken to facilitate respondent identification and scheduling of data gathering activities.

The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the respondents. Before distribution, the purpose of the study was explained clearly, and respondents were informed that participation was voluntary. Adequate time was provided for answering the instruments, and clarifications were given whenever necessary to ensure proper understanding of the questionnaire items.

After retrieval, completed questionnaires were checked for completeness and organized for data analysis. Confidentiality and anonymity of responses were maintained throughout the conduct of the study.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The data gathered were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools appropriate to the objectives of the study. Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the demographic profile of out-of-school youth respondents. Weighted means and ranking procedures were employed to determine the perceived extent to which school-related, family-related, personal and peer-related, and community-related factors contributed to out-of-school youth status.

The following interpretation scale was used in analyzing weighted mean values:

- 3.25–4.00 – Strongly Agree
- 2.50–3.24 – Agree
- 1.75–2.49 – Disagree
- 1.00–1.74 – Strongly Disagree



Comparative descriptive analysis was likewise utilized to examine similarities and differences in the perceptions of out-of-school youth, parents, and teachers regarding the contributing factors to educational disengagement.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical standards observed in educational research. Respondents were informed regarding the purpose and nature of the study prior to participation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and respondents were assured that their responses would be treated with confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. To protect privacy, identifying information was excluded from the presentation and interpretation of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Out-of-School Youth Respondents

The profile of the respondents showed noticeable differences in age, educational background, family situation, and economic condition. Most of the out-of-school youth who participated in the study belonged to the 18–20 age bracket, while a smaller number came from the younger age groups of 12–14 and 15–17 years old. There were also respondents aged 25 years and above. The presence of participants from different age ranges suggests that leaving school is not limited to one specific stage of adolescence. In the study area, educational disengagement appears to affect both younger learners and older youth who were unable to return to formal schooling.

Female respondents were slightly more represented than males during the conduct of the study. Although the difference was not very large, the finding indicates that school discontinuation in the locality affects both sexes. This observation is similar to recent national reports showing that patterns of school withdrawal may differ depending on local conditions and are not always determined by gender alone (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023).

In terms of educational attainment, many respondents reported leaving school while in junior high school. Others discontinued during senior high school, while fewer respondents stopped during elementary or college education. This pattern may indicate that secondary education is a particularly difficult stage for many adolescents, especially when academic demands begin to overlap with financial pressures, peer influence, and family responsibilities. Similar concerns have been discussed in studies examining learner disengagement among vulnerable youth populations.

Family size also appeared notable among the respondents. A considerable number came from households with four or more children. In large families with limited income, educational needs often compete with other household expenses, which may affect the level of support available for schooling. Custodio and Sombilla (2025) noted that economically constrained households in rural communities frequently experience difficulties sustaining educational needs when resources must be divided among several family members.

Most respondents likewise belonged to low-income households earning below ₱10,000 monthly. This reflects the economic realities of many upstream rural communities where livelihood opportunities are limited and income is often seasonal or unstable. The findings support observations from the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2022), which identified poverty and economic vulnerability as continuing barriers affecting educational participation among marginalized Filipino youth.

The educational background of parents was also generally low. Many respondents reported that their parents had only reached elementary or secondary schooling. Limited parental education may affect the kind of academic guidance and educational encouragement children receive at home. Previous literature has pointed out that parents' educational experiences often influence how families value schooling and support learners academically (UNESCO, 2023).

As for occupation, farming remained the most common source of livelihood among the respondents' parents. Some were also engaged in labor-related or informal work. Since the study area is largely agriculture-based, household income tends to depend heavily on farming activities and other unstable sources of earnings. In situations where financial resources are limited, continuing education may become difficult for some adolescents, particularly when family needs become more immediate.

Taken together, the demographic profile of the respondents points toward a broader pattern of socioeconomic vulnerability within the clustered upstream barangays of Dolores, Eastern Samar. Educational disengagement in the area appears connected not only to individual circumstances but also to household conditions, livelihood realities, and limited socioeconomic opportunities experienced by many rural families.

