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TITLE:

An analysis of socio-cultural and structural barriers to school reintegration for teenage adolescent mothers in secondary schools in Rushinga district.

A RESEARCH PROJECT

BY

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APPROVAL FORM

The under signed certify that they have read and recommend that Bindura University of Science Education for acceptance, a research project entitled, "AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIO-CULTURAL AND STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO SCHOOL REINTEGRATION FOR TEENAGE ADOLESCENT MOTHERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RUSHINGA DISTRICT ", submitted by ETHEL NDORO in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Bachelor (Honours) Degree in Development Studies.

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Dedication

To my adoring mother, your continual support, guidance, and encouragement have propelled me in my academic career. You have been a role model to me in being selfless, kind, and love me no matter what. This dissertation is evidence of your unwavering belief in me. I will always be thankful for all your sacrifices for our family, and for the values you have given me. Because of your presence, guidance, and love my whole life, you have made me what I am today. I thank you and dedicate this to you in all love and appreciation! I'd like to thank my amazing family, each one of you has helped shape me and I love, support and encourage you with your endeavors. For I know that all the days you are in my life you have made a great difference to me and I am grateful for the moments, laughter and memories. This is not just my achievement, it's yours, for without your support and belief in me, we would not be able to do this. With love, gratitude and appreciation, I dedicate this dissertation to all of you.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the socio-cultural and structural challenges faced by adolescent mothers' return to school in secondary schools in Rushinga District, Zimbabwe. Although Zimbabwe has a national re-entry policy that ensures pregnant girls and teenage mothers can return to school after childbirth, most teenage mothers in rural districts, such as Rushinga District, do not return to school. The study sought to examine the experiences of parents, school administrators and Local Authorities in the reintegrating process and discuss potential strategies and policy measures that may facilitate effective school reintegration. The research design employed was qualitative with semi-structured interviews of the 7 participants: 1 School Head, 3 teenage mothers and 3 mothers'/fathers/carers. The research results showed that the problematic factors affecting school reintegration are socio-cultural barriers (community stigma, peer pressure to marry, moral judgment, shame) and structural barriers (poverty, and conditions in the school that are not present in the national policy). The study recommends that there is a need to carry out a district wide adolescent awareness campaign for in-school adolescents both boys and girls, there is a need to develop an evidence based re-entry implementation toolkit for the local education authorities and school heads in Rushinga District, establish a peer mentoring and resilience building programme for the adolescent mothers in secondary schools, and practice of compassionate re-entry training in secondary schools and within the community all the school staff and community leaders should be trained for reintegration of the adolescent mothers to school.

ABBREVIATIONS

ZIMSTAT – Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency

ZDHS – Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund

CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

MDGs – Millennium Development Goals

BEAM – Basic Education Assistance Module

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CHAPTER 1.

1.1 Introduction

This section delivers a brief background of the study, problem statement, and limitations of the research, the main research objectives and research questions, definition of key terms as well as the significance of the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

All over the world, there is still the unequal situation that millions of girls are being left behind in the field of education, especially in developing areas. According to UNESCO (2013), more than 34 million adolescent girls were out of school and have not had access to the necessary skills required for life and work. While the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aimed at eliminating gender disparities in education by 2015, poverty, cultural considerations and poor institutional arrangements all contributed to lack of progress (Cerise & Francavilla, 2012).This was reinforced through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a focus on inclusive and equitable quality education (Goal 4), and the promotion of gender equality (Goal 5). Despite this, however, there are still significant disparities in sub-Saharan Africa, where patriarchy-based social norms, economic factors and weak institutional support continue to affect girls' access to education (UNESCO, 2022). Adolescent pregnancy, child marriage, and gender-based violence in schools further contribute to exclusion and make it a challenge for adolescent girls and young women to return to school after giving birth (Tinago et al., 2023).

Education has always been a major component of Zimbabwe's national development policies. After independence in 1980 the Government introduced the Education Act of 1987 as a law, which states that all schoolchildren irrespective of sex should have free and compulsory education (Ndawi & Peresuh, 2005). The policy resulted in a dramatic increase in enrolments which reversed colonial-era inequalities (Nziramasanga, 1999). But many of these gains were lost during economic crises in the late 1990s and early 2000s. However, a combination of structural adjustment programmes, hyperinflation and public-funding erosion led to many children in the school dropping out of school, particularly in rural areas (World Economic Forum, 2015). The Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) introduced in 2003 was designed to assist vulnerable learners, but was frequently underfunded and experienced administration problems (ZimVac, 2014).

Socio-cultural norms are also strong obstacles. Families in many communities place greater importance on a boy's education than on a girl's, and believe that girls are destined only for marriage (UNICEF, 2012). School drop-outs are still caused by early marriage and teenage pregnancy (TBP). While the Education Amendment Act of 2020 places emphasis on ensuring that learners' rights are protected and that adolescents and those who are pregnant should not be excluded from or missed out of school, the implementation has been inconsistent—with some adolescent mothers even being subject to stigma from their teachers and fellow pupils (Health Times, 2023). Zimbabwe has signed on to different international and regional conventions and frameworks, such as CEDAW (1979) and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and national instruments include the National Gender Policy (2004) and Affirmative Action Policy (1999) (Wanjala, 2015). These commitments have yet to address the gender gaps in secondary school enrolment and completion, particularly in rural districts (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education 2022).

Rushinga District in Mashonaland Central Province, represents the interaction of socio-cultural, economic and structural challenges influencing girls' reintegration into the education sector. The district has conducted empirical research that identifies chronic poverty, long distances to school, child labour and early marriage as the key drivers in rural secondary school dropout with girls being the biggest victims (Mangwiro & Chinamasa, 2023). Preventing teen pregnancy is a major concern. UNICEF (2022) reports that adolescent fertility rates are highest in the rural districts including Rushinga, aggravated by high levels of poverty, low levels of sexuality education and limited reproductive health services. To address the issue of adolescent

friendly clinic, SAfAIDS has set up an adolescent friendly clinic in 2019 that provides counselling and support on reproductive health (Zimbabwe Situation, 2019). But the majority of teen moms still do not re-enroll in school. Despite the government's re-entry policy, recent national results show that less than 5% of young Zimbabwean mothers return to school after giving birth, with reliance on traditional childcare arrangements involving grandparents, uncles, and neighbors to serve as their primary childcare support.

Currently, similar evidence from the region found that reintegration is dependent on a team of actions that involve the school, the family, and community health services (Mokoena, 2020). Therefore, local studies highlight that exclusion in Rushinga is not just a problem of poverty or policy deficiency, but is a problem of institutional and socio-cultural challenges which can be tackled through multisectoral collaboration (Mangwiro & Chinamasa, (2023).

1.3 Problem statement

Even though the Zimbabwean government is doing its best to ensure the right to education, the socio-cultural and structural barriers which stop teenage girls from re-entering school still remain in Rushinga District. From literature researched, there are critical gaps in understanding these barriers. Mtukwa (2018) gives a detailed analysis of the effectiveness of re-entry policy in Kwekwe, identifying the weaknesses of the policy and the need for legislations to be made, although limited geographically, it does not capture the unique socio-cultural dynamics of Rushinga District. Although there are studies on reasons for school dropouts in Rushinga, including those under the study by Chenge et al. (2017) that considers family issues like financial constraints and low parental education, the study's scope is wide and fails to capture the reintegration experiences of teenage mothers.

Further, community attitudes and stigma towards teen pregnancy have not been sufficiently studied in relation to reintegration outcomes for teenage mothers in rural communities. Additionally, little research has been conducted to determine the views of school administrators and teachers about school level implementation of re-entry policies. A gap in those studies is that they do not take into consideration localized barriers to the family and structural policy obstacles. Hence, this study aims to fill this gap and will involve analysing the policy and contextual perspectives that hinder the reintegration of adolescent teenage mothers at school, specifically in Rushinga District, secondary schools.

1.4 The aim of the study

The main aim of this study was to analyze the barriers that teenage mothers face when reintegrating into school after falling pregnant in Rushinga District, Zimbabwe.

1.5 Specific research objectives

1.To examine the structural and socio-cultural challenges that hinder school re-entry for teenage mothers.

2. To analyse the role of parents, school administrators, and local authorities in the school reintegration process for teenage mothers.

3. To explore the possible strategies and policy interventions that can promote effective school reintegration for teenage mothers in Rushinga District.

1.6 Main research question

What are the structural, socio-cultural, and institutional factors affecting school re-entry for teenage mothers in Rushinga District, and how can they be addressed?

1.7 Research Questions

1. What are the structural and socio-cultural challenges that hinder school re-entry for teenage mothers in Rushinga District?

2. What roles do parents, school administrators, and local authorities play in the school reintegration process for teenage mothers?

3. What strategies and policy interventions can be employed to promote effective school reintegration for teenage mothers in Rushinga District?

1.8 Significance of the study

The importance of this study is its potential to help in policy formulation, capacity building and change individual lives in Rushinga District. The findings will provide evidence-based information on the socio-cultural and structural challenges experienced in school re-entry which will support local education authorities and school leadership and community leaders in Rushinga in building their evidence base for effective school re-entry implementation. The findings can also have implications for the wider work on re-entry in Zimbabwe in making policies more responsive and inclusive.

From a practical standpoint, the study will help sensitise adolescents in Rushinga about the importance of educational investment and the impact of adolescent pregnancy on the community, promote responsible behaviours and nurture community support. Moreover, the study can be a powerful instrument for empowerment as it brings awareness about the possibility of success beyond childbirth, raising levels of resilience and teaching teenage mothers to turn the stigma into positive thinking and to pursue their academic dreams in the community. Overall, it promotes the implementation of school and community-based more compassionate approaches and a reintegration-friendly environment for teenage mothers in Rushinga.

1.9 Definition of key terms

Socio-cultural barriers: Barriers which are initiated by people's beliefs, attitudes and customs are referred to as Socio-cultural barriers. These are the community stigma (shame, gossip, laughter), pressure from traditional leaders to marry before going to school, and moral judgment (Muzingili 2025) that views teenage pregnancy as a sin.

Structural barriers: These involve the way schools, and government policies are structured (Chidarikire and Saruchena 2025). These include poverty (no money to pay school fees, uniform and transport), lack of creche facilities (no child care in school), and unfair school conditions not mentioned in the national policy.

