

Early School Leaving, a Worry in Algerian Secondary Schools Case of Ahmed Zabana and Ksar Chellala, Tiaret And 11 Decembre Secondary Schools/ Tissemsilt

التسرب المدرسي المبكر، قلق في المدارس الثانوية الجزائرية حالة أحمد زبانا وقصر شلالا وتيارت ومدرسة 11 ديسمبر الثانوية / تيسمسيلت

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Abstract:

The phenomenon of early school leaving is a significant societal issue prevailing in the Algerian educational system recently. This study attempts to investigate reasons behind students' abandonment of secondary schools. To do so, a sample of 50 early school leavers has been used. Namely; 25 females and 25 males, finished a battery of survey that was planned to empirically differentiate altered factors that push students to leave schools early. A semi-structured interview was also conducted with 15 teachers to gather data about students' decisions to quit studying earlier and play a role in student attrition that had not been previously considered. Results show that classroom disengagement has a direct relationship with leaving school. Recommendations are set at least to reduce the increasing rate of secondary school students' early leaving.

Key words: early school leaving, school leavers, secondary schools classroom disengagement, school failure, Algerian educational system.

ملخص:

تعتبر ظاهرة ترك المدرسة المبكرة قضية اجتماعية مهمة سادت في نظام التعليم الجزائري مؤخرًا. تحاول هذه الدراسة تفحص أسباب تخلي الطلاب عن المدارس الثانوية. للقيام بذلك، تم استخدام عينة مكونة من 50 طالبًا تخرجوا من المدرسة مبكرًا. يسمى؛ أنتمت 25 أنثى و 25 ذكرًا مجموعة من الاستطلاعات التي كان من المقرر أن تفرق تجريبياً بين العوامل المتغيرة التي تدفع الطلاب إلى

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مغادرة المدارس مبكراً. كما تم إجراء مقابلة شبه منظمة مع 15 معلماً لجمع بيانات حول قرارات الطلاب بالتوقف عن الدراسة في وقت مبكر ولعب دور في تناقص الطلاب الذي لم يتم اعتباره سابقاً. تظهر النتائج أن فك الارتباط في الفصل له علاقة مباشرة بترك المدرسة. تم وضع التوصيات على الأقل لتقليل المعدل المتزايد للمغادرة المبكرة لطلاب المدارس الثانوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التسرب المدرسي المبكر، تاركو المدرسة، فصل الصفوف من المدارس الثانوية، النفور من الفصل الدراسي، رسوب مدرسي، نظام تعليمي جزائري

1. Introduction

Leaving out schools has been known as a silent epidemic, a crisis and a challenge, thus most of the happening problems are an outcome of it. The decision to leave out schools is risky and costly not only to students but also to society. A significant number of them go on to become unemployed, living in poverty, receiving public assistance, in prison, unhealthy, divorced. In this case, studies on leaving out secondary schools may not be enough; therefore, a series of techniques, and measures are needed to keep the students in schools.

This investigation deals with students who left secondary schools, the aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon from the perspectives of those who had experienced it, teachers and parents. These efforts were set to paint a more in-depth picture of what made these students leaving out secondary schools, and what might have helped them complete their secondary school education. For the teachers, to see if they are aware of those students who are tending to leave school before completing their studies and are they ready to fight this. With the parents, closely the same thing with the teachers except if they were giving support to their children who leave out school and especially if they were able of doing something that would change their children minds.

The current study tends to answer the following questions:

1--What reasons stand behind early secondary school leave?

2-Is there a relationship between classroom disengagement, school failure and early school leaving?

To answer this question, the following **hypotheses** are suggested:

1-Classroom disengagement is a factor that lead to school failure.

2-School failure is the main reason that lead students to leave school.