Factors Contributing to Out-of-School Youth Status as Perceived by Out-of-School Youth

Out-of-school youth respondents generally viewed personal experiences and peer-related influences as major reasons behind their decision to leave school. Compared with family or school concerns, respondents placed greater emphasis on social environment, peer groups, declining interest in education, and exposure to risky activities within the community. Their responses suggest that leaving school was shaped more by everyday social experiences than by a single school-related problem alone.

Among the indicators presented, exposure to community vices received one of the highest ratings. Negative peer influence, reduced interest in schooling, preference for leisure activities, and early involvement in work were also commonly identified by respondents. These findings imply that some adolescents gradually became less connected to school as outside influences and competing priorities became more dominant in their daily lives.

The pattern observed in the study resembles the findings of Henry et al. (2020), who described educational disengagement as a gradual process rather than a sudden decision. According to their study, learners often begin withdrawing from school through declining participation, reduced academic motivation, and increased involvement in non-academic environments. In the present study, many



respondents appeared to experience a similar process in which social influences outside school slowly became more important than educational participation itself.

Peer influence also emerged strongly in the responses of the participants. Similar observations were discussed by Wentzel and Muenks (2021), who noted that peer relationships significantly shape adolescents' academic motivation, social behavior, and participation in school activities. During adolescence, acceptance within social circles often becomes highly important. Because of this, learners may begin adopting the behaviors and perspectives of peers around them. In communities where absenteeism or school withdrawal becomes common, some adolescents may gradually view leaving school as normal or unavoidable.

An interesting point in the findings is that respondents placed greater emphasis on peer and community influence than on financial hardship alone. This differs somewhat from national findings of the Philippine Statistics Authority (2023), where economic difficulty was identified as one of the leading causes of school non-attendance. In the context of the present study, however, the immediate social environment appeared to exert stronger day-to-day influence on learners' decisions regarding education. Although poverty remained part of the respondents' reality, many seemed to experience educational disengagement more through social exposure and community conditions than through financial limitations alone.

Community influence was likewise closely connected with educational participation. Respondents frequently associated unstructured social environments and exposure to vices with declining motivation to continue schooling. Morrow (2021) similarly explained that adolescents living in socially vulnerable communities may experience reduced educational

opportunities when poverty, social exclusion, and limited institutional support overlap within their environment. International reports from UNESCO (2023) and UNICEF (2022) similarly emphasized that vulnerable adolescents become more at risk of educational exclusion when communities lack supportive youth environments and positive developmental opportunities.

Another observation worth noting is the relatively lower rating given to family-related factors despite the generally low-income condition of many respondents. This somewhat contrasts with studies linking household poverty and limited parental support to school withdrawal (Benner et al., 2021). One possible reason is that financial hardship may already be viewed by respondents as a normal part of rural life. As a result, peer relationships and community exposure may have felt more immediate and visible in shaping their schooling experiences.

The findings suggest that out-of-school youth status in the clustered upstream barangays cannot be explained by economic hardship alone. Rumberger and Lim (2021) similarly emphasized that school dropout is often shaped by multiple interacting conditions involving family background, learner engagement, peer relationships, and school experiences rather than by a single isolated factor. Educational disengagement among the respondents appeared to develop through a combination of peer influence, social environment, declining educational interest, and exposure to community-related risks. These realities highlight the need for interventions that go beyond financial assistance and also address the social and psychosocial experiences affecting adolescents within rural communities.