School reintegration: the journey of teenage mother reentering the school after giving birth. According to Kudenga et al. (2025) it is not just about being enrolled in school, it is about remaining in school and finishing her education.

1.9 Study limitations

Poor availability of reliable data: No data on teenage drop-outs or data of re-entry policy implementation was available as a result of the rural setting of Rushinga District, the researcher relied on self-reported experiences.

Language barriers: Many participants spoke a local Shona dialect (ChiKorekore), which had to be interpreted and which may have led to misunderstandings or omission of subtle nuances in some areas pertinent to the issues of stigma and shame.

Sensitive information: The issue of teenage pregnancy is a sensitive one and some of the participants were not willing to share their experience because they were afraid of being judged or gossiped about as this affected the number of participants.

1.10 Chapter summary

This chapter provided the statement of the problem, aim, objectives of the study, significance of the study and the definition of key terms. The chapter also provides definition of the key terms of the study for better understanding. The chapter review of literature relevant to the research topic is the theme of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is an extensive literature review covering the field of education reintegration of pregnant girls and young mothers and a specific focus on the rural context of Zimbabwe. The review is structured based on the three objectives which were pursued in this study: structural and socio-cultural barriers and challenges to reentry, the role of key stakeholders in either facilitating or hindering reentry, and strategies and policy interventions that could enhance reentry for pregnant girls in a rural context, such as Rushinga, Mashonaland, Central Province. The chapter also offers the theoretical foundation that underpins this study, background to the research setting, and finally a synthesis of the literature and gaps in the research.

2.1 Theoretical Framework: Intersectionality as an Analytical Lens



Fig 2.1. The Feminist Theory of Intersectionality by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989).

This research examines the questions of intersectionality as a theoretical lens. Coined in 1989 by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, the term was used by her to describe how overlapping social identities (race, gender, class) generate experiences of oppression and privilege that cannot be understood through an analysis of the individual identities alone (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139). Crenshaw's work was a product of legal cases in which Black women's claims of discrimination were being rejected because the court could not imagine how both factors (race and gender) might have a cumulative effect. The basic concepts, however, date back before Crenshaw coined the term. As Black feminist activists, the Combahee River Collective (CRC) defined the basis of their lives in 1977 by claiming that "the synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives" (Combahee River Collective, 1977). Early versions of this formulation understood that oppression doesn't just exist as race, plus gender, plus class, but as a multiplicative rather than additive process, one which operates in ways that affect and are affected by each of these identities.

Today, intersectionality has become an international research paradigm for social justice, and is used in various disciplines to analyse the intersectionality in daily lives of individuals (Collins & Bilge, 2020). In the African context, scholars have used intersectionality to explore the interplay between colonial histories, post-colonial state and global economic order and local patriarchies on education outcomes (Tamale, 2020). An adaptation is very important with respect to contexts such as Zimbabwe, where the inequalities of the past have an impact on present realities.

In this study three fundamental principles of intersectionality are especially pertinent. First, social identities are not distinct and individuals don't experience gender without age or poverty

without rurality etc. In its place, these dimensions are mutually constitutive, each meaning the other (Collins, 2015). A pregnant girl in rural Zimbabwe is not just a girl who is poor and lives in a rural area. As a young teen in a patriarchal society with limited economic resources and geographically restricted access to services, her experience of pregnancy is heavily shaped by this. Each dimension affects the other dimension experience.

Secondly, power functions at various levels, structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal (Collins, 2000). Structural power is based on laws and policies that can either benefit or harm pregnant girls. The 2020 Education Amendment Act is a case of the "structural power" in the service of rights; yet, it has limits which demonstrate how the exercise of structural power can be undermined. In schools, disciplinary power exists in the ways that the institutional practices affect the likelihood of reentry, even though it is not necessarily explicit in the school's policies. Hegemonic power is manifested in cultural norms that define pregnant girls as morally irresponsible, and thus, how communities and families will respond. Interpersonal power is an everyday power that works through interaction with teachers, peers and members of the community who can stigmatize or support mothers returning to school.

Third, intersectionality cannot be done without paying attention to context; the modalities of intersecting oppressions vary according to historical, geographical and cultural particularities (Yuval-Davis, 2011). A pregnant girl in urban Harare where there is higher density of NGOs, and relative anonymity, is in a situation very different from that of a rural girl in Rushinga, when community policing is ubiquitous and traditional authorities have a great command. Such context sensitivity lends intersectionality to a study focused on a particular rural community, as illustrated below.

An intersectional approach to the Rushinga context shows the intersection of multiple identities. Gender is a basic axis of differentiation in Zimbabwean society. The pregnant learner is in a patriarchal system where there is differential value placed on male and female education. Zimbabwean literature shows that girls are socialized to be domestics and wives, boys to become wage labourers and heirs (Mugweni & Pearson, 2015). Once she becomes pregnant, she becomes a "mother" rather than a "student" and that brings with it other expectations and in community eyes, the end of her academic journey. The education of boys who father children continues undisturbed, whereas the girls are left to deal with the consequences.

Gender and age do not always go together. The pregnant girl is transitioning from child to adult in this liminal period where she is neither a child to be protected, nor an adult with autonomous

decisions. Being positioned through age means she might be cut out of grown-up support mechanisms and expected to live up to grown-up levels of moral responsibility. She doesn't have access to adult reproductive health care without parental authorization, can't make autonomous choices about education, can't exercise right without adult intervention. However, talking about the baby in the community places the entire blame on her pregnancy. Machoka (2024), in his study in Rushinga, records that gravid girls are often perceived as morally lax, and that this perception is resonated by elders, who consider the character of teens to be "formable.

The essence of rurality is its basic influence on the geography of opportunity and constraint. However, for a girl in Rushinga, the issue of community is different – a closed rural community with constant social oversight and little or no opportunity to change the stigma that tarnishes her. The data from 2022 ZIMSTAT also shows that while 68% of rural women have secondary or tertiary education, 91% of women in urban areas have attended secondary or tertiary education; this indicates that disparities in access to education go beyond simple access to education and are rooted in cultural and structural barriers. Rurality also implies the lack of infrastructure – fewer schools, longer distances to travel, low sanitation facilities, and poor transport. A 10-kilometre journey to school is not just hard for a pregnant girl in her third trimester, but for a new mother with a baby, it is impossible.

Poverty adds to disadvantage when combined with all other axes. The 2023-24 Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS) reveals that women in the richest households are over four times more likely to have gone to secondary school than women in the poorest households (78% compared with 18%) (ZIMSTAT & ICF, 2024). The financial burden of school fees, uniforms, materials, especially on a poor girl, is all too heavy when added to the cost of child care required on a pregnant school girl. Families are compelled to make decisions about resource allocation that are impossible to make and evidence indicates that when resources are scarce, sons' education is given priority to that of daughters (Colclough et al., 2000).

There is also the issue of the religious and cultural affiliation. In post-land reform Zimbabwe, the study of educational commitment shows that there are wide differences between various religious denominations. Scoones and Chatikobo (2025) reported that children in Apostolic churches—especially those that are polygamous—are not sent to school beyond primary school; and children are hired as farm labourers. A pregnant girl from a conservative

community can be confronted by multiple obstacles: her pregnancy can be interpreted theologically as a punishment for a sinful action; she can be told that a girl's education is disrupted automatically, and thus not a rights violation that needs to be addressed.

This study is especially suited for intersectionality in three ways. First, pregnant girls in rural Zimbabwe are literally in an intersectional space – the space this frame is intended to call attention to. Second, the focus on multiple levels of power in intersectionality resonates with this study, which accounts for formal policies and informal practices. Third, as intersectionality's naming of the context specificity of experiences suggests, a focus on a single community as with Rushinga is important because experiences are different in different places that need research in those places.

2.2.1 Zimbabwe's Evolutionary History of Educational Rights.

Zimbabwe's current education laws are shaped by its colonial past. During the Rhodesian period, education was racially divided, there was a separate and unequal understanding of the education of European, Asian, Coloured and African children (Nherera, 2000). Education for African children was carefully restricted and meant to create labourers instead of intellectuals, and even their education for girls was neglected. Teachers' education was seen as the most risky aspect of education as women might gain the ability to break the traditional roles given them by the colonial administrators, and girls were less educated than boys. Such colonial legacy structures the inequality of education, decades after independence.

The Education Act of 1987 (Chapter 25:04), which was passed three years after Zimbabweans gained independence, was the first move towards establishing a national education system (Government of Zimbabwe, 1987). The Act was a merger of several ordinances issued during the colonial period and set up the framework for government and non-government schools. The new government's first concern in the early years of independence was the expansion of education, the construction of new learning institutions and the training of teachers. Enrolment grew rapidly and Zimbabwe reached the goal of universal primary education close to 100%. Even though, the Act brought about a great deal of access, there were still provisions that permitted the expulsion of girls who were pregnant. School officials had the authority to enforce "discipline" according to community standards and the Act didn't specifically mention pregnancy-related discrimination. In this legal framework a child's education was irrevocably disrupted by a young girl falling pregnant, and she was routinely expelled, thereby losing her right to continue with school education. (Musandu-Nyamutinga, 2015). These expulsions,

however, were justified by school authorities as essential to upholding the moral standards in schools and to prevent others from becoming pregnant.

Another key aspect of the 1987 Act was the differentiation between government and non-government schools (mission, community and private) (Government of Zimbabwe, 1987, Section 3). This distinction is relevant when considering access for pregnant girls since historically non-government schools, including many religious schools, had a greater discretion when considering admissions and could potentially deny access to pregnant learners based on moral or religious grounds (Chirimuuta & Gudhlanga, 2012). Mission schools in particular frequently had codes of conduct which made pregnancy a non-redeemable cause for exclusion and because of their semi-autonomous status, the Ministry of Education was unable to intervene.

