BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION.

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK.

DISSERTATION REPORT.

An assessment of DREAMS educational interventions on mitigating school dropouts on vulnerable girls at Rushinga High School in Rushinga District.

BY

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APPROVAL FORM.

The undersigned certify that they have read and recommended to Bindura University of Science Education for acceptance of a project entitled "An assessment of DREAMS educational interventions on mitigating school dropouts on vulnerable girls at Rushinga High School in Rushinga District".

submitted by Makuva Nomore in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Social Work

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TITLE OF PROJECT   An assessment of DREAMS educational interventions on mitigating school dropouts on vulnerable girls at Rushinga High School in Rushinga District

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DEDICATION.

This dissertation is dedicated to Elizabeth Mtunguzuma for her support during my academic studies.

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ACRONOMYS.

AGY-   Adolescent Girls and Young Women.

BEAM-   Basic Education Assistance Module.

CAMFED-   Campaign for Female Education.

DREAMS-   Determined, Resilient, Empowered, Aids-free, Mentored and Safe.

DSD-   Department of Social Development.

EFA-   Education for All.

GBV-   Gender Based Violence.

HIV & AIDS-   Human Immuno Virus & Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome.

NGO-   Non-Governmental Organizations.

NAC-   National Aids Council.

NAP-   National Action Plan.

NDS-   National Development Strategy.

STI-   Sexually Transmitted Diseases.

UDHR-   Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

UNESCO-   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

UNDP-   United Nations Development Program.

UNPF-   United Nations Population Fund.

UNICEF-   United Nations Children's Fund.

ABSTRACT.

Vulnerable girls face a lot of challenges in accessing education. School dropouts have been witnessed among vulnerable girls due to a variety of factors. This study aims at assessing the educational interventions of the DREAMS program in mitigating school dropouts among female students at Rushinga High School in Rushinga District, Zimbabwe. The objectives of this study were to identify strategies implemented by the DREAMS program to mitigate school dropouts among female students at Rushinga High School, examine factors leading to school dropouts in the DREAMS program and to explore the strategies that can be implemented to reduce school dropouts in the DREAMS program. The study was contacted with 21 participants, including 6 key informants. The researcher used qualitative research methodology. Purposive sampling technique and stratified random sampling were used to select participants. Data was collected using in-depth interview guides 1 for participants and the other for key informants. Thematic analysis was used to analyze and present data. School fees payments, provision of school uniforms, provision of sanitary wear and sexual reproductive health education were identified as the strategies implemented by the DREAMS program to reduce school dropouts. The research also identified the main causes of the existence of school dropouts among DREAMS beneficiaries, despite its efforts to mitigate them. Amongst these reasons was poverty, sexual abuses, child marriages, poor academic performance, lack of interest, lack of exposure, lack of motivation, health challenges, long distance from school, less significance of education in the society and parent/ guardian's educational level. Strategies that can be implemented to reduce school dropouts in the DREAMS program were also identified under this study. Some of these strategies were, improving communication between children and their guardians, strengthening teacher-guardian relationship, diversification of services, improving access to sexual reproductive rights education, guidance and counseling, awareness campaigns, strengthening household economy, skills training and capacitating female students to start their own projects.

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES.

Table 4.1 Response Rate.

Table 4.2 Demographic data.

LIST OF APENDICES.

APPENDIX Key Informant in-depth interview guide.

 APPENDIX B In-depth Interview Guide for Participants.

APPENDIX C Approval Letters

CHAPTER ONE.

INTRODUCTION.

1. INTRODUCTION.

This chapter presents the background of educational intervention by DREAMS and its effectiveness on vulnerable girls. The aim, objectives, assumptions and significance of the study will be discussed in this chapter. To have a clear understanding of the study, the statement of the problem and key definitions will be discussed in this chapter. To allow maximum participation of the participants and key informants, research questions will be drafted in this chapter.

1.2.BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY.

A girl child has always been disadvantaged in education globally. Economic challenges that have been witnessed globally are among some of the main factors that have negatively affected the education of a girl child. School dropouts have been witnessed in every nation as a result of poverty. Gender disparities have disadvantaged the girl child especially in developing countries. Since education play a very significant role to sustainable development, it is very difficult to talk about women empowerment, poverty eradication and sustainable development without education for a girl child. Education also play a very crucial role in reducing gender disparities as an educated girl child has necessary weapons to fight against gender discrimination.

The efforts to support equality in education can be traced back to 1948, through the launch of the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights (UDHR). Article 26 of the UDHR ushered the right to education for everyone. In addition to that, signatory governments, were compelled to at least provide elementary and fundamental stages of education for free. Although most African countries including Zimbabwe failed to provide free education to its citizens due to economic hardships, the UDHR marked an important step towards the realization of the right to education for a girl child.

The World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in 1990) also improved access, quality and equity in education. Its launch was a milestone towards supporting education for girls. The program was launched by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

(UNESCO) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Bank.

The United Nations Girls Education Initiative was also launched by the UN in 2000 in partnership with non-governmental organizations such as CAMFED to support education for girls and reduce disparities that existed in the education system that disadvantage the girl child.