Table 1. Weighted Mean and Rank of Factors Contributing to OSY Status as Perceived by OSY

Rank	Item	Description	Weighted Mean
1	S17	Presence of vices in the community	3.80
2	S12	Negative peer influence	3.56
3	S11	Lack of motivation	3.52
4	S13	Early involvement in work	3.48
4	S19	Lack of livelihood opportunities	3.48
6	S4	Bullying or peer pressure	3.44
7	S15	Preference for recreation	3.42
8	S6	Financial difficulties	3.40
9	S10	Family problems	3.38
10	S3	Teacher–student relationship	3.36
11	S2	Lack of learning support	3.34
11	S16	Lack of community programs	3.34
13	S14	Health problems	3.32
13	S1	Lack of school facilities	3.32
15	S5	Distance and travel difficulties	3.30
15	S7	Lack of parental guidance	3.30
17	S20	Community safety issues	3.28
18	S18	Leaders not addressing dropout	3.22
19	S9	Parents' low education	3.08
19	S8	Lack of supervision	3.08



Summary of Weighted Mean and Rank by Factor Domain

Rank	Factor Domain	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1	Personal/Peer-related	3.46	Agree
2	Community-related	3.42	Agree
3	School-related	3.35	Agree
4	Family-related	3.25	Agree

Factors Contributing to Out-of-School Youth Status as Perceived by Parents

Parents who participated in the study generally recognized that educational disengagement among learners was influenced by a combination of personal, social, familial, and community-related conditions. However, compared with family-related and school-related concerns, parents placed stronger emphasis on peer influence, behavioral changes, and exposure to negative community environments. This suggests that many parents perceived the immediate social surroundings of adolescents as highly influential in shaping their educational participation and long-term interest in schooling.

Among the identified indicators, negative peer influence emerged as one of the highest-rated contributors to school discontinuation. Parents also gave relatively high importance to exposure to community vices, excessive involvement in recreational activities, and declining learner motivation. These findings indicate that parents viewed adolescent socialization and environmental exposure as critical factors affecting learners' attachment to formal education.

The results are consistent with the work of Kindermann (2020), who explained that peer groups strongly shape adolescents' academic motivation, behavioral engagement, and educational attitudes. During adolescence, learners become increasingly influenced by social belonging and peer acceptance, which may either strengthen or weaken their connection to school. In communities where peers exhibit low educational engagement or normalize absenteeism and early work involvement, learners may gradually adopt similar behaviors and perspectives.

At the same time, the findings also support international evidence suggesting that vulnerable adolescents are more likely to disengage from schooling when exposed to socially risky and unsupported environments. UNICEF (2022) emphasized that learners residing in disadvantaged communities often experience educational disruption due to overlapping social, emotional, and environmental pressures. The present study reflects a similar situation in which parents perceived community exposure and peer dynamics as immediate influences affecting learners' educational continuity.

Interestingly, family-related factors obtained comparatively lower ratings despite the generally low-income conditions of many households represented in the study. This partially contrasts with the findings of Benner et al. (2021), who highlighted parental involvement and family support as strong predictors of adolescents' educational success. In the current study, parents appeared more inclined to attribute educational disengagement to external social influences rather than to

family-related limitations within the household. One possible explanation is that many parents may have already considered economic hardship and limited livelihood opportunities as normal realities within rural life, causing them to perceive peer and community pressures as more immediate threats to learners' educational participation.

Another important observation involves the role of early work involvement among adolescents. Parents acknowledged that some learners became engaged in livelihood-related activities at a young age, particularly in agriculture-based communities where household survival often requires shared labor responsibilities. This finding aligns with reports from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development indicating that economically vulnerable households may unintentionally place educational participation at risk when adolescents are expected to contribute to family income or domestic responsibilities (OECD, 2022). However, unlike purely urban poverty contexts where financial deprivation is often emphasized as the dominant factor, the present study suggests that educational disengagement in geographically isolated communities may be more socially embedded and influenced by local environmental conditions.