2. Literature Review:

2.1. Finn's Models and Withdrawing from School

This paper labels two theories for understanding the phenomenon of early school leaving as a progressive process that may activate in the earliest grades. There is focus on Finn Jermy's models to explain it: First, he labeled the Frustration-Self-Esteem Model, theorizes that the early antecedent to school withdrawal is early school failure which in turn leads to low self-esteem and then leads to problem behaviors. Sooner or later, students either willingly leave school or are detached (pushed out) from school because of their difficult behavior. It offers one perspective for understanding this phenomenon as well. "The Participation- Identification Model", in this model, the initial originator to withdrawal is the lack of involvement in classroom activities which in turn causes to low school performance and then to less identification with school. Participation in

school activities includes responding to teacher directions and class necessities, participation in homework and other learning activities, participation in non-academic school activities, and participation in the control of the school. This second model emphasizes on the importance of a youngster’s “bonding” with school; when this does not occur, the likelihood of problem behavior, including skipping classes and truancy, disruptive behavior and leaving school before graduation, are increased.

Figure1.Frustration-self-esteem models, Gold and Mann (1984:385)

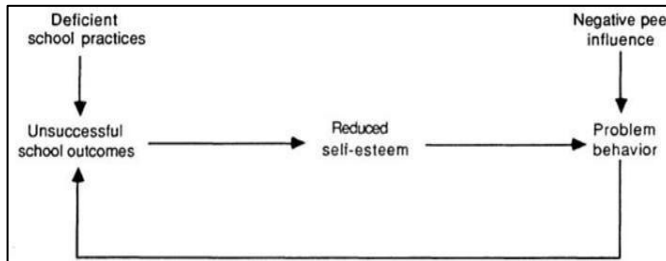


Figure2 .Participation-identification models, (Bernstein and Rulo,1976:158)

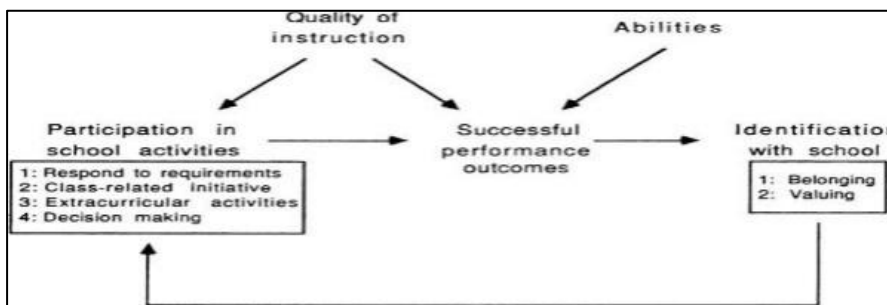
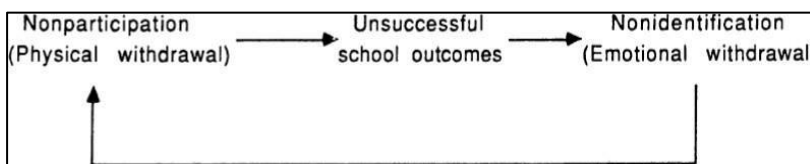


Figure3 .Participation – identification models, (Bernstein and Rulo 1976:163)



2.2. The Affective Filter Hypothesis

First labeled in late seventies, the affective filter crucial is like a mental wall that increases in a student’s head reducing or efficiently closing of their ability to acquire (Newmann, F. M. (1981). The three explanations that subsidize to affective filter are worry, motivation and self-confidence, to decrease a student’s affective filter, a teacher may need to lower student anxiety and raise motivation and self-confidence (Hagborg, J. M., Berglund, K. & Fahlke, C. 2018).

This paper labels two theories for understanding the phenomenon of early school leaving as a progressive process that may activate in the earliest grades. The frustration-self-esteem has been used for years in the study of juvenile delinquency pinpoints school failure as the starting point in a cycle that may terminate in the student's refusing, or being pushed out by the school. The participation-identification focuses on students "engagement schooling", with both behavioral and emotional components. According to this devising, the probability that students will efficaciously complete 12 years of schooling is to get the most out of if he or she preserves numerous, increasing methods of participation in school-relevant activities. The failure of students to partake in school and class activities, or to improve a sense of identification with school, may have important damaging

penalties. The ability to operate modes of participation positions favorable possibilities for further research as well as for involvement efforts.