In addition, Sustainable development goals (SDG) 5 and 10 which focuses on gender equality and reduced inequalities respectively are some of the global efforts in supporting education for girls. Although sustainable development goal 4 advocate for quality education, goal 5 and 10 ensure that quality education is for all. Mhlaba (2021) support this claim, as he articulates that, equal access to education on SDG4 includes girl child, vulnerable children, as well as children with disabilities.

In Africa, many efforts have been witnessed in trying to challenge the disadvantages that a girl child face in attaining education. The AU International Centre for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa which was established in 2004 remains the overriding institution for endeavoring to empower the women and girls in economic, social and cultural spheres in and through education (Motsi, 2022). The AU campaign to end child marriage in 2014 is also another milestone in Africa in support of education for a girl child.

In Zimbabwe, efforts to support education for the girl child have been witnessed through ratification to international and regional policies that support education for all, including the girl child. Chimbunde (2021) articulate that, Zimbabwe is committed to the EFA policy, United Nations Bill of Human Rights through enshrining education for all in its Education Act (1987) and the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act of 2013 on article 75. Policies such as the National Strategic Plan for the Education of Girls, Orphans and other Vulnerable Children 2005-2010 were implemented to deal with the problems faced by the girl child in attaining education (Motsi, 2022). Chipunza (2018) cited by Motsi (2022) claimed that, in 2018, the first lady, Auxilia Mnangagwa launched the National Action Plan (NAP) and communication strategy to create an environment friendly for girl's development, without being exposed to child marriages. Traditional, religious and political leaders were given the mandate to protect female children against child marriages. In some Districts such as Shamva, traditional leaders responded very well as strict restrictions against child marriage were introduced.   The National

Development Strategy 1 (NDS 1) (2021-2025) pinpoints the commitment of the government of Zimbabwe in addressing the challenges encountered by the girl child in attaining education as it emphasizes on leaving no one and no place behind. The efforts of the NDS 1 can be witnessed through an increase in the number of students catered for under the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM).

However, despite all the efforts to support education for girls across the globe, a worrying trend of school dropouts still exist especially in secondary schools. The covid 19 pandemic exacerbate the pre-existing problem of school dropouts. World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF (2021) postulate that, following the shutdown of schools due to covid 19, 24 million students in basic through higher education face the risk of not returning to school (Longitudinal assessment of school dropout of 2019). In Brazil, one out of three students dropped out before graduating high school (Lichand & Christen, 2021). Mhlaba (2021) pointed out that, the figures of school dropouts are very high in countries such as Chad with 72%, Uganda and Angola with 68% and South Africa with 60%. The challenge with girls' education have shifted from their access, where they were denied their right to education to dropout, where various factors such as child marriages are pushing them out of school.

The rate of school dropouts for girls in Zimbabwe is also very worrying, despite all the efforts from the government and NGOs. This was supported by Motsi (2022), who articulate that, despite many efforts by the Zimbabwean government to try and deal with the problem faced by the girl child, Zimbabwean norms which prioritize boy child over the girl child, pushes the girl child towards school dropouts and into child marriages. It is out of this background that some non-governmental organizations prioritize the education of the girl child as a strategy to address gender disparities that existed time immemorial. In Rushinga District, DREAMS program is one of the notable programs that support education for girls. In Rushinga District, the program is being implemented by the National Aids Council. The study is going to be contacted in a secondary school as they are the most affected by school dropouts. The program covered 13 secondary schools in Rushinga such as Chimhanda, Gwangwava and Magaranhehwe.

The DREAMS program was initiated to reduce HIV prevalence among adolescent girls and young women in sub-Saharan Africa through partnership. It was announced in 2014 on a World AIDS Day. Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Eswatini, Tanzania, Uganda,

Zambia and Zimbabwe are some of the African countries that have implemented the DREAMS program. The program extended its scope to educational intervention after realizing that, school out of school AGYW are at risk of contracting HIV than their peers in school. Therefore, the program target school retention for AGYW in primary and secondary schools. In Zimbabwe, Bulawayo, Chipinge, Gweru, Makoni, Mazowe, Mutare and Rushingaa are some of the Districts in which the DREAMS program have been implemented. Interventions under the DREAMS initiative are designed to strengthen families, empower girls and young women, lower the risk of sexual partners and inspire change among communities. Under interventions to strengthen families, the DREAMS program have parenting/caregiver programs, cash transfers, educational subsidies. School based HIV prevention and community mobilization/ norms change fall under interventions to mobilize communities for change. Increase consistent use and availability of condoms, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and treatment, HIV testing and counselling, increasing the variety of contraceptive methods, and social asset building are among the activities that support the empowerment of girls and young women. Lastly, characterization of male sexual partners falls under interventions to reduce risk of sex partners. However, some of these interventions were not implemented in Zimbabwe, due to shortage of material resources and cultural norms. In this study, the interventions that NAC had managed to implement under the DREAMS program will be identified.

Most schools of thought, believe that failure to pay school fees is the main common reason children drop out of school. However, in Rushinga District, the case is different as some of the students that dropout of school benefit from fees assistance schemes. Therefore, this prompted the researcher to conduct a study, assessing the educational interventions of the DREAMS program under NAC in Rushinga District. The researcher selected Rushinga High School because of its location. The school is located in Rushinga urban, where transport cannot be a challenge when collecting data.

1.3. AIM.

The thrust of this study is to assess the educational interventions by the DREAMS program on mitigating school dropouts among vulnerable girls.

1.4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.