Parents also perceived school-related factors as contributory, although these were ranked lower than personal and community influences. Concerns related to teacher-student relationships, learner health, and academic difficulty were acknowledged but were not viewed as the primary reasons for school discontinuation. This differs somewhat from studies emphasizing institutional barriers and academic frustration as major precursors to dropout behavior (Henry et al., 2020). The difference may indicate that parents within the study area interpreted educational disengagement more through the lens of social environment and adolescent behavior than through school-based limitations.

Overall, the findings reveal that parents viewed out-of-school youth status as a complex social issue shaped by the interaction of peer influence, environmental exposure, behavioral conditions, and family realities. Their responses suggest that while poverty and limited household resources remain present, educational disengagement among adolescents in rural upstream communities is experienced more directly through the influence of social surroundings and weakened learner attachment to schooling. These realities highlight the importance of community-based interventions that strengthen parental engagement, promote positive youth environments, and encourage stronger educational support systems within rural communities.



Table 2. Weighted Mean and Rank of Factors Contributing to OSY Status as Perceived by Parents

Rank	Item	Description	Weighted Mean
1	S12	Negative peer influence	3.93
2	S17	Presence of vices in the community	3.81
3	S15	Preference for recreation	3.76
4	S3	Teacher–student relationship	3.69
5	S14	Health problems	3.67
5	S13	Early involvement in work	3.67
7	S20	Community safety issues	3.64
8	S6	Financial difficulties	3.62
9	S10	Family problems	3.60
10	S7	Lack of parental guidance	3.57
10	S1	Lack of school facilities	3.57
10	S4	Bullying/peer pressure	3.57
13	S5	Distance/travel difficulties	3.55
13	S19	Lack of livelihood opportunities	3.55
15	S11	Lack of motivation	3.50
16	S9	Parents' low education	3.48
16	S18	Leaders not addressing dropout	3.48
18	S2	Lack of learning support	3.38
19	S16	Lack of community programs	3.36
20	S8	Lack of parental supervision	3.17

Summary of Weighted Mean and Rank by Factor Domain (Parents' Perceptions)

Rank	Factor Domain	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1	Personal/Peer-related	3.70	Strongly Agree
2	Community-related	3.57	Agree
3	School-related	3.55	Agree
4	Family-related	3.49	Agree

Factors Contributing to Out-of-School Youth Status as Perceived by Teachers

The teachers involved in the study generally did not view school disengagement as something caused only by academic difficulties or problems within the school itself. For many of them, the issue appeared more connected to what learners experience outside the classroom. Family situations, peer influence, emotional struggles, and community conditions were repeatedly emphasized in their responses. While school-related concerns were still acknowledged, teachers seemed to believe that the roots of the problem often begin beyond the school environment.

One of the strongest concerns raised by teacher respondents was the lack of parental guidance and supervision. Many teachers associated this with poor attendance, declining participation in class, and eventually dropping out of school. Some respondents also mentioned that learners who receive little monitoring at home tend to become more vulnerable to negative influences from peers and their surroundings. Family conflict, health problems, and emotional difficulties were likewise viewed as contributing conditions affecting learners' ability to remain engaged in school.

These observations are similar to the discussion of Benner et al. (2021), who explained that parental involvement plays an important role in sustaining adolescents' educational participation. Learners who regularly receive encouragement and support from parents are generally more likely to maintain

interest in schooling even during difficult situations. In contrast, limited supervision and weak family support may gradually affect motivation and accountability toward school responsibilities.

Peer relationships were also repeatedly emphasized by teachers. According to several respondents, some learners become heavily influenced by the attitudes and behaviors of friends, especially during adolescence when social belonging becomes highly important. This supports the work of Kindermann (2020), who noted that peer groups can strongly shape learners' behavior, school participation, and attitudes toward education. When adolescents spend more time in social environments where absenteeism, risky behavior, or disinterest in schooling become common, continuing education may slowly lose importance from their perspective.