3. Methodology

The current research has been conducted in two secondary schools: Ahmed Zabana secondary school Ksar Chellala, Tiaret and 11 Decembre Secondary School, Tissemsilt. The appropriate type of sampling is that of stratified sampling. So, the population concerns students who left these secondary schools from different grades and different streams. The total sample consisted of 25 males and 25 Females. In addition, a total of 30 participants (15 teachers) were interviewed to gather their views. So, a mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative research was used to know factors related to early school leaving. This method is appropriate to accomplish the objective of investigating interaction between disengagement and school failure. The current research is both descriptive and exploratory. Therefore, tools of data collection are school leavers questionnaire, teachers and parents' interviews

3.1. School Leavers Questionnaire: The questionnaire consists of 12 different questions which are closed-ended and open-ended.

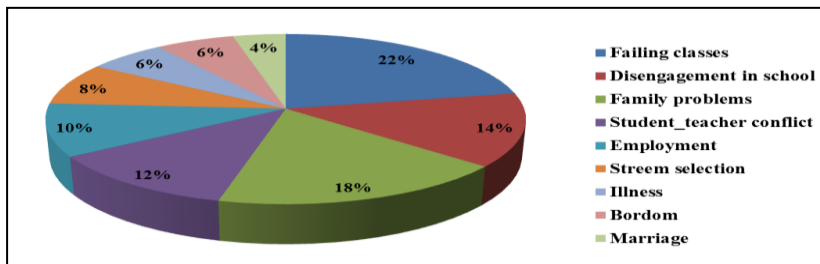
3.2. Teacher's Interview: The interview contains 12 questions and they are all open ended where there are different answers but still presented in a limited way to facilitate data analysis.

4. Data Analysis and the Interpretation of Results

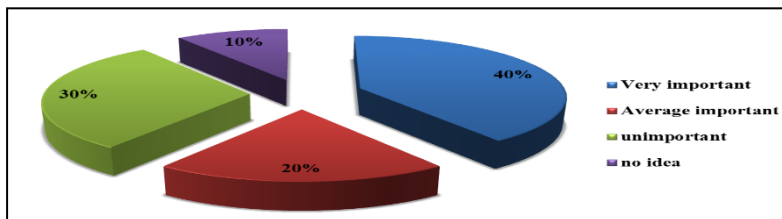
This step allows the researcher to interpret respondents' answers. Therefore, all the data collected during the research are analyzed using Microsoft Excel which is widely used for data analysis

4.1. School leavers' Questionnaire Analysis

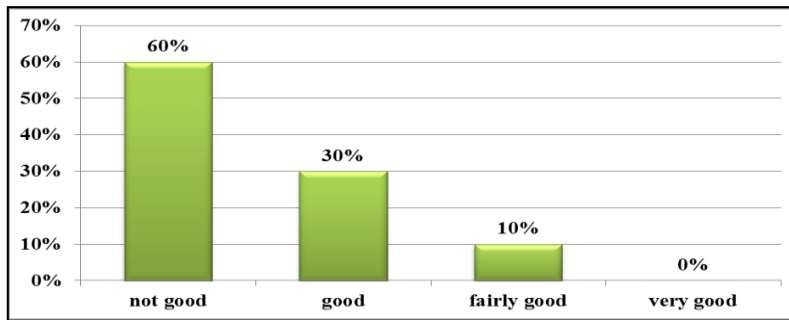
Question 01: Why did you leave school early?



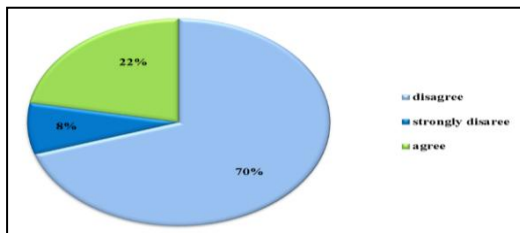
Question 02: How do you feel about School and the importance of education?