With the new Zimbabwe Constitution of 2013, introducing for the first time an extensive and justiciable Bill of Rights, the legal landscape changed significantly. The Constitution's Chapter 4 is a list of rights which bind all branches of government as well as, in some instances, private actors. Two of the provisions are specific to girls' right to education in the context of pregnancy. It includes a right to basic education to be provided by the State to all citizens and to permanent residents and to further education to be made progressively available and accessible to all by reasonable legislative and other measures. (2) All recognised the right to initiate and sustain independent educational institutions at their own expense and of reasonable standards without discrimination on any basis contrary to this Constitution. This places education as a right, rather than a policy objective (Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013, Section 75). The right to basic education under subsection (1)(a) is an immediate right, which the State is obliged to deliver it now. The constitutional protection is now extended to mission schools and other non-government providers, by clear wording in subsection (2).

To ensure that the Education Act is aligned with the Constitution (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013) this was included as a legislative mechanism in the Education Amendment Act (No. 15 of 2019) signed into law in 2020. The Amendment contained a number of important elements. The most important change was the insertion in the Amendment of an explicit ban on the expulsion of girls when pregnant from school. The Amendment Act provides for the addition of a new provision to the principal Act which prohibits the expulsion of a learner and exclusion from school on the basis of pregnancy. This provision brought a change such that it changed the issue of administrative discretion into a right that could be enforced by law.

The amendment added the definition of “basic State-funded education”, which has implications on access. Whilst, basic State-funded education is defined as "education from early childhood education up to form four which shall be free of fees and levies payable by the pupil and shall be provided with learning and teaching material, facilities, infrastructure and resources subject to the provisions of section 75 of the Constitution" (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020, Section 2). It's a positive duty on the State -- not a mere prohibition on discrimination, but a positive duty to provide education without cost barriers.

Furthermore, the Amendment mandated that schools provide for children with disabilities, which also by implication provided for pregnant learners as well who might need accommodation (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020, Section 6). Although the provision does not specifically refer to pregnancy, the principle of reasonable accommodation (that educational institutions must accommodate the needs of their learners) is relevant for pregnant girls and young mothers who may need flexible schooling arrangements, breastfeeding breaks etc.

Even though of these progressive legal arrangements, research finds that there is a significant disconnect between law and implementation. Mudzongo and Dube (2022) reported that many school administrators in Zimbabwe were unaware of the provisions of the Act on pregnancy of learners (2020) affecting learners. More than half of the secondary school head teachers interviewed in Mashonaland East province in their study could not adequately describe the legal safeguards that are available for the protection of pregnant learners. This lack of awareness is not just informational, it is due to the deeper structural and attitudinal barriers to implementation.

However, an attitudinal gap exacerbates the awareness gap. Even if a school administrator is familiar with the law, he or she may not agree with it or be willing to implement it. Afrobarometer survey data for 2023 shows that despite the fact that 69% believe that pregnant pupils should be allowed to continue education, almost a third of Zimbabweans are either against or unsure about this right (Afrobarometer, 2023). There may be higher rates of opposition in rural areas where the traditional notions of gender and sexuality have even more influence. These attitudes are reflected in the interpretation and implementation of laws.

Resource gap additionally hampers implementation. In even the cases where schools would like to roll out support, they do not have the necessary resources to effectively support pregnant girls. There has been no sufficient government funding to replace lost fee income to support the 2020 Amendment's provision for basic education to be made fee and levy free. Schools still

collect a range of similar levys such as sports fees, examination fees, which act as a barrier to poor families. The Zvimba evictions case is a stark example of this: a government school needed $50 for fees and levies, two bags of cement, $10 for sportswear and $5 for a report book and was too expensive for the evictued families (Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2020).

Perhaps the most important monitoring and enforcement gap is. There are no systematic mechanisms in place to track compliance with the 2020 Act and no sanctions are in place for schools who continue to exclude pregnant girls. Legal rights are only so much paper until enforcement. If the girls are not allowed to return, they have few practical means to act if they are unaware of their rights, lack the means to go to court, or if they complain, face retaliation.

The extent to which the 2020 Act is implemented is very different in the various provinces of Zimbabwe. The results of the 2023-24 ZDHS survey shows that there are wide differences in educational outcomes, which are related to implementation capacity; in particular, the respondents from Mashonaland Central, which includes Rushinga, had the lowest literacy rates in the country, with 86% of women and 84% of men being able to read and write, while Bulawayo had the highest, with 99% of women and more than 99% of men able to read and write (ZIMSTAT & ICF, 2024). These variations are influenced by differences in social attitudes, institutional capacity and the presence of NGOs.

2.2.3 Knowledge of the Study Site: Rushinga District

Rushinga is a key location for studying pregnant girls' reintegration into education for a number of reasons: First, its low levels of literacy and high poverty rates make it a context that has many barriers to successful schooling, and successful interventions developed here could have relevance in other contexts with high levels of poverty. Second, the robust role of traditional authority and Apostolic churches offers the chance to explore how traditional authority and Apostolic churches affect reentry outcomes, a dimension that is largely underresearched in the current literature. Third, the lack of any significant NGO presence in the district, means that reintegration, if it does occur, takes place through the mechanisms of the communities and schools – and not through externally funded programmes – giving insights into 'organic' processes of reintegration involving community resources and relationships. These organic processes need to be understood in order to formulate sustainable strategies that will not rely on external funding.

2.3 Challenges of reintegration at the structural and socio-cultural level

The challenges faced by pregnant girls and young mothers re-entering school in rural Zimbabwe can be summarised as structural and socio-cultural, with there being a significant overlap between these categories and reinforcement.

2.3.1 Structural barriers

Structural barriers meaning institutional, economic and physical constraints of access to education. These are barriers that are built into the structure of educational systems, how resources are allocated and how economic markets function.

The most basic structural barrier is represented by poverty and direct costs of education. Even though there are constitutional guarantees of free basic education, significant costs are still borne on the side of the family. According to the 2023-24 ZDHS, "could not afford fees" was the most frequently reported "reason" for avoiding secondary school attendance among women who did not attend secondary school (ZIMSTAT & ICF, 2024). Enabling a pregnant girl to attend school could mean that the additional expenses of a pregnant girl fee, uniforms bought to accommodate pregnancy, materials and perhaps even childcare are beyond the means of already impoverished families.

Colclough et al (2000) have been able to analyse gender gaps in several countries and discovered a consistent trend whereby boys are preferentially treated compared to girls when family resources are inadequate to send all children to school. The reasoning is economic: sons should stay within the bounds of the family and support their parents in old age; daughters should marry out and the money they earn is for the benefit of their husbands' families. A pregnant daughter is even worse, her pregnancy a confirmation of her sexual activity which may make her less marriageable so further reducing any return on educational investment.

Improper geographic access and school distribution is the other structural barrier. In rural areas such as Rushinga, secondary schools are very rare. Many learners have to walk long distances - 10 kilometres and more - to secondary school. It's too far for a pregnant girl in her third trimester or for a young mother to walk with her baby. Most families only have the option of walking to get to and from destinations as public transport is poor and expensive. It is difficult to attend regularly because of the physical strains during the pregnancy and carrying an infant in the long distances trip.

A poor infrastructure exacerbates the issue of distance. Pregnant girls and young mothers have insufficient WASH facilities in many rural schools. Water is important for meeting pregnancy-

related needs, and for caring for infants. Most schools lack private and secure places to breastfeed or express milk. Toilet facilities (if available) are often pit toilets which are inaccessible for pregnant women and inappropriate for infants. Even if girls attend school, they can't go to school regularly because they lack adequate facilities.

Inside the educational system, there are additional obstacles because of institutional stasis. The school calendar and daily timetable are based on the needs of pupils with no caring responsibilities. Classes are from early morning to mid afternoon, and there is not a lot of flexibility. This strict schedule is not acceptable for the young mother who is breastfeeding on demand, has no child care options, and possibly health issues. Infrequently schools offer alternative part-time attendance, flexible scheduling, catch-up classes, or bring infants to school. The inflexibility of the system makes it difficult for even the most motivated mother-students to keep going.

Structural barriers include the lack of available information on legal rights and support. The Education Amendment Act of 2020 offers solid legal safeguards; however, they are no protection at all if the girls and families don't know they exist. Information on legal rights is not carried out into rural areas because there is not much media coverage and literacy rates are low. The reason that families assume that pregnancy would automatically end a girl's education is because it has always been that way — and no one has told them otherwise.

2.3.2 Socio-Cultural Barriers

Socio-cultural barriers include the norms, values, beliefs and social practices that influence community reactions to pregnant girls. These barriers are based on stigma, shame and social pressures.

Perhaps the most prevalent among socio-cultural barriers is stigma and moral judgement. Pregnant girls are seen as being morally irresponsible, as shameful to themselves and their families, on a regular basis. Machoka (2024, p. 45) discovered that in Rushinga, community discussion of pregnant girls focuses on personal shortcoming and not the wider structural issues of poverty and the lack of reproductive health education. This moral framing influences their responses, both at the family, school, and community level. Instead of seeing the pregnant girl as a rights-holder who is entitled to uninterrupted access to education, they see her as someone who has transgressed community values and who may have to face the consequences, within which may be included exclusion from education.

Pregnancy is a morally loaded issue with strong underpinnings in Zimbabwe's cultural norms, which highly value female virginity before marriage and view pregnancy as a disgrace for family. Girls' bodies are not considered as belonging to themselves, but rather to their families and thereby the families of their future husband. Pregnancy outside of marriage represents a theft of property the girl's reproductive capacity has been "spoiled" and her value as a bride diminished. There can be compensation to the boy's family from the families through Lobola negotiations, although this is only an economic solution and does not bring the girl's status back. She is branded for her sin.

Stigma does not just affect the girl, but impacts on the families, through the sense of family honour/dishonour and the collective shame. Tightly knit rural societies that have shared a history of generations and where social status is significant for marriage, economic and political connections, a daughter's pregnancy is a stain on the family's reputation. Other families may be unwilling to marry their sons or daughters with a boy or a girl from a family that has "loose" girls. The family can be cut off from the social sphere or be the target of social ridicule. Within this context, the pregnant girl's best option is to remain at home, where she is out of sight. If she was allowed to go to school, the family's disgrace would be on display to everyone, every day.

Household and community responses are influenced by the patriarchal attitudes towards girls' education. In many rural areas, the training of girls is not considered as important as that of boys. While being economically rational given poverty and patrilocal marriage this logic systematically disadvantages girls. If a girl of child-bearing age is found to be pregnant, her education is viewed as even less valuable and she has proved herself to be sexually active and is less marriageable and her education investment wasted. Families might not see the value of further supporting her education.