School dropouts is one of the problems the whole world is experiencing. African countries, Zimbabwe in particular experienced the highest rate of school dropouts. Girls in secondary education are more vulnerable to school dropouts. School dropouts are associated with risk behaviors such as engaging in sexual activities at an early age which result in unplanned pregnancies, face challenges in school to work transition and have challenges in adapting to the digital world. Mulwa, Chimoyi, Agbla, Osindo, Wambiya, Gourlay, Birdthistle, Ziraba & Floyd (2021) acknowledged that, girls who drop out of school are at risk of teen pregnancies, child marriages and HIV/AIDS. In Zimbabwe, efforts to support retention of girls in schools has been a major concern for government and NGOs. However, despite these efforts, girls under DREAMS program, are still dropping out of school. It is the scope of this study to explore the major reasons behind dropping out of school of DREAMS beneficiaries, despite their fees being paid in time.

1.5.OBJECTIVES.

The objectives of this study are:

- o To identify strategies implemented by the DREAMS program to mitigate school dropouts among female students at Rushinga High School.
- o To examine factors leading to school dropouts in the DREAMS program.
- o To explore the strategies that can be implemented to reduce school dropouts in the DREAMS program.

1.6.RESEARCH QUESTIONS.

The study is guided by the following research questions.

- o What are the strategies implemented by the DREAMS program to mitigate school dropouts of female students at Rushinga High School?
- o Why school dropouts still exist in the DREAMS program?
- o Explore strategies can be implemented to reduce school dropouts in the DREAMS program?

1.7. ASSUMPTIONS.

The researcher assumes that, educational interventions by DREAMS in Rushinga District have positive and negative outcomes. As the researcher partakes in this journey, it is assumed that, DREAMS beneficiaries and staff, the Department of Social Development and teachers will consent to participate in the study. The researcher also assumes that, the school under study have records reflecting enrolment and dropout of female students under DREAMS.

1.8. SIGNIFICANCY OF THE STUDY.

The study aims at providing valuable information on the strategies being implemented by the DREAMS program to combat school dropouts among female students at Rushinga High School, as well as the factors that are leading to school dropouts, despite the efforts of the program and the strategies that can be implemented to improve the effectiveness of the program. This research will therefore be of significance to the students in various secondary schools. The students can benefit from understanding that they have a right to education and it's not a privilege, through this study.

The research project is of paramount importance to future academics in various Universities. They may read and cite this project when writing their assignments. There are also academics who might be interested in studying a similar topic. Therefore, they may identify a gap from this research project.

The research project is going to benefit the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. This is the ministry that was given a mandate by the government of Zimbabwe to take control of primary and secondary education. Therefore, they are the ones who are going to examine and monitor the implementation of the recommendations of this project.

The research is vital to the DREAMS program itself. DREAMS is striving to achieve the retention of girls in schools as it believes that there is correlation between school retention and reduced risk of contaminating HIV/AIDS. Therefore, the program will consider the causes of school dropouts that are beyond failure to pay school fees as well as the recommendations of this study in its future policies.

The study will help policy makers in formulating policies that are helpful to female students. The study is also useful in examining the effectiveness of the current policies.

Lastly, the project will play a pivotal role to any stakeholder who have the passion of assisting a girl child such as CAMFED. In this research, the needs of the girl child will be outlined. Therefore, these stakeholders can make use of such information.

1.9 KEY DEFINITIONS.

DREAMS Educational interventions: Mulwa, Chimoyi, Agbla, Osindo, Wambiya, Gourlay, Birdthistle, Ziraba & Floyd (2021) defined the DREAMS Educational intervention as a package which includes interventions like educational subsidies to support retention, promote return to school, and transition to secondary school. Therefore, this indicate that the DREAMS program assist students with fees subsidies to avoid school dropouts as a result of poverty.

School dropout: Ramirez and carpenter, 2018 cited by Abdullahi (2021) defined dropout as a condition in which a learner leaves an institution of learning before graduation with no intention of returning.

Vulnerable girls: Arora, Shah, Chaturvedi and Gupta, n.d) defined vulnerable girls as female children, who have high chances of being exposed to risks than their male counterparts. This definition indicates that, children, girls in particular are more prone to various risks. Hence the need to protect them.

1.10. CHAPTER SUMMARY.

The chapter provided an introduction to the study mainly through the background of the girl child school dropout as well as the efforts to mitigate them. The problem statement, aim of the study, objectives and research questions were also covered under this chapter. The chapter also provided the justification why the study was necessary. Assumptions were also covered under this chapter. The next chapter will discuss the theoretical framework and literature review of this study.

CHAPTER TWO.

LITERATURE REVIEW.

2.1 INTRODUCTION.

This chapter presents the theoretical framework that has been utilized in this research. The research utilizes the Motivational Theory, popularly known as Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The chapter also presents previous literatures on the strategies implemented by the DREAMS program in mitigating female school dropouts, factors that are leading to the existence of drop outs in the program, despite efforts to mitigate them and strategies that can be implemented to improve the program. Graham, Montoya, Cohen and Lopez (2021), Uddin (2021) and Dagane (2021) are the main researches to be utilized in this study.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

The study was guided by the motivation theory formulated by Abraham Maslow (1943), popularly known as Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The theory was applicable in this research for a variety of reasons which include, its ability to identify the needs that are crucial for the survival of every human being (basic needs), its ability to pinpoint the crucial role of the family and the society in supporting girl child education and its applicability in motivating children to reach their maximum potential in education.