Another point that stood out in the findings involved health and emotional well-being. Teachers appeared more sensitive to these concerns compared with parents and out-of-school youth themselves. Some educators observed that learners dealing with stress, emotional problems, or poor physical health often struggle with attendance and classroom participation. Reports from the World Bank (2022) similarly noted that vulnerable learners frequently experience interruptions in learning when health issues and socioeconomic pressures occur together. In geographically isolated communities where healthcare access and psychosocial support



remain limited, these difficulties may become more serious over time.

Interestingly, teachers did not rank school-related concerns as the strongest causes of educational disengagement. Although inadequate facilities and limited instructional resources were recognized, these were generally viewed as secondary compared with family and social influences. This somewhat differs from studies that strongly connect school withdrawal with academic frustration and institutional barriers (Henry et al., 2020). In the present study, teachers appeared to see the learners' home environment and social surroundings as more immediate influences affecting educational participation.

There was also a noticeable difference between how teachers and other respondent groups viewed the problem. Compared with parents and out-of-school youth, teachers placed greater emphasis on family-related conditions. This may be because educators observe learners regularly over long

periods of time. Through classroom participation, attendance records, and daily interaction, teachers are often able to notice behavioral changes and patterns linked to limited support at home. Meanwhile, learners themselves may focus more on peer influence and community realities because those are the situations they encounter more directly in everyday life.

Looking at the findings as a whole, teachers seemed to view educational disengagement as a gradual process rather than a sudden decision. Their responses point toward the combined influence of family conditions, peer relationships, emotional well-being, and community environment on learners' educational experiences. The findings also suggest that addressing the problem of out-of-school youth requires more than improving academic instruction alone. Stronger cooperation among schools, families, and local communities may be necessary in order to better support adolescents living in geographically isolated areas.

Table 3. Weighted Mean and Rank of Factors Contributing to OSY Status as Perceived by Teachers

Rank	Item	Description	Weighted Mean
1	S7	Lack of parental supervision	4.11
2	S14	Health problems	4.06
3	S12	Negative peer influence	3.89
4	S10	Family problems	3.83
5	S13	Early involvement in work	3.78
5	S4	Bullying/peer pressure	3.78
5	S5	Distance/travel difficulties	3.78
5	S3	Teacher–student relationship	3.78
5	S19	Lack of livelihood opportunities	3.78
10	S9	Parents' low education	3.72
10	S20	Community safety issues	3.72
12	S11	Lack of motivation	3.67
12	S16	Lack of community programs	3.67
12	S8	Lack of supervision	3.67
15	S17	Presence of vices	3.61
16	S6	Financial difficulties	3.56
16	S15	Preference for recreation	3.56
16	S18	Leaders not addressing dropout	3.56
19	S2	Lack of learning support	3.28
20	S1	Lack of school facilities	3.17

Summary of Weighted Mean and Rank by Factor Domain (Teachers' Perceptions)

Rank	Factor Domain	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1	Personal/Peer-related	3.79	Strongly Agree
2	Family-related	3.78	Strongly Agree
3	Community-related	3.67	Agree
4	School-related	3.56	Agree

Comparative Analysis of the Perceptions of Out-of-School Youth, Parents, and Teachers

The comparative analysis revealed both common patterns and notable differences in how out-of-school youth, parents, and teachers perceived the factors contributing to school discontinuation in the clustered upstream barangays of Dolores, Eastern Samar. Across all respondent groups, personal and peer-related factors consistently emerged as the most influential contributors to educational disengagement. This shared perception suggests that social environment, peer

relationships, and learner motivation were widely recognized as central influences affecting adolescents' educational participation.

The consistency of these findings across respondents reflects the growing body of literature emphasizing the role of adolescent socialization in shaping educational behavior. Kindermann (2020) explained that peer groups significantly influence learners' academic engagement, motivation, and sense of belonging within school environments. Adolescents often develop attitudes and behavioral patterns that mirror the



norms of their peer groups, particularly in communities where educational persistence is not strongly reinforced. In the present study, respondents repeatedly associated peer influence, exposure to vices, and declining interest in schooling with the gradual weakening of learner attachment to formal education.