In areas, religious beliefs contribute to resistance to pregnant girls' education. Leaders in Apostolic churches prevalent in Rushinga teach that pregnancy out of wedlock is God's judgment for sin and the only remedy is repentance and withdrawal from the world, including from education. There are some Apostolic groups that believe in the fact that formal education itself is corrupting, especially for girls and may advise families to pull all the children out of schools (Scoones & Chatikobo, 2025). If the pregnant girl were from such a community, her decision to return to school would be a challenge to the religious authority—and with potentially severe spiritual and social consequences.

Peer attitude and school atmosphere provides other socio-cultural barriers. Even if girls are able to formal re-enrol, they may encounter hostility, mockery or exclusion of peers. Others may ostracize them, out of fear of association. They might be treated differently by teachers, expecting more of these students in terms of acceptable behaviour or making disparaging remarks. The school environment, which should be conducive to the learning process, can turn sour and exclusionary.

2.4. Overlap between structural and socio-cultural barriers

It can be important to have an understanding of these intersections in order to make effective interventions. Addressing the structural barriers through provision of fee scholarships only may not be effective if socio-cultural barriers are not addressed. A girl who does not have to pay school fees could abandon school because she is still stigmatized. Likewise, if there are structural barriers and only focus is laid on socio-cultural barriers, the community sensitisation campaigns may fail. If the family can't afford uniforms or childcare, and there is no community support for the girl to attend, she won't be able to attend school.

2.5 The role stakeholders in shaping re-entry outcomes

Gatekeepers are people who regulate or facilitate access to learning opportunities. The key gatekeepers for pregnant girls reintegration are parents, school authorities, teachers, traditional and religious leaders. These actors wield various kinds of power – all have the potential to either enable or impede a girl's return to school.

2.5.1 Parents and family members will be notifying the school.

The first gatekeepers are parents. Whether or not re-entry is allowed to a daughter in school depends directly on their attitudes of either supporting or making it difficult for her to go back to school. Studies in sub-Saharan Africa have consistently found that parental attitudes are a key influence on girls' education (Psaki et al., 2019). When parents are supportive, the girls return and continue to persevere; when parents are opposed, it is almost impossible to return. Parents have a variety of different factors to take into account in their decisions. There are economic calculations that are relevant: are the school fees, uniforms and materials affordable for the family? Are they able to do without the girl's labour at home? Ma, how will the little baby get looked after when you are off at school? These questions become especially relevant for poor families who rely on the labor of all family members in order to survive. Parents are faced with balancing the needs of education and survival.

Social aspects are of the same importance. It is important for parents to think about what the community will say about their daughter's re-entry at school. Will they be criticized, ridiculed, or rejected? Will other parents take their children out of the school that admits girls who are "bad"? Will the family's reputation be forever tarnished? Such social calculations are not simply about pride in the communities where social networks are integral for economic survival, social exclusion has also a material impact.

There is an influence of parents' educational background on their attitudes. The study conducted by Chenge et al (2017) revealed from the Rushinga study that parents with low levels of education are less inclined to promote further education for any of their children, especially for girls. Parents not personally benefiting from education may not appreciate its importance, or it may not be important to the agricultural livelihood, which parents hold their children to be their calling.

The gendered character of parent's authority is also important. In many families, they would have to consult their father for an opinion before he makes a decision on big spending, which includes school fees. Even if the mother feels this way, this is one of the decisions a father can make, and he won't be required to contribute if he says he doesn't want to pay for an education that he feels is being wasted. The mothers, probably more considerate, often do not have the money or authority to supersede fathers' decision making.

2.5.2 School administrators and teachers

The principal can be seen as playing a major gatekeeping role. Where there is no national policy to the contrary, school principals have control over the practical aspects of enrolment. They interpret policy and make decisions on individual cases and influence the school environment which girls returning to the school will face. Mudzongo and Dube (2022) reported that many of the school heads surveyed in Zimbabwe were unaware of the provisions of the Act 2020, while some aware might still refuse enrolment due to personal beliefs and/or perceived community pressure.

There are a number of factors that affect the decisions of school heads. Personal attitudes are important - one who considers pregnant girls to be immoral may not enroll even if the law is known. Even if personally supportive, their evaluation of community attitudes will cause them to turn down enrolment of pregnant girls so as not to create problems. The institutional position in which they are located – heads of mission schools might find themselves under conflicting pressures from church authorities who may not favour pregnancy and government authorities

who may demand inclusion. Their resources – some may find it easier to refuse permission for a girl to attend school when she is pregnant if the school does not have the facilities.

2.5.3 Traditional leaders

In rural Zimbabwe, it is customary for traditional leaders, headmen and village elders to have a great deal of influence on the norms and behaviour of the community. Their power is based on tradition, precedent and respect. They settle arguments, make land distributions and enforce community codes. They can influence community actions with their attitude to the education of pregnant girls. Changing community norms starts with a chief who is publicly affirming reintegration and promoting girls' education, and disapproves stigmatisation. When it is traditional for women to support their daughters, their confidence may be bolstered. On the other hand, a chief who disapproves of 'loose' girls and says that a pregnant girl should stay at home may make an exclusion legitimate and increase the stigma. Gatekeeping is also more direct by traditional leaders. They can be called upon by a family when they are making tough choices regarding their daughter's future. May be called on to help settle a conflict between families and schools. They are the voices that matter, because they are considered to be the voices of the community and of customary knowledge. Involving the traditional leaders as reintegration allies can be critical in changing the attitudes of the community.

2.6 Strategies and policy interventions

Other African contexts have identified a number of strategies that have facilitated reintegration of girls in education during pregnancy. These strategies came out of various contexts, but provide models with the potential for adaptation in rural Zimbabwe.

In Kenya, Zambia and Uganda, flexible schooling arrangements have been put in place (UNESCO, 2020). These include providing part-time school for girls with child caring responsibilities, catch-up classes for girls who have missed a significant amount of school, and letting girls have flextime. Some countries were able to create radio-based instruction and mobile learning groups during the COVID-19 school closures, which allowed for students who were unable to attend school regularly to learn. Such flexible attitudes appreciate that inflexible school timetables will not include those with caring responsibilities.

Some childcare provision has been tried, either by setting up childcare facilities at schools or by community-based arrangements. Some schools in Uganda have also introduced creches to allow young mothers to drop off their babies while they are in school and be cared for by older

women from the local community or childcare vocational programme students (UNGEI, 2019). It is good for mothers, babies and makes intergenerational links.

Economic barriers are addressed with economic support like fee waivers, material support (uniforms, supplies) and scholarships. Cash transfers: some programmes offer conditional cash transfers to families that keep girls in school, including young mothers. Others deliver direct aid with childcare fees. The pledge to achieve fee-free basic education in the 2020 Amendment – if it ever comes into being – would mark this kind of intervention on a national level.

Aiming to change socio-cultural attitudes, community sensitisation and engagement programmes are implemented. These generally include engaging with parents, traditional leaders, religious leaders and community members to create a supportive environment for the girl child in the education sector and for the reintegration of learner mothers specifically. Successful programmes involve respected community members as spokespeople, incorporate community languages and cultural styles and provide opportunity for community discussion on contentious topics (Psaki et al).

These, however, were designed for localities with higher levels of NGO presence and government capability than Rushinga has. There are no significant NGO programmes in the district related to girls' education, limited infrastructure for flexible learning (access to radio or mobile network is limited or unreliable) and limited government resources for programme implementation. However, this doesn't imply that the strategies are not relevant, but rather that there must be adaptation. Qualitative, participatory research such as this study is a necessary precursor to understanding what is possible in Rushinga, which community resources are available, what is occurring in community innovation and what community members see as workable.

2.7 Chapter summary

The literature review in this chapter examined literature on the obstacles, teenage mothers encounter when reentering school post-pregnancy. It also impacted teenage motherhood and the national re-entry policy. The chapter then proceeded to mention the socio-cultural problems such as community stigma and influence of traditional leaders. The chapter also provided the matrix employed in this study, based on intersectionality theory. The chapter also outlined some of the impacts of school exclusion on teen mothers including poverty and dependency. It gave a general picture of the problem at a global, regional (African) and Zimbabwe, and

Rushinga District levels. A summary of policy gaps, support systems and recommended interventions was provided as the chapter concluded.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explained the study area, and the method of research used in this research. The chapter also presented the data collection methods and tools and the sampling strategy.

3.2 Study area

The study was conducted in Rushinga district which is a rural area of Zimbabwe. The district of Rushinga lies in Mashonaland Central Province of the 10 provinces of Zimbabwe. Thus, the research was carried out in a rural setting, that is, Rushinga district area of Mashonaland Central in Zimbabwe. Rushinga district is geographically at 164 kilometres from Bindura town and 251 kilometres away from Harare the capital city. Rushinga has 25 wards. One of these is an urban ward (ward 24) comprising the district head and the remaining 24 wards are exclusively communal wards. There are 19 secondary schools and 51 primary schools in the district. To

ensure the validity of the research and elicit a balanced opinion from the survey, five or six schools were chosen to allow generalisation of findings..