2.2.1 The Hierarchy of Needs.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a psychological theory of motivation that includes a five-tier model of human needs. (McLeod, 2018). Huitt (2007) articulated that, Maslow proposed a hierarchy of needs based on two categories, deficiency needs, physiological, safety, love and belongingness and growth needs, self-actualization. Maslow believed that deficiency needs must be met before progressing to the growth needs Maslow (1943). This theory is applicable in education as female students have needs that needs to be met for them to be motivated to reach higher level of the hierarchy. Female students have a variety of needs, that if not met, the probability of dropping out of school can be very high. In addition to that, it can be acknowledged that, Maslow believed that, every human being has a potential to reach their maximum potential if an environment suitable for human growth has been created, that makes

the theory relevant in every study relating to a girl child, whose potential has been doubted in many circumstances. The needs of female students will be fully discussed in each stage.

2.2.2 Physiological needs.

The most fundamental needs for human survival are under physiological needs which include food, water, shelter and clothes. Maslow also termed them, the basic needs. The term basic needs clearly indicate how crucial these needs are. If these needs are not adequately met, the probability of school dropouts increase. The basic needs are essential for a girl child to be motivated to continue pursuing her education.

2.2.3 Safety needs.

Maslow believed that, the need for security is inherent in human being. Female students also need to feel secure, both at home and at school to attain school retention. Freedom from fear can be attained through order, law and stability that can be guaranteed through proper management of the whole education system. The desire to attain a secure job can also motivate female students to pursue education.

2.2.4 Love and belongingness needs.

Feeling of belongingness is one of the important phases in Maslow's hierarchy of needs that is applicable to the situation of female school dropouts. Female students, like other human beings need interpersonal relationships both at home and at school such as friendships, intimacy, trust, and acceptance, receiving and giving affection and love. Failure to be loved, results in loneliness that is often experienced by teen pregnancies and they usually end up dropping out of school.

2.2.5 Esteem needs.

Maslow classified esteem needs into two categories, esteem for oneself, dignity and achievement and the desire for reputation or respect from others for example status and prestige. (McLeod, 2018) indicated that, Maslow believed that for children and adolescents have the desire to be respected or reputation. Therefore, the need for reputation can be utilized to motivate female students to reach higher levels of education.

2.2.6 Self-actualization needs.

This is the last stage in the hierarchy of needs that comprises of realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment and seeking personal growth. Maslow defined it as a desire to achieve one's full

potential (Maslow, 1987). This phase can also be utilized to improve school retention of female students, through helping them to realize the maximum potential in them. Empowerment of girl child is rooted within the need for them to realize their maximum potential.

2.2.7 Strengths of the theory.

One of the main strengths of Maslow's theory is that, it is applicable in a variety of disciplines such as Management and Social work. Therefore, this makes the theory applicable in this study, which is a Social work research.

The theory also finds its strength in being applicable in every age group. All human beings have a variety of needs that were propounded by Maslow. This makes the theory applicable in working with children.

The theory also has a strength in empowering people. The theory indicates that, human beings have a role of satisfying their needs, as it never mentioned the role of government or NGOs in satisfying the needs of the people. This makes it applicable in this research as the study was having an intention of empowering a girl child than being a passive recipient of aid.

2.2.8 Weaknesses of the theory.

The main weakness of the Hierarchy of needs is that, it failed to recognize cultural differences. The theory has always been criticized for being Eurocentric. Maslow believed that, human being only self-actualize when they are educated and when their businesses are flourishing. The theory ignores some of the concepts of the Ubuntu philosophy that makes people self-actualize such as sharing. However, although the theory has been criticized, it was useful during the study as it gives a crucial role to education for one to self-actualize. It can also be credited for ignoring some of the practices that makes Africans self-actualize such as having many wives and many children, which is a source of child marriages.

2.3 STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED TO REDUCE SCHOOL DROPOUTS AMONG FEMALE STUDENTS.

2.3.1 Fees Payment.

Fees payment has been acknowledged as one of the strategies in supporting vulnerable girls to remain in school, basing on the assumption that, many school dropouts are a result of failure to pay school fees. The government of Zimbabwe cater for school fees of vulnerable children

through the BEAM program. In Rushinga District, the BEAM program cater for venerable children in all primary and secondary schools in the District who meet the eligibility criteria that include being disabled. However, Garutsa and Masuku (2020) reported that, the Department of Social Development has always been incapacitated to cater for all the needs of vulnerable children, particularly female ones. CAMFED also cater for school fees for vulnerable girls in Zimbabwe and Rushinga District in particular. The CAMFED Annual Review (2021), reported that, CAMFED has assisted vulnerable girls in African countries such as Zambia, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.

2.3.2 Provision of learning material.
CAMFED support vulnerable girls with learning materials such teaching materials and textbooks The CAMFED Annual Review (2021). Some of these learning materials also comprise of life skills education which are an integral part of the efforts to achieve school retention among female students such as My Better World. CAMFED Zimbabwe (n.d) reported that, it provides a holistic support that include, school uniforms, exam fees, pens and bikes.