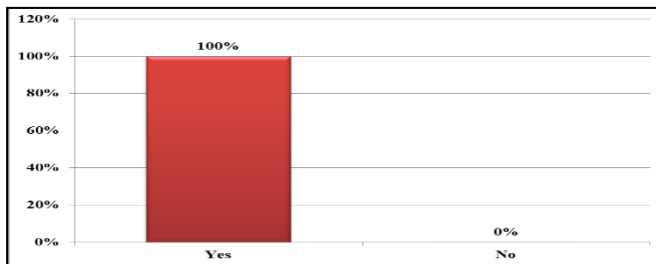
Question 03: How was your relationship with your teachers?



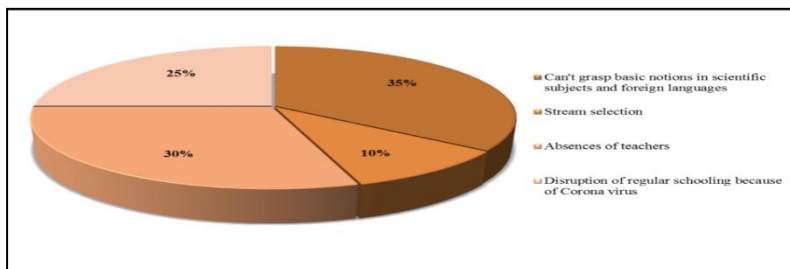
Question 04: Did teachers encourage you to participate in classroom?



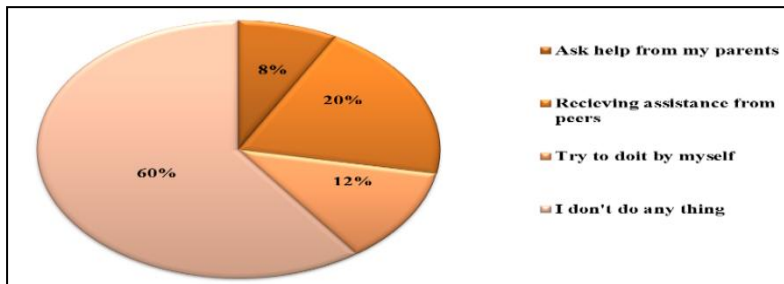
Question 5: Did you fail in some school subjects?



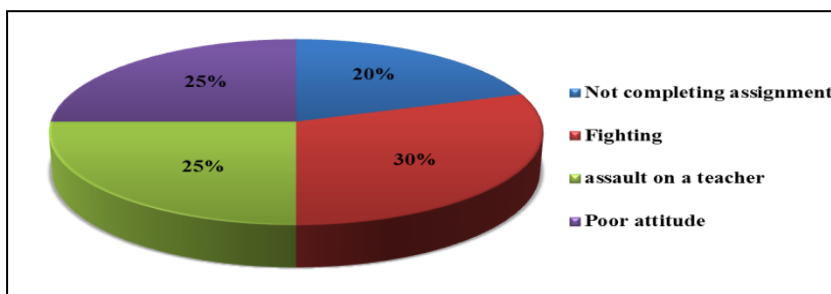
Question 06: What were the reasons behind failing in those subjects?



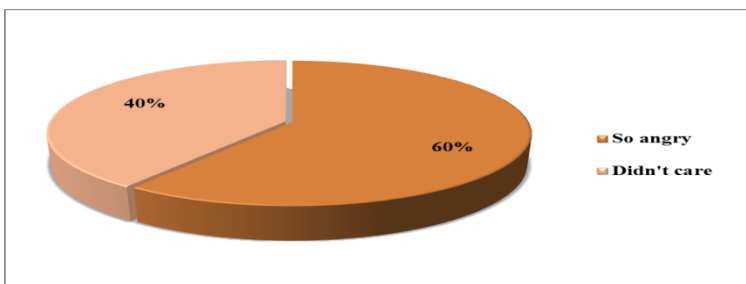
Question 7: What did you do when you did not understand assignments or instructional activities