3.3 The map of the study area

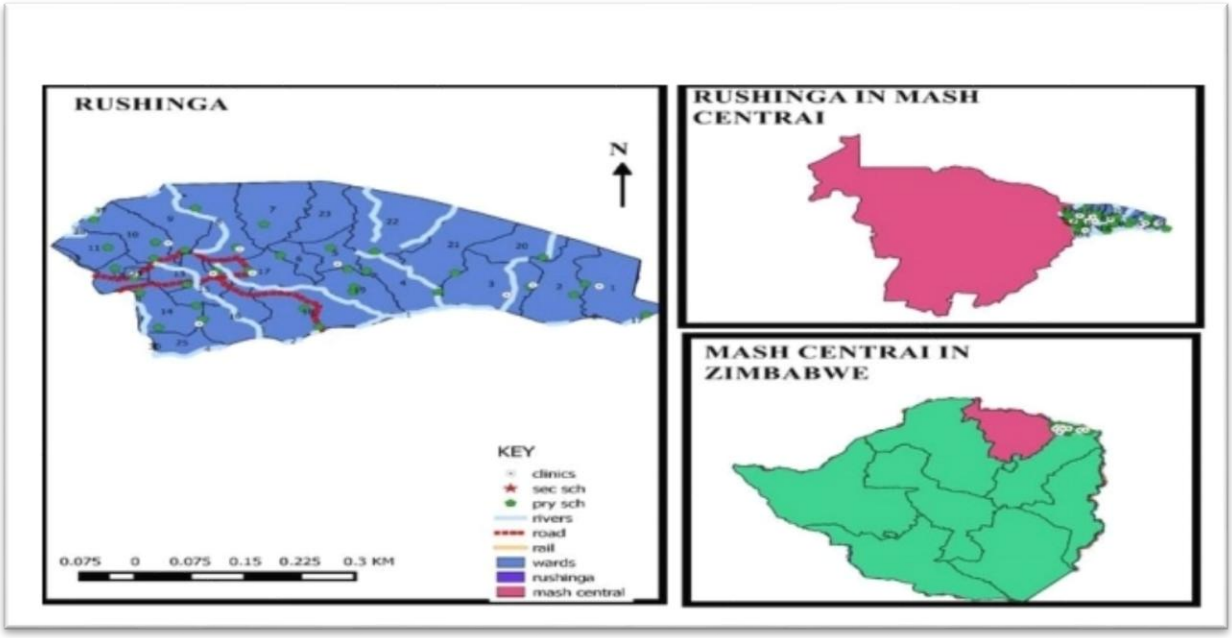

Fig 3.1 Rushinga District Map.

3.4 The Study Design

The qualitative research design was used in this study because it was the best suited research design in order to understand the subjective experiences, perceptions and meaning that the pregnant girls, young mothers and key stakeholders gave to the phenomenon of reintegration into education in Rushinga District. The qualitative approach revealed an in-depth understanding of structural and socio-cultural challenges to re-entry, the role of gatekeepers (parents, school administrators and local authorities), and what strategies will help to increase the possibility of positive reentry outcomes. Qualitative research, which focuses on understanding lived realities, highlighted factors that influenced participants' choices, and the ways in which stigma, poverty, and patriarchy interacted to affect access to education. The design used was apposite to the study's goals and allowed for rich and detailed data collection using the key informant interview guide and in-depth interview guide, which provided data depth to address the study's research questions and to make meaningful contributions to policy and practice in rural Zimbabwe.

3.5 Study Population

The researcher has determined the population before determining the sample size for data collection. Creswell (2012) says Population is defined as the group of people who shared the same characteristic. The target population for this research are the teenage pregnant mothers, parents or guardians, school head in Rushinga District.

3.6 Sample Size

A sample is a part of the people being investigated on (Chimedza, 2003). A total of seven participants were selected purposively of pregnant girls, teenage mothers, and key stakeholders in Rushinga District. The small sample size was suitable for the qualitative method of research where the focus was on understanding the individual lived experiences and perceptions.

3.7 Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was used to select certain respondents who had information that was rich and relevant to the study on Educational reintegration of pregnant learners/young mothers in Rushinga District. Qualitative research was appropriate as individuals were selected based on certain knowledge, experiences and roles they had regarding the phenomenon under study and this selection was called purposive sampling. The sample size was negotiated and determined by the data saturation; data was collected from three teenage mothers until no new information emerged from the interviews. The sample included pregnant girls and young mothers who have undergone and those who are experiencing the process of re-entry to school, their parents or guardians, school administrators including head teacher and senior teacher, local traditional leaders (headmen) and religious leaders (in the communities where there is a significant presence of Apostolic church). This multi-category sampling strategy ensured that data was collected from all key stakeholder groups identified in the study objectives, which allowed for triangulation of data and perspectives, and enabled a comprehensive understanding of the barriers, gate keeper role and possible strategies for reintegration.

3.8 Data collection methods

Two types of qualitative data collection were used in this study: key informant interviews and in-depth interviews which are suitable for the purposes of this study due to the need to gain rich and detailed narratives to support the achievement of the research objectives.

3.9 Research methods

This study was a qualitative study which aimed to describe the socio-cultural and structural obstacles to school reintegration of teenage mothers in Rushinga District. Seven (7) participants were purposefully selected consisting of teenage mothers and parents of teenage mothers who had been pregnant while of school-going age. Two major research instruments namely: an in-depth interview guide for teenage mothers and an in-depth interview guide for parents, and key informant interview guide for school head based on the three research objectives were used to collect the data. The interviews were carried out sensitively and in a conversational style and the data analysed thematically with an emphasis on identifying recurring patterns, barriers and facilitators to school re-entry.

3.9.1 Key informant interviews.

The key informants who were surveyed were the school heads of Rushinga District, a survey guide for the respondents has been developed by the researcher. The tool was designed to collect qualitative information consistent with the three research objectives – structural barriers and socio-cultural barriers to reintegration, role of authorities in the reintegration process, and strategies and policy interventions. Questions were open-ended to enable participants to provide detailed experiences, observations and recommendations related to their unique institutional and community contexts.

3.9.2 In-depth interviews with teen mothers

An in-depth interview guide was developed by the researcher to guide teenage mothers who went through pregnancy while of school going age. These young women were at the heart of this study, and their lived experiences offered the best insight into barriers and facilitators to re-entering school. The tool was designed in a format that corresponds with the three research objectives: identify structural and socio-cultural barriers; understand their role of parents, school administrators and local authorities; and explore strategies and policy interventions. The questions were carefully worded and presented in a sensitising and conversational style to elicit the experiences, in the participants' own words.

3.9.3 Parent in-depth interviews

An in-depth interview guide for parents of school-age teenage mothers experienced by the researcher. These parents acted as gatekeepers for the reintegration and their insights offered invaluable knowledge of the family level challenges and enablers to school re-entry. The tool was designed to reflect the three research questions: identify socio-cultural and structural factors from a parental perspective; identify the parental role within school, administrative and local authority settings; and discuss strategies and policy responses. Questions were designed to be sensitive and non-judgmental and elicit parents' thoughts and experiences related to the process of reintegrating teenage mothers to school.

3.10 Data analysis

In this study, the researcher used thematic analysis to analyze the qualitative data that had been obtained from the key informants of the heads of the schools and in-depth interviews of teenage mothers and parents. The six steps of Braun and Clarke's data analysis method were applied, which involve familiarisation, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes and writing the report. Audio recordings of all the interviews were made, transcribed verbatim, and reread several times to become very familiar with the data that were obtained. Manual coding was done by the researcher using the identification of meaningful segments from the transcripts data regarding the three research objectives. Codes were clustered into four themes: socio-cultural barriers, structural barriers, gatekeeper roles and strategies for reintegration. Themes were considered, developed and specified to reflect the participants' experiences. Trustworthiness and richness of interview contextual understanding have been ensured by extracting direct quotations from the interview transcripts to support and illustrate each theme.

3.11 Authenticity and validity of the study

The triangulation of sources of data (teenage mothers, parents and school heads) and member checking to check the validity of data interpretation were used to ensure validity. A clear audit trail was kept of the raw transcripts, coding sheets and thematic maps to ensure reliability. Study replicability was made possible with detailed description of the research context and selection of participants. The six-phase thematic analysis framework by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used consistently to ensure dependability of the analytical process. Findings were presented using direct quotations to support each theme, thus putting participants' words on

record. Together these approaches enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the study results.

3.12 Ethical Consideration

Ethical issues have been given due consideration by the researchers in order to safeguard the rights and well-being of the participants. Ethical considerations including: volunteer participation, knowledgeable consent, privacy, confidentiality and minimisation of potential for harm were significant factors in the engagement of this research. Preserving these ethical principles in this study, the researcher intended to preserve the integrity of this research, to be able to increase the validity of this research, and to show respect for the people who were involved in the study. Ethics is not only a Rule, but a Moral Rule necessary for doing good and responsible research.

3.13 Chapter summary

This chapter presented Rushinga District, in rural Zimbabwe, as the study area. It was a qualitative study to study educational reintegration of pregnant girls. Purposive sampling was used in obtaining participants; the data saturation determines the participation of five teenage mothers. Key informant and in-depth interview were used as data collection methods. The researcher created interviews guides based on the three objectives of the research for the school heads, the traditional leaders and teenage mothers. All the questions were open-ended and designed to be sensitive to eliciting detailed lived experiences. Triangulation of all the key stakeholder groups' perspectives was possible due the methodology.

Data presentation and discussion

4.0 Introduction

The chapter reports the results of the research and their interpretation and analysis in light of the objectives of the research. The researcher gives interpretation of the research results in relation with the aims and objectives of the study by using thematic approach. The researcher concluded the chapter with discussion of the findings of the research. The researcher analysed the barriers that teenage mothers facing for them to reintegrate to school after falling pregnant for the past 2 years to 2026.

4.1 Demographic Profile of Participants

The analysis of participants characteristics reveals information on a participant level of education to the teenage mothers , experience at work, the source of income to the guardians and the age of their babies among other characteristics. , the demographic profile shows that all participants in this study were poor, female-headed households (except the headmaster). But the teenage mothers were young, and the babies very young. All had been dropped out after Form 4. Military parents were working long hours with short time to care for themselves.

4.2. Demographic profile of participants.

Fig 4.2.1 Teenage mothers:

Code	Category	Age	Grade left	Age she was interviewed	Baby's age	Occupation
TM-001	Teenage mother	14	Form 2	16	7 months	Hairdresser
TM-002	Teenage mother	15	Form 3	17	4 months	Part-time maid
TM-003	Teenage mother	13	Form 1	15	9 months	Farmer

Fig 4.2.2 Parents and school head

Code	Category	Age	Occupation
KI-001	School head	50	Teacher
PG-001	Parent	35	Subsistance farmer
	Parent	42	Subsistance farmer
	Parent (Grandmother)	68	Domestic worker

4.3 Participant's characteristics of the research

In this study, apart from the headmaster (KI), all the participants were from the poor, female headed household (PG). The teenage mothers (TM) had an age of 14, 13, and 15 years respectively. None of them had come up to Form 4; they had dropped out in Forms 1, 2 and 3. Their infants ranged from 4 to 7 and 9 months of age. The teenage mothers earned informally from time to time by weeding, harvesting or washing clothes. Parents were subsistence farmers and one parent (grandmother) was a domestic worker. The headmaster had been installed as the headmaster for 8 years.