2.3.3 Creating a child friendly learning environment.
Some of the organizations are mainly interested in creating a child friendly learning environment. Amongst these organizations is World Vision, which have different approach to some of the organizations especially in Rushinga District. World Visions Education Strategy (n.d) posited that, World Vision has the main goal of creating an environment that is friendly to vulnerable girls. In Rushinga District, World Vision support schools to maintain sanitation through construction of boreholes at every school in their area of operation.

2. 4 CAUSES OF SCHOOL DROPOUTS.
A lot of researches have been carried out globally on the causes of school dropouts. Most of these researches target all students in general, whilst this research specifically targets a girl child. The main causes are, child marriages, economic challenges, environmental challenges just to mention a few.

2.4.1 Financial Constrains.
A lot of researchers have come to an agreement that financial constrains is the main reason why students, female ones in particular dropout of school. The findings of Graham, Montoya, Cohen

and Lopez (2021) on dropouts among rural youth in Honduras where the largest proportion of students who participated in their research said financial constraints were the main reason they stopped their studies supported this idea. Their findings were akin to those of Kabiru, Motungo and Nzengya, (2021) who articulated that, low-income families do not afford money to pay for students' tuition. Dagane (2021) cited household income as one of the causes of school dropouts of female secondary school students among Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya. Arafat, Ahmad and Ismail (2021) also supported that girls are the most advantaged in financial constrains situations, claiming that, when parents have financial instability or crisis they stop financing their girls' education. These findings also correlate with the results of Zada, Sarir, and Jawad, (2021) in Pakistan, where parents consider their money as wasted if they spent it on educating a girl child and considered it as well spend, if they spend it educating a boy child. Students on fees subsidiaries also suffer financial constrains considering other needs that require finance at school. This was stated by Mhlaba (2021) who traced the causes of school dropouts in terms of cost of not only school fees but also other costs school of requirements such as stationery, uniforms and food.

2.4.2 Child Marriages and teenage pregnancy.

Africa is one of the regions, most affected by child marriages. Uddin (2021) articulate that, child marriage rates are the highest in Africa and South Asia where 30% of the girls between the ages 10 and 15 years are married. The trend is mainly common in Zimbabwe and Rushinga District in particular. Uddin (2021) examined the effects of child marriages on school dropouts from a family life course perspective which consist of family residence transition after marriage, early marital sexuality and pregnancy, child bearing and rearing and family responsibilities. According to him, family life courses increase high school risk behaviors such as class absence, poor reading, exam exit, grade retention and fail, that ultimately lead to a negative attitude towards school and girls ultimately dropout. A research by Graham, Montoya, Cohen and Lopez (2021) on dropouts among rural youth in Honduras also supported child marriages as the main reasons for school dropouts among female students. Students under DREAMS are of no exception as far as child marriages in Rushinga District are concerned. Mokoena and Van Breda (2021) contacted a research on school dropout among female learners in rural Mpumalanga, South Africa. In their findings, pregnancy was one of the most influential causes of school dropouts. They articulate that, female students decide to drop out of school to avoid being a victims of discrimination from

teachers. Although the re-entry policy in Zimbabwe is against discrimination of pregnant students, there is no evidence of its effectiveness. This concur with the research of Ruzibiza (2021) in Mahama Refugee Camp in Rwanda, who found out that, despite the existence of a progressive and favorable policy to encourage pregnant teenagers to remain in school, the decision to drop out can be understood as a result of the burden of stigma associated with teen pregnancy. Zeb, Gul, Mingyan and Ullah. (2021) articulate that, many girl's dropout of school at the age of 15-16 mainly as a result of marriage, since parents are not comfortable to continue supporting a married child, as they portray them as housewives, who have to focus on house chores. Mayadunne and Kariyasekera (2021) are also in support of child marriage as the main cause of school dropout among girls, claiming that, while poverty is an overarching reason for abandoning schooling, in the case of girls, there appears to exist an early marriage. Masterson, Neild and Freedman (n.d) propounded that, misunderstanding, poor conditions, and lack of strategies to approach the problems associated with teen pregnancy and early motherhood have resulted in loss of opportunities for women in education. Hence, there is the need for proactive approach in dealing with teen pregnancies before they occur as the conditions in developing countries such as poor health conditions don't allow their full integration into a school environment. However, measures to assist those who fall victims of teen pregnancies should also be in place, considering that, no measure will mitigate teen pregnancies 100 %.

2.4.3 Lack of Interest.

Lack of interest has often been undermined when considering the main causes of school dropouts. However, the study conducted by Graham, Montoya, Cohen and Lopez (2021) on dropouts among rural youth in Honduras can change the opinion of many people. Their findings were being shocking as they report that, a significant proportion, close to 40% of girls and above 40% boys state that, the main reason behind their school dropout was that, they were no longer interested in being a student. The main reasons for lack of interest are, low academic performance, age, and unavailability of job opportunities at local level. A research contacted by Din, Mahmood, Abbas and Salman (2021) cited marriage as a precedent of lack of interest. Rahman (2021) also traced the causes of school dropouts from a lack of interest perspective. The research cited grade repetition, low academic performance and deviant behavior as the main causes of low interest in school that ultimately lead to dropouts. Chhaing (2021) also cited negative academic attitudes as the main causes of school dropouts. Parents who were participants

in the research confirmed that, dropouts exhibit undesirable attitudes towards education such ranging from getting up late for school, frequent absenteeism, laziness to truancy.