At the same time, the findings also support the observations of Henry et al. (2020), who described school disengagement as a progressive process rather than a single event. According to their study, dropout behavior often develops through accumulated experiences of absenteeism, declining motivation, weakened participation, and growing involvement in non-academic activities. The current findings reflect a similar pattern in which educational disengagement appeared to evolve gradually through the interaction of social, behavioral, and environmental pressures affecting learners within their communities.

Despite this general agreement, important differences emerged among the respondent groups regarding the relative importance of family-related and school-related factors. Teachers placed stronger emphasis on parental supervision, family guidance, and household support than did out-of-school youth and parents themselves. From the perspective of teachers, weak parental involvement appeared closely associated with absenteeism, declining classroom participation, and reduced learner accountability. This finding aligns with the work of Benner et al. (2021), who emphasized that parental support and educational involvement remain important protective factors against learner disengagement and school withdrawal.

In contrast, out-of-school youth and parents tended to assign greater importance to peer influence and community exposure than to family conditions. This partially contrasts with several international studies where household poverty and parental support were identified as primary predictors of educational persistence (World Bank, 2022). One possible explanation is that many families in the study area may already perceive economic hardship as a normal aspect of rural life. As a result, respondents may have viewed peer relationships and environmental exposure as more immediate and visible influences affecting learners' day-to-day educational decisions.

Another notable finding involves the relatively lower ranking of school-related factors across all respondent groups. Although respondents acknowledged concerns such as learning difficulties, teacher relationships, and limited school resources, these were generally perceived as less influential compared

with peer dynamics and community conditions. This differs somewhat from educational studies conducted in more urbanized settings where institutional barriers, academic frustration, and school climate frequently emerge as dominant predictors of dropout behavior (OECD, 2022). The present findings suggest that within geographically isolated rural communities, educational disengagement may be experienced more through social and environmental realities than through institutional limitations alone.

Community-related influences also emerged consistently across respondents. Exposure to vices, limited youth opportunities, and weak support structures within the community were repeatedly associated with educational disengagement. This observation supports international reports emphasizing that educational exclusion among vulnerable adolescents is strongly shaped by broader social inequalities and limited developmental opportunities within marginalized communities (UNESCO, 2023; UNICEF, 2022). In remote areas where structured youth programs and educational support systems are limited, adolescents may become more susceptible to negative peer environments and weakened educational motivation.

What makes the present study particularly significant is the convergence of perceptions despite differences in stakeholder roles and experiences. Although respondents varied in how they interpreted specific contributing factors, all groups recognized that educational disengagement among out-of-school youth was not caused by a single isolated condition. Instead, the findings point toward a complex interaction of peer influence, learner motivation, family realities, and community environment operating simultaneously within the lives of vulnerable adolescents.

Overall, the comparative findings reinforce the importance of adopting holistic and context-sensitive approaches in addressing out-of-school youth concerns in geographically isolated communities. The results suggest that interventions focusing solely on financial assistance or school access may be insufficient if broader psychosocial and community-related influences remain unaddressed. Strengthening parental engagement, promoting positive peer environments, expanding youth development opportunities, and improving community support systems may therefore play an important role in sustaining educational participation among vulnerable rural learners.

Table 4. Comparative Summary of Weighted Means by Factor Domain

Factor Domain	OSY WM	Rank	Parents WM	Rank	Teachers WM	Rank
Personal/Peer-related	3.46	1	3.70	1	3.79	1
Community-related	3.42	2	3.57	2	3.67	3
School-related	3.35	3	3.55	3	3.56	4
Family-related	3.25	4	3.49	4	3.78	2

Top Contributing Factors Across Respondent Groups

Rank	OSY	Parents	Teachers
1	S17 – Community vices	S12 – Peer influence	S7 – Parental supervision
2	S12 – Peer influence	S17 – Community vices	S14 – Health problems
3	S11 – Lack of motivation	S15 – Recreation	S12 – Peer influence



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The study revealed that the experiences of out-of-school youth in the clustered upstream barangays of Dolores, Eastern Samar were shaped by several conditions occurring at the same time. For many respondents, leaving school did not happen because of one specific problem alone. Instead, educational disengagement appeared to develop slowly through everyday experiences involving peer influence, weak motivation to continue schooling, family situations, and exposure to conditions within the community.