4.4 Presentation of results

4.4.1 Socio-cultural and structural impediments to reintegration of teenage mothers into schools.

Socio-cultural and structural challenges in school reintegration studies are essential in understanding why school re-entry policy has no effect on the continuation of school education for teenage mothers in Rushinga District. Results of in-depth interviews with teenage mothers, parents and key-informant interviews with school heads are included in this section.

4.4.1.1 Socio-cultural barriers

The community stigma, moral judgement and internalised shame and traditional leaders control over community norm are significant barriers on the reintegration of the teenage mothers to school after falling pregnant.

4.4.1.1.1 Community Stigma

According to multiple respondents, teenage mothers who wish to return to school are treated poorly by the community. They are called shameful names, gossiped about and laughed at as KI- 001 stated,

> *"People in the community call them children who were not disciplined, who have no shame. And neighbors gossip, saying bad things about them."*

This reveals that the community uses shame as a way to punish teenage mothers. The label them with shameful names and these are not just the names, it is a way to make the girls feel they do not belong. Gossip spreads quickly in a village and creates a hostile environment where

girls feel rejected every where they go. This become a big hinderance for them to go back to school as noted by TM- 001 who shared her personal experience,

> *"My grandmother said school is for girls who are disciplined, and neighbors laugh at me so much that I struggled to walk or meet people. Returning to school is difficult for me."*

The respondent answer shows that stigma comes from family members as well as neighbors. When a girl's own grandmother tells her she no longer belongs in school, the message is very powerful. The message also discourages the teenage mothers on the issue of going back to school. The neighbors' laughter is public humiliation that makes the girl too ashamed to try returning to school. This is confirmed by PG-002, who said,

> *"People say, 'If your daughter has had a child, she has sinned, she is grown up, going back to school is no longer possible. Let her stay at home.' So if we say she wants return to school, they laugh."*

This reveals that stigma affects the whole family, not just the girl. The community uses words like she has sinned (*akatadza)* to make the family feel guilty. Parents become afraid to advocate for their daughters because they do not want to be laughed at. As a result, the teenage mother's education also affected

4.4.1.1.2 Traditional leaders' control over community norms

This is also another barrier affecting teenage mothers failing to go back to school. According to multiple respondents, traditional leaders such as village heads *(sabuku*) do not support school re-entry. Instead, they push families to marry off teenage mothers as supported by TM- 002 who highlighted that:

> *"The village head came to our home and told my mother that I must get married. He also said that returning to school is a waste of time for me, and the child now needs to be cared for."*

This shows that traditional leaders have direct influence over family decisions. The village head did not give advice; he came to the home and told the mother what to do. His message is

clear that marriage is more important than education for a girl who has had a baby and also and a baby needs mothers love and care as noted also by KI- 001 who confirmed that

"Village heads often support the family saying the girl should get married and take care the child."

This shows that when a girl becomes pregnant, the village head typically gets involved and pushes the family toward marriage, not education. They do not value education yet education is the key for a teenage mother to be recognized and become skilled with lifestyles as described by PG- 002 that

"The village head said I should force my daughter to get married, saying her husband would pay school fees if he wants to."

4.4.1.1.3 Moral judgment and internalized shame

According to respondents, the community sees teenage pregnancy as a moral failure rather than a problem that needs solutions. This moral judgment turns into internalized shame where girls and parents start to believe they are bad as stated by KI-001

"People here see teenage pregnancy as a sin, not a problem. Until that mindset change, policies will fail."

The reseacher suggested that as a crucial finding. The headmaster is saying that the community frames teenage pregnancy as a moral issue. When something is a sin, the appropriate response is punishment, shame and exclusion. The headmaster predicts that Zimbabwe's re-entry policy will never work as long as people see pregnancy as a sin. This is also supported by TM- 003 who said:

"I started thinking that I am evil, and I thought that God no longer wants me because of what people and those I live with said about me."

This quotation is devastating. The girl has taken the community's judgment and made it her own. The community said she was a sinner. Now she says she is evil and rejected by God. This is internalized shame at its deepest level. She no longer believes she deserves to go to school. As highligted by PM- 002

"I never went to the school to talk to the headmaster because I was ashamed

because my daughter sinned. I thought they would say, 'Mother, you have failed because of your daughter.''

This shows that shame stops parents from taking action. The parent did not go to the school because she was afraid of being blamed. She imagined what the school would say, but she never actually went to find out. The shame was in her mind, but it was powerful enough to stop her from advocating for her daughter.

4.5 Structural barriers to school reintegration

Structural barriers are crucial as these are the physical, economic, and institutional obstacles that prevent teenage mothers from returning to school. In this study, the researcher found out two structural barriers which include poverty and economic constraints and school conditions that block re-entry.

4.5.1 Poverty and economic constraints

According to multiple respondents, poverty is the most insurmountable structural barrier. Families cannot afford school fees, uniforms, transport, or the loss of the girl's labor at home as supported by PG- 003 who provided a breakdown:

"School fees come to about $50 per term. Uniforms, schoolshoes, and books come to $50 perterm. But the big problem is that I do not have a stable source of income, I depend on farming''

This reveals two types of costs. Direct costs (fees, uniform, transport) add up to $100 per term. For a subsistence farmer, this is an enormous amount of money. Indirect costs are the loss of the girl's labor at home. The parent asks "*Who will help me?"* showing that the household cannot absorb this loss. The researcher found out that, the probability for the teenage mother to go back to school is very low due to lack of finances. This was also highlighted by TM-002 who described

"My mother does farming, so there is no money. My father abandoned us. I do piece jobs to get money for the baby."If I go to school, what will the baby eat, and who will give him milk?

According to the participants, this shows a female-headed household with no stable income. The father has abandoned the family. The teenage mother herself works casual jobs just to feed her baby. There is no extra money for school fees. The household is surviving day by day. There is also no any other change that can help this teenage mother as TM -002 explained:

'I do not have money to by food so that my baby will be safe when I go to school.''

This quotation gets to the heart of the matter. A 7-month-old baby needs to eat every few hours. If the mother goes to school for 6-7 hours, the baby will be hungry or affected by mulnutrition. The family cannot afford formula. The mother cannot concentrate with school work and let her baby go hungry. Therefore, she stays home.

4.5.2 Absence of childcare support

According to multiple respondents, no school in Rushinga district has creche facilities. This means teenage have no place to leave their babies during school hours. This was mentioned by TM-001:

"I was told that I am not allowed to come to school with the baby. My mother works in the fields, and my grandmother is too old to look after the baby at all. Who will look afther him?"

This had revealed to the researcher that the school's rule (no babies in class) conflicts with the family's reality (no one to care for the baby at home) is another barrier for these teenage mothers to reintegrate to school. The girl is caught in the middle with no solution. The word "*hapana*" (no one) is absolute. The option that is only left is to stay at home and take care of the baby. KI-00 also admitted that:

"We have no childcare facilities like a creche, no counseling, and no flexible timetables. We have a policy on paper only."

This is a very honest admission. The headmaster lists three things the school does not have: a creche for babies, counseling for teenage mothers, and flexible timetables. Then he says the most important thing: the policy exists only on paper only. The researcher noted that, the policy has not been implemented and this is the gap. TM-001 also described this issue by saying:

"The baby cries in class, students laugh, the teacher gets angry. Then the girl gets ashamed and doesn't come back."

4.6 Role of key actors in reintegration decisions

The role of key actors is crucial as different people have power over whether a teenage mother returns to school and the actors include parents and traditional leaders.

4.6.1 Parents as gatekeepers

Parents hold the most influence over whether a teenage mother returns to school according to multiple respondents as KI-001 stated:

> *"If parents refuse to pay fees or provide childcare, nothing happens. Even if the school says yes, a parent can simply keep the girl at home."*

This is very clear. The school's permission is not enough. The parent has the final say. The parent can simply keep the girl at home, and the school has no power to make the parent send her since the school have no enough facilities interms of school fees which can cater for these students. This was also admitted by PG-001 that:

> *"I decided no because I was hurt by what my daughter did, but there was nothing I could do for her. I have five other children all needing food from me."*

According to this respond, the researcher concluded that, this was very honest. The parent feels pain, most of them are very bitter with these situations. She knows she is hurting her daughter's future. But she feels she has no choice. Five other children need food. She cannot afford to lose her daughter's labor at home. This is the reality of poverty and the education of the teenage mother is affected.

4.6.2 Traditional leaders as barrier

According to multiple respondents, traditional leaders do not support school re-entry. They use their authority to push families toward marriage as reported by TM-002 that:

> *"The village head told my mother, 'Don't send this girl back to school. She will become a prostitute again. Send her to get married.'*

The village head uses very harsh language. He calls the girl a future prostitute. He says marriage will fix her. This is not advice; it is a command to the mother. The village head's authority makes it hard for the mother to refuse and the child is affected negatively in education.

4.7 Existing support systems

Existing support systems is very important as it reveals whether the national re-entry policy is actually being implemented or there is still gaps that needs to be addressed so that the teenage mothers will persue with their education even though they have babies they left at home. KI-001 stated that

> *"There is nothing here at school. No creche, no counseling, and no flexible timetables. We have a policy on paper only."*

The researcher found out that, this is a powerful admission. The headmaster lists everything that is missing. There is no support at all. The only thing that exists is a piece of paper with the policy written on it. The biggest challenge is that, the policy has not been implemented, at the end these teenage mothers are affected and their future is ruined. TM-003 also confirmed that:

> *"No one helped me since I had the baby. I thought the school headmaster would stand with me in such a difficult situation so that I could return to school with my baby."*

This shows that the girl had hope. She expected help and she thought someone from the school or any organization under government or private sector that can cater for them would reach out to her. But no one came. She was completely alone.

4.8 Participant-identified intervention

According to multiple respondents, the researcher managed to find out two main interventions would help teenage mothers return to school teaching the community through awareness campaigns and providing financial support from the government.