2.4.4 Family Relationships.

The family play a pivotal role in school retention especially through supporting their children financially and emotionally. Shi and Lin (2021) articulate that human beings are driven by innate needs for survival, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-realization. In children, it is the family that provide these needs such as food, water, shelter and love. In a dysfunctional family, these needs cannot be met, resulting in school dropouts. Dagane (2021) traced the importance of family relationships in school retention of secondary school girls in the Dadaab refugee camps of Kenya. Interviews that were contacted in this research confirmed that, family members especially mothers encouraged their children to continue pursuing their educational dreams. The research confirmed that, in cases where family support was not evident, school dropouts were witnessed. A research contacted by Paul, Rashimi and Srivastava (2021) on the effect parental involvement have on school dropouts among Indian Adolescents confirm that, female children with parents who don't have enough time to make academic discussions with their teachers were at risk of dropping out of school.

2.4.5 Family Education.

The level of education of the parents usually determine the educational attainment of the child. The more educated the parent is, the less likely the child is to dropout and the lesser educated the parent is, the more likely the child is to dropout. Educated parents are aware of the importance how crucial education for girls is and less educated parents are more likely to be influenced by cultural values that place value on education for boys. Dagane (2021) articulated that, educated parents help their children in completing assignments, do assessments of the learning materials of their children and maintain good relationships with their teachers. All this support helps children to develop interest in school work, hence reducing the rate of school dropouts among girls.

2.4.6 Gendered Family Cultural Traditions.

Preferences based on sex have affected girls' education globally since time immemorial. Dagane (2021) propounded that, parents give preference to boy child education, on the ground that, it is an investment to the family and society, whereas girl child education have nothing to offer to the

family. Although the situation has improved in Zimbabwe, gender roles have taken a leading role in undermining education for girls. Girls also have roles that tradition expect them to perform, despite their age, such as cooking, fetching water and other domestic chores (Dagane, 2021). Girls lose interest in school work as they are more occupied with domestic work, prompting them to dropout. In some instances, girls fail to meet due date for school related work such as assignments due to pressure at home. Bettach and Ouahidi (2021) believed that, gender disparities are one of the main causes of school dropouts as girls are conditioned to traditionally accept their future as wives and mothers. Singh (2021) also supported the same idea, claiming that, a girl is being trained for a role as a wife, mother and daughter-in-law. Agha, Rind and Issani (2022) also shared the same view, indicating that, parents want to prepare their daughters to be good wives and mothers, and this has negatively affected their education. The findings of Ndivo, Mwania and Mumo (2021), Sidi, Muhammad and Ngala (2021) also indicate that, society have developed a negative attitude towards financing girls' education as they believe that, after education, girls will eventually get married hence losing family resources. The same idea was coined by Fatima, Fatima and Alwi (2021) who propounded that, a major reason for parents avoiding the investment of their money in the education of their female child is due to the social consideration of almost no return from female child education.

2.4.7 Chronic illness.

Chronic illness has affected school retention in various ways. Mokoena and Van Breda (2021) propounded that, illness affected the learner's academic performance and concentration as well as their general sense of wellbeing and self. Chronic illnesses promote absenteeism that usually turn into dropout.

2.4.8 School Related Factors.

School related factors that contribute to school dropouts include peer influence, teachers, salaries and school environment. Ngamaba, Lombo, LOMBO, and Viviar, 2021 articulated that, due to peer influence, students will be involved in behaviors that they are not used to, as a way of fitting in a group. The same study confirmed that, the behavior of a teacher or other students at school can influence dropping out of school. Bullying can be given as an example as it has resulted in school dropouts for many students as it reduces the self-esteem of the victim. This resonates with the findings of Rahman (2021) who articulate that, being bullied by peers or teachers

significantly increases the likelihood of dropping out of school. The way teachers are paid also determine the outcome educational outcome of students. Highly paid teachers are motivated to monitor school attendance of every child in their classes while absenteeism, is very difficult to be noticed or will be tolerated by a low paid teacher, prompting higher dropouts. Ngamaba, Lombo, LOMBO, and Viviar, (2021) concluded that, many students drop out, as the lack of motivation and inspiration they receive from their teacher will eventually affect their confidence and productivity.

2.5 STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE SCHOOL RETENTION AMONG FEMALE STUDENTS.

A lot of researches have been done on how to combat school dropouts in schools. Some of these researches were targeting children in general and some of them were specifically for a girl child. Some of these strategies included contraceptive knowledge and use to combat pregnancies.

2.5.1 Contraceptive knowledge and use to combat teen pregnancies.

Students dropouts are mainly because of early pregnancies. Stigmatization and discrimination associated with having a pregnancy at school has tempted many girls to dropout. A research by Ruzibiza (2021), supported this as she propounded that, girls have the courage to attend school during the early months of their pregnancy and stop attending when it became visible as a way of protecting themselves from stigma. Pregnancies in high school are mainly a result of ignorance on contraceptives. Chanda, Masaiti and Simui (2021)'s findings in Zambia correlates with this idea as they postulate that, parents in Zambia, advocated and educated abstinence as the only best way for contraception. However, the danger will be on those female children who failed to listen to their parents' teachings as they will be found in unsafe sex, which has various consequences such as contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STIs) and pregnancy which can result in school dropout. The situation has been exacerbated by religion, where sex before marriage is abolished and no one have the courage to teach children about the contraceptives. Therefore, considering the reality that students are sexually active at an early age, as witnessed by the high cases of teenage pregnancies which ultimately lead to school dropouts, contraceptive knowledge and use is a necessity. In Zimbabwe, the education system and the NGO sector has been burdened with the responsibility of imparting contraceptive knowledge among the youth. However, contraceptive use in schools has not been integrated in Zimbabwe as parents believe

that, contraceptive use promote prostitution among female students. Teen pregnancies need to be combated as they also result in child marriages as it is culturally unacceptable to stay with a pregnant child in Rushinga District.