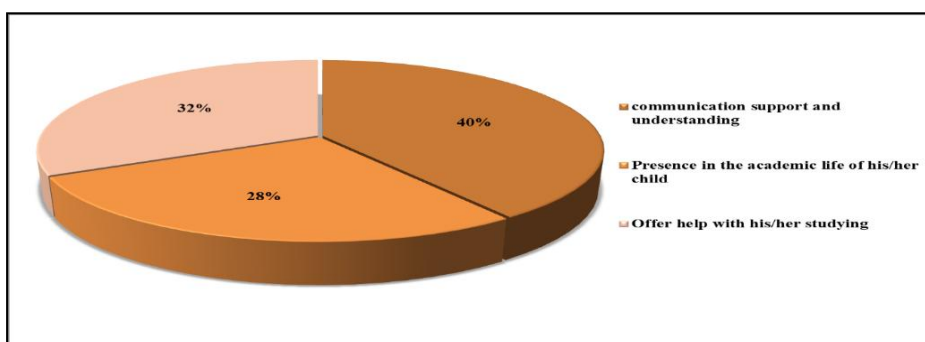
Question 08:What were the reasons for suspension?



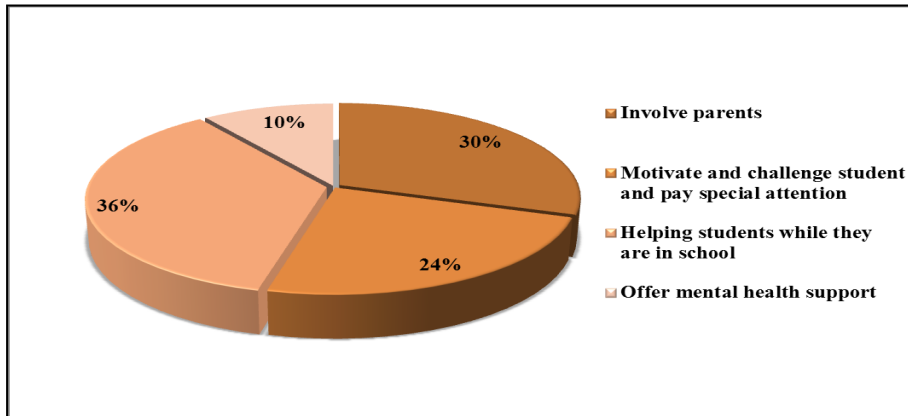
Question 9: How did your parents react about your decision to quit school?



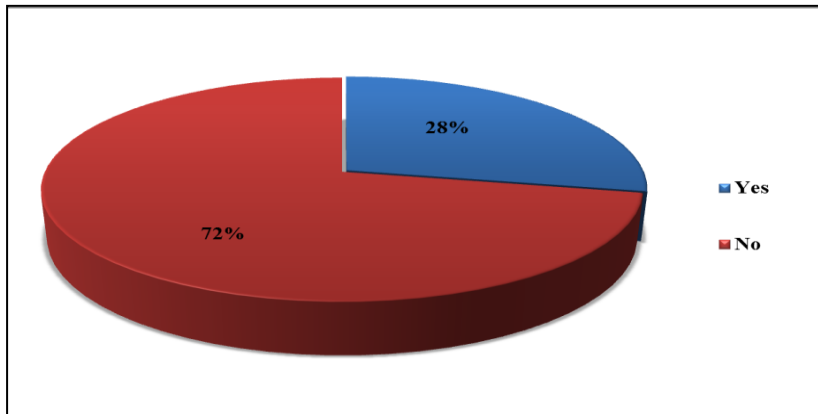
Question 10: What could parents do to persuade you not to leave school?



Question 11: What could the school staff do to Persuade you not to leave school?



Question 12: Was leaving school the right decision?



4.1.1. Findings and Discussions:

Findings from school leavers’ questionnaire indicate that early school leaving is caused by school factors especially those related to class disengagement and school failure. The respondents emphasize disengagement from school as caused by teachers themselves and students’ capabilities, the language package and skills to express themselves.