4.8.1 Teach the community

The community is not aware about the right to education of the teenage mothers even if the fall pregnant. They listen much to their religious leaders, village heads as KI-001 said:

> *"People must be taught. Religious leaders, village heads, elders. They must understand that a girl with a baby is not finished."*

The researcher noticed that, headmaster recognizes that the problem is in people's minds. The community should be educated on the fact that teenage mothers are not done. But they are still able to learn, to work, to have a future. We will mention opinion makers in the community as this explicitly includes religious leaders, village heads and elders.

4.8.2 Provide financial help

This is the most intervention that need to be addressed since it is affecting the teenage mother's education for better future. This was mentioned by a number of respontents as PG-003 said:

> '*The government should pay school fees for our kids and construct school rooms in schools. Children can be safely looked after while the mother learns until they can be safely looked after elsewhere.*

The parent specifies two things – one is school fees and the second is childcare facilities. If the infant isn't safe, paying fees won't suffice. But for teenage mothers to excel with their education, these issues must be addressed by the government.

4.9 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Socio-cultural barriers

The study's results pointed to the influence of socio-cultural barriers as a strong force that determines a community's response. The stigma of the community was consistently mentioned as teenage mothers were labeled with derogatory names, gossiped about, the object of laughter, by neighbors, even family members. This is consistent with the observation by Machoka (2024) cited in chapter 2 that pregnant girls in Rushinga are perceived as being morally irresponsible. The study revealed that not only is stigma "out there," it is also internalized: One adolescent mother reported thinking that she was "evil" and that God rejected her. This "embarrassment" is harmful in its own right because it undermines the girl's sense of her own right to education. The role of traditional leaders was another factor, as the village heads also actively encouraged families to marry instead of to educate. This observation corroborates the views of Scoones and Chatikobo (2025) that the traditional authorities play a huge role in influencing learning commitment in the rural areas of Zimbabwe. The researcher suggests a national re-entry policy will not succeed while traditional leaders continue to be a hurdle and not a partner to re-entry.

Through the initiation of a community sensitisation programme at the district level aimed at traditional leaders, religious leaders and parents. Through this programme, dialogue should be established where community members' concerns could be voiced and they could be informed of their legal rights as teenage mothers. No policy can be effective in Rushinga if it fails to change the moral language that surrounds teenage pregnancy and instead calls it a ‘challenge that needs community support'.

Structural barrier

The most hindering was found to be poverty. The cost of fees, uniforms, and books was $85-$100 per term, which was unaffordable to subsistence farmers. Further, the loss of the girl's labour at home proved to be unfeasible for the families that were already hard pressed to maintain their family members. This is aligned with the Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey (ZIMSTAT & ICF, 2023-24) which indicated that female respondents in the wealthiest households were four times more likely to have completed secondary education compared to those in the poorest households. Its noted that there are no creche facilities at all schools. There are no babies in schools, no breaks for breastfeeding and no flexible timetables. The school master said, “Yes, babies do cry, students do laugh, teachers do get angry and the girl does leave, never to come back.” This validates the evidence that Mudzongo and Dube (2022) cited in chapter 2 which revealed that knowledge of the implementation of the 2020 Education Amendment Act's is lacking and/or unavailable on many school heads. Creating a re-entry incentive fund to give direct financial assistance to teenage mothers with regard to their school fees, uniforms and material. Unless direct and indirect cost of education are taken care of, poor families will choose survival over education of their daughter.

Role of gatekeepers

Parents were identified as the strongest gatekeeper, with the final say as to whether or not a daughter returns to school. One parent said, "I decided no, because I felt hurt by what my daughter did, but I can't help her. I have five other kids that need food from me. This results is similar to that of Psaki et al. (2019) referred to in chapter 2 that stated that parental attitudes are an important factor in determining girls' educational outcomes. The researcher also noted a strong influence of traditional leaders who play an active role in dissuading re-entry and advocating for marriage. This finding reinforces the discussion of the role of the traditional authorities in the shaping of community norms and individual behaviour, as discussed in

chapter 2. The researcher observes that school heads, although exposed to the national policy, do not have enough resources and under pressure from the community, are not able to support reintegration effectively. The teenage mothers will continue with school with the creation of confidential reintegration support committees, which will consist of trained teachers, a parent representative and a traditional leader at each school.

Support systems in place and participant identified interventions.

There are virtually no support systems to help teenage mothers re-join school in Rushinga District.The headmaster's statement 'there is nothing here at school. No creche, no counselling, no flexible timetables. We have a policy on paper only' substantiates the issue of implementation gap mentioned in detail in chapter 2. The researcher determined that none of the teenage mothers indicated that they were provided with support since their birth by school, government, or NGO. This lack of support is in stark contrast to the constitution and legislature commitments set out in the Constitution 2013 and the Education Amendment Act 2020. The two key interventions mentioned were the need to educate the community through awareness programmes and the financial assistance to be given to the community by the government. By working with these identified interventions, the teenage mothers will be safe and continue with school in Rushinga District.

4.10 Chapter summary

The socio-cultural and structural barriers towards school reintegration of teenage mothers in Rushinga District were identified in the study. The chapter included, discussed and analysed research findings on the basis of interview with teenage mothers, parents and heads of the schools. It has been found that adolescent girls who become mothers suffer from stigma in their communities, shame within themselves and opposition from traditional leaders who advocate for marriage rather than schooling. Poor households are unable to reintegrate because of structural constraints, such as poverty, the costs of education and lack of childcare facilities.

CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions that were made from the research and also gives the possible recommendations to the government and its different stakeholders on improving school reintegration for teenage adolescent mothers in secondary schools in Rushinga district.

5.1 SUMMARY

In analyzing the socio-cultural and structural barriers to school reintegration for teenage mothers in Rushinga District, the study used in-depth interviews with teenage mothers and parents, as well as key informant interviews with school heads, to obtain the different views of stakeholders. Teenage pregnancy in Rushinga has resulted in school dropouts, community stigma, internalized shame, and opposition from traditional leaders, posing a threat to the educational futures of young girls. The main motives of the study were to examine the structural and socio-cultural challenges hindering school re-entry, to analyze the role of parents, school administrators, and local authorities, and to explore possible strategies and policy interventions for effective reintegration.According to the study's data, the majority of teenage mothers and parents demonstrate awareness of the national re-entry policy, but implementation remains

non-existent. Barriers to school reintegration include community gossip and name-calling, internalized shame where girls believe they are "evil and rejected by God," poverty with direct costs of $85-100 per term, and the complete absence of creche facilities, breastfeeding breaks, and flexible timetables at schools. Responses from interview outputs showed that the factors influencing reintegration barriers are community attitudes, household poverty levels, parental education, and the authority of traditional leaders. Teenage mothers from female-headed households with no stable income face insurmountable barriers, while traditional leaders actively discourage re-entry and push families toward marriage. The relationship that exists between socio-cultural and structural barriers and school reintegration is that teenage mothers facing multiple barriers have proved to be unlikely to return to school. As a result, the study presented the opinions of Rushinga's teenage mothers, parents, and school heads, the factors that influence reintegration barriers, and the relationship between these barriers and the national re-entry policy.

5.2 Conclusions

5.2.1 Socio-cultural and structural barriers hindering school re-entry for teenage mothers

The research was on the structures and socio-cultural issues that constrain the return to school for the adolescent mothers in Rushinga District. Results confirmed that socio-cultural factors such as stigma and shaming from communities, and pressure from traditional leaders who advocate for marriage over education are strong deterrents to reintegration. In terms of structure, poverty emerged as the most significant hindrance, as the fees, uniforms and books required for direct costs ranged between $85-$100 per term – which was more than the subsistence farming households could afford. The lack of creche, breastfeeding break, school working hours flexibility, came out as a critical gap; one headmaster recognised that babies cry, children laugh, teachers get angry, and the girl leaves, never to come back.

5.2.2 Parents, school administration, local authorities and more

The role of parents, school administrations and the local government in the school reintegration process of teenage mothers has been analysed. The most determining influence was parents as gatekeepers, one of whom reported that she chose not to re-enter due to hurt from her daughter's actions and five more children that needed food. Traditional leaders – especially village chiefs

– have strong influence and actively discourage re-entry and promote families to marry, denying access to education due to traditional control. In spite of the Education Amendment Act 2020, school heads with knowledge of the national re-entry policy are under resourcing pressures, community pressures and are not provided with any implementation guidelines, are unable to effectively support re-entry.

5.2.3 Strategies and policy interventions to promote effective school reintegration

The possible strategies and policy interventions that can promote effective school reintegration for teenage mothers in Rushinga District have been explored. The two primary interventions noted by participants were: awareness creation through teaching the community and government assistance in the form of money. Through a community sensitisation programme on a district-wide basis targeted at traditional leaders, religious authorities and parents; by establishing a re-entry incentive fund, which provides direct support for school fees, uniforms, materials etc; by setting up monitoring and enforcement committees at each school, comprised of trained teachers, a parent representative and a traditional leader; and by setting up monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to ensure schools comply with the 2020 Education Amendment Act. In the absence of these interventions, the national re-entry policy will continue to be a promise to be broken and teenage mothers in Rushinga will be denied access to education.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following are recommendations by the researcher. These recommendations are key in overcoming the barriers to school re-entry faced by teenage mothers in Rushinga district.

- Create a re-entry implementation toolkit for local education authorities and school leaders in Rushinga District based on the research findings that local education authorities can use to guide step-by-step implementation of the existing re-entry programs to enhance their implementation.

- Start an awareness campaign within the district on the importance of education of both boys and girls in secondary schools, highlighting the effects of early pregnancy and encouraging responsible behavior and limiting stigma at community level.

- Implement a peer mentoring and resilience-building programme for teenage mothers, linking successful reintegration with newly returning mothers to demonstrate success after childbirth and build self-efficacy and mitigate psychological stigma.

- Ensure all school staff and community leaders in Rushinga receive training in compassionate reintegration, using trauma-informed, non-judgemental practices to create supportive environments instead of punitive attitudes when dealing with returning teenage mothers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1**: Key Informant Interview Guide For School Administrators and Local Authorities** on the socio-cultural and structural barriers affecting the reintegration of teenage adolescent mothers into secondary schools in Rushinga district.