2.5.2 Sensitization on the importance of Education.

The value of education seems to be decreasing in developing countries due to several reasons such as, lack of exposure, economic hardships and unemployment. The fact that, both the educated and the uneducated people are struggling to make ends meet in developing countries, particularly Zimbabwe have tempted many parents and students to view education as a waste of resources. Sensitization on the value of education is a necessity to instill positive attitudes in education. Ndivo, Mwania and Mumo, (2021) supported the idea, arguing that, in order to reduce cases of school dropout rate among the girls there is need to create mass awareness on the importance of educating a girl child. Kabiru, Motungo and Nzengya (2021) also shared the same idea, arguing that, more efforts should be focused on sensitizing the importance of secondary school education Some of the strategies of adding value to education of young girls in rural areas is through increasing their exposure. Parents also need to be sensitized on other advantages of being educated, besides employment opportunities such as increasing the reasoning capacity.

2.5.3 Guidance and Counseling.

Some scholars have advocated for guidance and counseling in secondary schools. Guidance and counseling have various responsibilities such as educating students on sexual reproductive rights, carrier guidance and psychosocial support to victims of different circumstances such as sexual abuse. Mhlaba (2021) recommends guidance and counselling in Secondary Schools which provide health and reproductive education, career guidance, give lessons on child abuse and provide counseling services to those in distress. Kabiru, Motungo and Nzengya (2021) also indicated that, the Ministry of Education should ensure that each school has a professional guidance and counseling teacher.

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY.

This chapter covered the theoretical framework which guide the whole study. The Motivational Theory by Abraham Maslow was used to by the researcher. The chapter also covered previous

researches that were used as a baseline information throughout the study. The next chapter will cover the research methodology of this study.

CHAPTER THREE.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.

3.1 INTRODUCTION.

This chapter, provide an overview of how this research was contacted. The research approach, design, target population, sample size, sampling technique, data presentation and analysis

method of this research are part of this chapter. Justification of the methods that were used in this research is also covered under this chapter. The chapter also encompass the delimitations, limitations and feasibility of this study.

3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN.

A research design is a procedure for gathering and analyzing data from relevant information which has been acquired from sources which individual researchers have identified as satisying the requirements of their proposed studies (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010). In this study, the researcher used a phenomenological research design.

Phenomenological research design.

The researcher utilized phenomenological research through giving priority to the meanings individuals attach to a phenomenon. Asenahabi (2019) articulate that, "phenomenological research is a design of inquiry which originates from philosophy and psychology where the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by the participants" p83. The researcher provided a platform to the beneficiaries of the DREAMS program to share their experiences that result in school dropouts despite their school fees being paid. The meanings they attached to the events were presented in Chapter four. The researcher opted for a phenomenological research design as it allows him to draw information from those who experience the phenomenon.

3.3 METHODOLOGY.

Gounder (2012 p10) defined methodology as, "the procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena". A qualitative research methodology has been utilized in this study.

Qualitative Research.

In this study, the researcher utilized qualitative research approach as it allows him to gain an in-depth information on the perceptions of participants to the area under study. The researcher gave priority to the views of the DREAMS beneficiaries on the causes of school dropouts, despite their school fees being paid and the strategies that can be implemented to achieve school retention through assuming that, they are the ones who understand their situations than anyone, regardless of how educated you are. Additionally, the researcher understood that, participants

have different experiences and perceptions towards the DREAMS program, hence the need for using an approach that value their views. The researcher also prioritized qualitative research methodology as it gives an opportunity to study a particular phenomenon within the context in which they occur. Chivanga and Monyai (2021) supported the idea, claiming that, "a qualitative research methodology enables the researcher to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the meanings, which the participants ascribe to the phenomena upon which the research topic is centered, in a natural setting" p13.

3.4. DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS.

Interviews were contacted in this research, using the in-depth interview guide. Two in-depth-interview guides were used in this research, 1 for key informants and the other for the beneficiaries of DREAMS program. The researcher started by introducing himself to the participants as well as seeking their consent. The respondents gave consent after the researcher had explained the topic and the use of information acquired, which will remain for academic studies only. After giving consent, the next stage was to ask them questions relating to their demographic information such as their age and academic qualifications. After obtaining demographic information, the researcher asked questions that answer the objectives of this study which are highlighted on interview guide attached at the end of this project. The interviews were contacted for 25-30 minutes and the researcher recorded participants who gave consent to be recorded. The researcher also wrote notes during the process of the interview, asking clarification on areas that were not clearly explained. The researcher also paid particular attention to nonverbal communication such as gestures especially in areas such as sexual reproductive rights, where girls were not comfortable in articulating to a male researcher. At the end of each session, the researcher expressed his gratitude to the participant. The researcher opted for interviews as they allow the interviewer to record personal observations and an opportunity to assess the credibility of the data provided by the respondents.