The decision to leave school is typically not an instantaneous event Azzam, A. M. (2007) Many students who left school were experiencing disengagement from school that has been foreshadowed by indicators of withdrawal e.g., poor attendance and unsuccessful school experiences (e.g., academic or behavioural difficulties) (Rumberger, 1995). These students are not accepted in the main stream because of their poor performance in an exam oriented system. The latter thus argues a lack of self-esteem.

4.2. Teacher’s Interview Analysis:

Question 1: What are the reasons inside school and outside it that lead students to take the decision to leave school early? All the interviewed teachers agree on external and internal forces that are likely to influence many students to take the decision to quit school.

Question 02: How do you identify a young person in danger of early school leaving? All the teachers state that poor school results in almost all subjects, lack of motivation and absences

Question 03: What observations have you noted about the physical, emotional and behavioural characteristics of the students at risk of leaving school? Teachers say that these students feel bored, showing no interest and talkative and disturbing their classmates during the sessions.

Question 04: Could you describe your relationship with students at risk of leaving school? All teachers agree on that they become so understanding and supportive because in such a sensitive situation that is all that is needed.

Question 05: What contact do you have with families of students who are at risk to leave school? Most teachers report that they don't contact families of school leavers .

Question 06: How would you describe the home environment and families of school leavers? The majority of the teachers have no idea about their home and families environment

Question 07: How important is teachers/parents' team work to avoid school failure?

All teachers agree on the point that teacher parent association is so important .

Question 08: How would you describe your interaction with students at risk of leaving school? Most of teachers agree on the point that there is no social interaction with those school leavers they don't care, they don't interact and they don't communicate.

Question 09: How would you describe your thoughts and feelings when you learn that one of your students has decided to leave school? All of the interviewed teachers agree that they feel a bit guilty and responsible.

Question 10: What strategies did you employ to improve student's academic achievement and to try to prevent him/her from leaving school? The teachers come to an understanding in which they can give hope to students who are at risk of dropping out. In fact, to be closer to them, to

listen to their problems and to encourage them to work in groups and to assign them a second chance activities, some homework that can change their mind. Teachers should engage them as role plays, classroom responsible for example and to remind them that they do exist in this class. Finally, teachers should sit together and select those who are at risk and to suggest solutions in order to save them from failure.

Question 11: What prevented you from applying other strategies?

All teachers agree that lack of time, lack of training, lack of resources prevent them from applying strategies to cope with school failure.

Question 12: What can educational officials do to meet the needs of students in our schools so that to reduce the rate of early school leaving?

According to the respondents, in order to achieve that goal, educationalists should take charge of this group of students who are facing a problem at school. After selecting them in the first year, special programmes should be dedicated to them and also to engage them in the school activities as a whole for example to add more tutorial sessions and to reduce teachers' absences.

4.3.1. Findings and Discussions:

Teachers proposed different strategies related to family and school factors influencing leaving school. They emphasized intervention and prevention strategies to reduce the rate of early school leaving:

- 1) The importance of engagement with parents
- 2) Developing safe and conducive learning environment
- 3) Detecting early warning signs
- 4) Relevancy and joy in learning
- 5) Developing a more challenging curriculum
- 6) Personalizing learning through class

This research suggests that the majority of students questioned who chose an early exit from their educational career, their decision came at the end of a long process of disengagement from secondary schools. According to this study, classroom engagement has a strong relationship with the decision to leave secondary schools; however, it is not a direct relationship which means that a school leaver is not supposed to be only disengaged from classroom activities but also a school failure. To be clearer, classroom disengagement exposes many problems that will lead the students to decide to quit the school.

Findings show that students who left school as responded to the questionnaire were school failures according to the questions that have been asked, all of them agreed on the point that they failed in one or more subjects.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the early school leaving issue is quite differently perceived regarding the categories of participants, namely teachers and students. Teachers' perception of the phenomenon of leaving secondary schools proves to be less objective than a student who has experienced such a problem. Besides, teachers' perception is relatively objective in the sense that they are closer to their students. The school leavers, however, have their personal arguments to blame the teachers in general for having failed at school.