Introduction

My name is Ethel Ndoro a student from Bindura University of Science Education. I am currently studying a degree in Bachelors of Science Honors' degree in Development Studies. I am carrying out a study on the **"An analysis of socio-cultural and structural barriers to school reintegration for teenage adolescent mothers in secondary schools in Rushinga district.".** I am therefore requesting your willing and assistance to participate in this survey. I assure you of utmost confidentiality and anonymity of your responses.

Interview No: …….

Date: …….

Gender of Respondent: …….

Position of Respondent: …….

Institution/Community Role: ……

Section 1: Background

1. What is your current role or position, and how long have you served in this capacity?

2. What are your primary responsibilities as they relate to student enrollment, welfare, or discipline?

3. In the course of your work, how often have you encountered cases where a teenage girl left school due to pregnancy and later sought to return?

Section 2: Structural and Socio-Cultural Challenges

4. What is the official practice in this school or district when a girl falls pregnant and later wants to return to school?

5. What conditions, if any, are typically placed on a girl who wants to return to school after pregnancy?

6. From your observation, how these teenage mothers who wishes to go back to school are being treated in the community?

7. How do these community attitudes affect teenage mothers themselves?

8. What are the practical obstacles that make it difficult for these girls to return to school?

Section 3: Role of School Administrators and Local Authorities

10. What role do you personally play when a teenage mother seeks to re-enroll in school?

11. What factors influence your decision or recommendation in such cases?

12. Can you describe a specific case you remember where a teenage mother attempted to return to school, what happened from beginning to end?

13. How do local authorities such as village heads, councilors, or traditional leaders typically influence these cases?

14. Who would you say holds the most influence over whether a girl returns to school her parents, the school, or community leaders? Why do you say that?

Section 4: Strategies and Policy Interventions

15. What support systems are currently in place in this school or district to help teenage mothers reintegrate into school?

16. How effective are these existing support systems?

17. If you had the power to change three things to make school re-entry easier for teenage mothers in Rushinga, what would those three things be?

18. Which of these changes is most feasible given the current resources and cultural context of Rushinga? What would it take to implement it?

19. Is there anything else you think I should understand about how teenage mothers navigate school re-entry in this district?

APPENDIX 2: In-Depth Interview Guide for Teenage Adolescent Mothers on the socio-cultural and structural barriers affecting their reintegration into secondary schools in Rushinga district.

Introduction

My name is Ethel Ndoro a student from Bindura University of Science Education. I am currently studying a degree in Bachelors of Science Honours' degree in Development Studies. I am carrying out a study on the **"An analysis of socio-cultural and structural barriers to school reintegration for teenage adolescent mothers in secondary schools in Rushinga district.".** I am therefore requesting your willing and assistance to participate in this survey. I assure you of utmost confidentiality and anonymity of your responses.

Interview No: …….

Date: …….

Section 1: Background

1. How old are you, and how old is your baby?

2. What grade were you in when you left school?

3. How old were you when you became pregnant?

4. Who do you live with, and who helps you with caring for your baby?

Section 2: Structural and Socio-Cultural Challenges

5. How did things unfold from the time you were in school to when you became a mother?

6. When did you leave school, and what were the circumstances surrounding your departure?

7. After you had your baby, what did people in your family and community say about you possibly going back to school?

8. What did you learn from others (family members, teachers and friends) after becoming a mother? How did that affect your decisions about school?

9. When you thought about returning to school, what were the challenges came in your way?

Section 3: Role of Parents, School Administrators and Local Authorities

11. How did your parents or guardians respond to the idea of you returning to school? What did they say and do?

12. When you or your family spoke to the school head and teachers about your return, how did they respond to you?

13. What exactly did they tell you? Did they welcome you, place conditions on your return, or turn you away?

14. Did any community leader such as a village head, councilor, or church leader become involved in your situation? What role did they play?

15. Did that leader help you return to school or pressure you toward something else like marriage or staying home?

Section 4: Strategies and Policy Interventions

16. Looking back, what was your expectations from the school, your family, or the community?

17. Can you manage both motherhood and school, if you get a chance to return to school?

18. If you could give advice to the Ministry of Education or school leaders about how to help girls like you, what would you tell them?

19. What is the single most important thing you believe should change to make it easier for teenage mothers to stay in school?

20. Is there anything else about your experience that you feel is important for me to know?

APPENDIX 3: In-Depth Interview Guide for Parents/Guardians of Teenage Mothers

For Parents or Guardians on the socio-cultural and structural barriers affecting the reintegration of their teenage mothers into secondary schools in Rushinga district.

Introduction

My name is Ethel Ndoro a student from Bindura University of Science Education. I am currently studying a degree in Bachelors of Science Honours' degree in Development Studies. I am carrying out a study on the **"An analysis of socio-cultural and structural barriers to school reintegration for teenage adolescent mothers in secondary schools in Rushinga district.".** I am therefore requesting your willing and assistance to participate in this survey. I assure you of utmost confidentiality and anonymity of your responses

Interview No: …….

Date: …….

Section 1: Background

1. What is your relationship to the teenage mother?

2. How old is your teenage mother, and how old is her baby?

3. What is your current occupation or main source of livelihood?

4. How many children or dependents do you care for in your household?

5. What was your teenage mother's level of education when she became pregnant?

Section 2: Structural and Socio-Cultural Challenges

6. In this community, how do people treat a teenage mother who wants to go back to school?

8. From your perspective as a parent, what were the biggest challenges your daughter faced in trying to return to school?

10. How did your daughter's pregnancy and the birth of the child affect your household's lifestyle?

11. How did these changes influence your decision about whether she should return to school?

Section 3: Role of Parents, School Administrators, and Local Authorities

12. What was your role in deciding whether your daughter would return to school?

13. What factors influenced your decision?

14. What was your experience when you went to the school to discuss your daughter's return? How did the school administration treat you and your daughter?

15. What conditions, did the school place on her return?

16. What did you get from any local authority such as a village head and traditional leaders regarding your daughter's future and does that affected your decision about her schooling?

Section 4: Strategies and Policy Interventions

18. What do you think can help parents in this community to send their teenage mothers back to school?

20. Would you support a policy that requires all teenage mothers to return to school? Why or why not?

21. What would make it easier for you to support such a policy, and what would make it difficult?

22. What do you think schools, local government, or community leaders should do differently to make it easier for girls in your daughter's situation to continue their education?

23. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience or about what needs to change?

Ethel Ndoro

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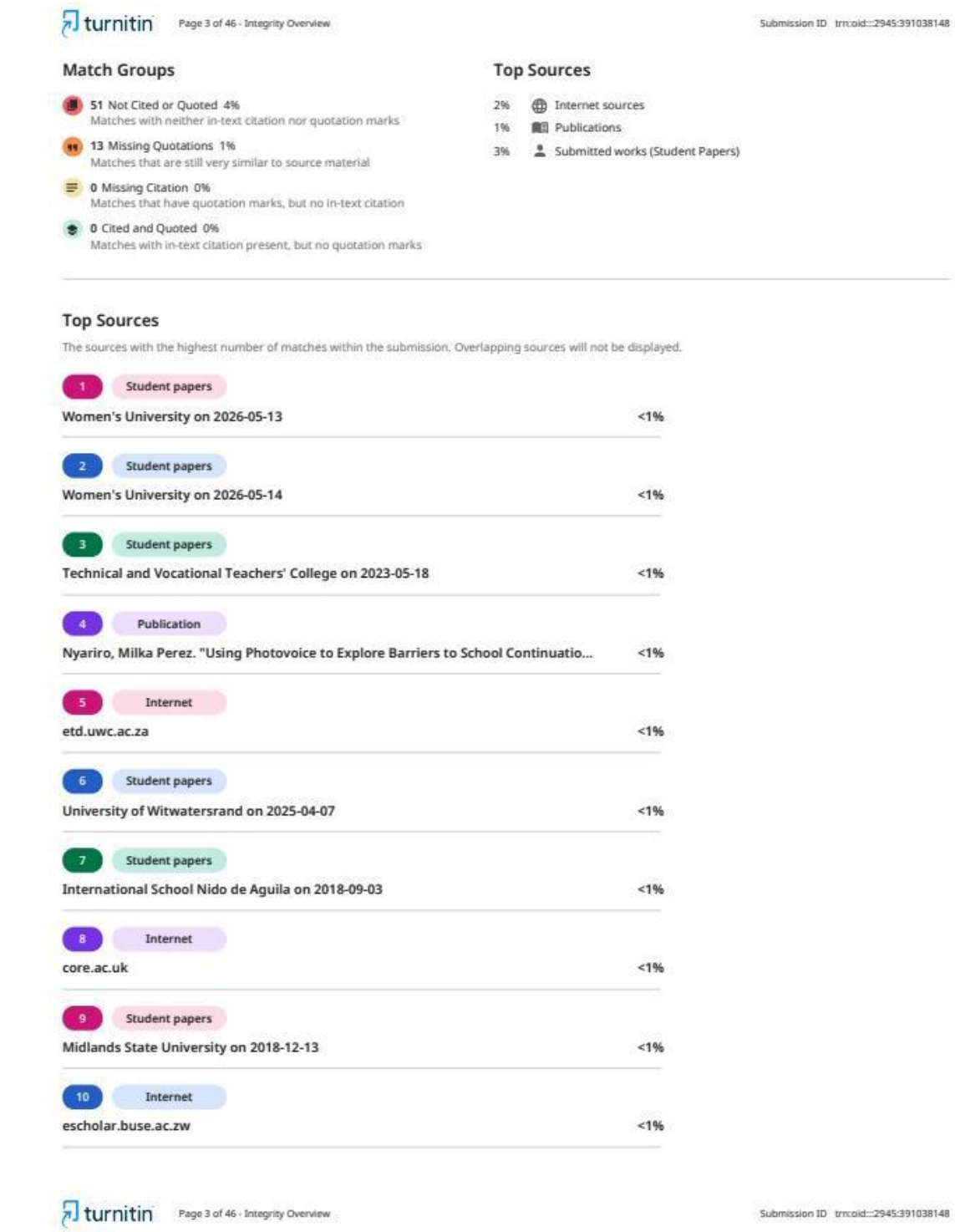

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