One pattern consistently seen in the responses was the strong influence of peers and social environment. Out-of-school youth, parents, and teachers commonly connected school discontinuation with negative peer groups, exposure to vices, loss of interest in schooling, and growing participation in non-academic activities. These findings show how adolescents' surroundings may gradually influence the way they think about education and future goals.

Community conditions were also repeatedly mentioned by respondents. Some adolescents were exposed to environments where risky behavior, limited opportunities, and weak youth support systems were already common realities. In situations like these, remaining engaged in school may become more difficult, especially for learners who already experience personal or family struggles. Similar concerns have been discussed in reports involving marginalized and socially vulnerable communities (UNESCO, 2023; UNICEF, 2022).

Although poverty and financial difficulty were present in the lives of many respondents, these were not always identified as the strongest reasons for leaving school. Many out-of-school youth and parents talked more about peer influence and community exposure than household problems. Teachers, however, focused more on lack of parental supervision and weak support at home. The difference in responses may be connected to the different ways each group experiences and observes the situation of adolescents in the community.

Another observation from the study was the lower emphasis placed on school-related concerns. Respondents acknowledged problems involving school resources, learning difficulties, and classroom experiences, but these were generally viewed as less influential compared with social and environmental conditions. In the study area, adolescents seemed to experience educational disengagement more through their everyday surroundings than through institutional factors alone.

The findings suggest that the problem of out-of-school youth in geographically isolated communities is closely tied to broader social realities affecting adolescents. Because of this, addressing the issue may require more than improving school access or providing financial assistance. Strengthening family involvement, creating healthier peer environments, improving community support, and sustaining learner motivation may all contribute to better educational participation among vulnerable youth.

Recommendations

Several recommendations are offered based on the findings of the study.

Schools may strengthen learner support programs for students showing signs of absenteeism, poor participation, or declining motivation. Guidance activities, mentoring, and peer support programs may help learners remain connected to school. Stronger communication between schools, parents, and community leaders may also help identify concerns affecting learners before prolonged disengagement occurs.

Teachers may continue giving attention not only to academic performance but also to the social and emotional conditions experienced by learners. Monitoring attendance patterns, classroom behavior, and changes in participation may help identify adolescents who are becoming vulnerable to school withdrawal. Maintaining open communication with families may also improve learner support.

Parents and guardians may be encouraged to become more actively involved in the education of adolescents. Regular guidance, supervision, and emotional support at home may help strengthen learners' interest in continuing their studies. Parenting activities and community awareness programs may also help families better understand the importance of consistent educational support.

Local government units and barangay officials may consider developing more youth-centered activities within the community. Programs involving sports, leadership, skills training, and recreational activities may provide adolescents with more positive social environments and reduce exposure to risky behaviors.

Support programs intended for out-of-school youth may also be expanded through alternative learning opportunities, counseling services, livelihood assistance, and community-based educational activities. These programs may help adolescents continue learning and improve future opportunities even after leaving formal schooling.

Future researchers may further examine other concerns related to educational disengagement, including mental health, digital access, migration, family instability, and the long-term experiences of out-of-school youth living in rural communities. Qualitative studies may also provide deeper understanding of the personal experiences behind school discontinuation.

The results of the study may serve as reference for schools, communities, and educational stakeholders in developing localized interventions aimed at strengthening learner retention and reducing the number of out-of-school youth in geographically isolated barangays.

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