5. Conclusion

The study attempts to examine the major possible reasons for early school leaving in Algerian Secondary Schools. Findings demonstrates a strong evidence that school leavers have always been disengaged of the classroom activities which leads them to school failure and then to take the decision to leave school. Besides this study concludes that the friendly atmosphere at school/classroom and general communication between teacher/students are the most important factor to prevent students from leaving school early. A class –teacher has much more understanding regarding children's interests, Learners' capacities, like/dislike of learning, what is happening with children during classes etc., comparing with illiterate family and parents.

Based on the main findings of this study, the following recommendations would help to reduce the rate of early school leaving; the teacher, the school and the parents should focus on students' needs and interests in their learning process and making them engaged in their learning activities, taking suitable measures to prevent school failure and therefore to control the phenomenon of early school leaving in Algerian secondary schools. A teacher and parents' cooperation and willingness are much important and effective than any other factors to engage students in their learning. This study suggests that learners need their families and teachers' support is essential to the students' perception of their own. There are needs that include wanting to be seen, to belong, to feel

included. There is a need to pay attention to the importance of engagement as central to educational outcomes, belongingness, academic achievement, and retention.

In spite of the fact that this work tried to cover a number of important factors of early school leaving, there are limitations of this study that should be considered in future research. Consequently, studies on multiple samples from different secondary schools could lead to more in-depth understanding of the problem. Then, another major limitation was the time and access to students, school leavers. Finally, other studies of the phenomenon can bring deep insights about it.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: School Leavers’ Questionnaire

Dear Students,

This questionnaire is about reasons behind the problem of early school leaving in the Algerian secondary schools. Your collaboration is precious.

Background Information

Gender: Male Female

Age:

Withdrawal School Year:

Class and stream before leaving school:

Secondary school:

1-Why did you leave school early?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Stream Selection | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disengagement in School | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Student/Teacher Conflict | <input type="checkbox"/> | Failing Classes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Employment | <input type="checkbox"/> | Family Problems | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Marriage Boredom | <input type="checkbox"/> | Illness | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2- How do you feel about school and the importance of receiving education?

- a) very important b) average importance c) unimportant d) don't know

3- How was your relationship with your teachers?

- a) very good b) fairly good c) good d) not good at all

4-Did teachers encourage you to participate and do your classroomactivities?

- a) agree b) disagree c) strongly disagree

5- Did you fail in school subjects? Yes No

6- If yes; what were these subjects?

.....

7- What were the reasons behind Failing in those Subjects?

.....

8-What did you do when you didn't understand assignments or activities?

- a) ask help from my parents b) receive assistance from peers
 c)try to do it by myself d) don't do anything

9-What were the reasons of suspension?

- a) not completing assignment b) fighting c) assault on a teacher d)poor attitude

10- How is your relationship with your parents ?

- a) very good b) fairly good c) good d) not good at all

11- How did they react when they noticed that you left school?

- a) they were so angry b) they didn't care at all

12- What could your parents do to persuade you not to leave school?

.....

13-What could the school staff have done to persuade you not to leave school?

.....

14- With hindsight do you feel that leaving school was the right decision?

.....

Thank You

Appendix 2: Teachers' Interview

Dear teachers,

This interview is conducted to find reasons behind the problem of early school leaving in the Algerian secondary schools.

1. What are the reasons inside school and outside it that lead students to take the decision to leave school early?
2. How do you identify a young person in danger of early school leaving?
3. What observations have you noted about the physical, emotional and behavioural characteristics of the students at risk of leaving school?
4. Could you describe your relationship with students at risk of leaving school?
5. What contact do you have with families of students who are at risk to leave school?
6. How would you describe the home environment and families of school leavers?
7. How important is teachers/parents team work to avoid school failure?
8. How would you describe your interaction with students at risk of leaving school?
9. How would you describe your thoughts and feelings when you learn that one of your students has decided to leave school?
10. What strategies did you employ to improve student's academic achievement and to try to prevent him/her from leaving school?

11. What prevented you from applying other strategies?
12. What can educational officials do to meet the needs in our schools so that to reduce the rate of early school leaving?

Thank You