3.5. TARGET POPULATION.

Strydom, 2005 cited by Chivanga and Monyai (2021) defined target population as the sum of individuals, sampling units, or elements with which a particular research problem is concerned. 15 students from Rushinga High School who dropped since 2021 were targeted in this research. The population also encompasses 34 students who were still benefiting from the DREAMS

program at Rushinga High School to have a clear picture of the challenges they face to the point of dropping out of school. 6 key informants were also part of the total population in this study. These key informants were, a Social Development Officer from the Department of Social Development, Youth Officer from National Aids Council, District Learner Welfare from the Ministry of Education and Guidance and Counseling teacher, School Head and Focal person from Rushinga High School. Therefore, the whole targeted population was 55 people, 49 participants and 6 key informants.

3.6.SAMPLE SIZE.

A research sample comprises a small but representative portion of a target population (Chivanga and Monyai, 2021). In this research, a sample size of 38% (21) was used. The researcher used 21 participants in this research, basing on the recommendations that were provided by Shetty (2023), who articulate that, a sample of 20-30 respondents can be ideal for qualitative researches. In this sample size, 6 were key informants and 15 DREAMS beneficiaries.

3.7.SAMPLING TECHINIQUES.

This study utilized purposive sampling technique in selecting respondents and stratified random sampling.

3.7.1. Purposive sampling technique.

Maxwell, (1996) defined purposive sampling technique as a technique where specific settings, people or events are chosen on purpose in order to reveal crucial information that cannot be revealed from other options. The researcher utilized purposive sampling technique in selecting key informants, basing on their expertise in the area of study. Through purposive sampling technique, the researcher was able to select key informants who were well versed with the causes, effects and possible recommendations to school dropouts of DREAMS beneficiaries in Rushinga District. The researcher selected key informants who had 5 years' experience, working in Rushinga District.

3.7.2. Stratified random sampling.

The researcher utilized stratified random sampling in selecting participants of this research. The researcher divided the participants into 2 subgroups, and a random sample was selected from

each subgroup. These subgroups were of DREAMS beneficiaries, who dropped out of school and those who are still benefiting from the program. The researcher utilized stratified random sampling to ensure that the beneficiaries who were still at school and those who had dropped out were all represented.

3.8.DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURES.

In this study, tables were used in presenting demographic data. Tables were used by the researcher to clearly indicate the response rate, gender, educational qualifications of the respondents. The researcher used the thematic content analysis in analyzing data obtained from the respondents. The researcher followed stages that were propounded by Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008) in thematic data analysis. The researcher started by open coding, reading each transcript and making notes in the margins of words, that sum up what was being said in the text. In the second stage, the researcher assembled all of the words and phrases from all of the interviews onto a clean set of pages. On the third stage, the researcher looks for similar categories. The researcher then compiled a list of similar categories that were finally presented.

3.9.ETHICAL ISSUES.

Chivanga and Monyai (2021) defined research ethics as principles that enable researchers to fulfill the ethical norms of professional social science research. They are used to avoid harming or violating participants' rights, and they require researchers to be honest in their interaction with study participants and to keep any information they offer completely confidential (Strydom, 1998).

3.9.1. Voluntary and informed consent.
The researcher was guided by the ethical principle of voluntary and informed consent throughout the whole process of data collection as he first seeks the consent of the participants before conducting an interview. The researcher had an interview guide which had a section where the interviewee could sign, giving his or her consent without any force or coercion. The researcher explained everything about the research in a language they understand such as its purpose and the rights of the respondents to withdraw at any time. Therefore, participants were partaking in this study knowingly, willingly and voluntarily.

3.9.2. CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality of the participants is not only crucial in research, but also in social work where it's one of Biastek (1957)'s 7 main principles. Therefore, as the researcher is a social work student, people's privacy was protected. The names of the respondents were replaced with letters to protect their identity. This is in line with Miller and Brewer (2003)'s claim that, confidentiality means that the researcher will not and cannot identify the respondent with the results. None of the information related to the identity of the participant was published. The study will remain for academic purpose only, for further protection of the confidentiality of the respondents.

3.10. FEASIBILITY.

The research was feasible as the respondents were willingly cooperating during data collection. The researcher was also able to obtain a permission from the District Development Coordinator for Rushinga District. A letter from the District Development Coordinator has been attached at the end of this dissertation as Appendix C.

3.11. DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.

The study focuses on the effectiveness of the DREAMS program in mitigating school dropouts among vulnerable female students. The study focused on the views of the beneficiaries of the program and its implementers. Due to financial constraints, the study was conducted at Rushinga High School only. However, the services provided by the DREAMS program in other 12 secondary schools in Rushinga District are the same, making slight disparities when conducting a similar research in other schools. The research is only limited to vulnerable girls who benefited from the DREAMS program. These girls range from 14-20 years of age. The research only covered school dropouts that occurred from 2021-2023 at Rushinga High School.

3.12. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.

During the study, the researcher faced a challenge in accessing some of the key informants due to tight schedules. However, to overcome this challenge, phone calls were used to make appointments when they are free. Another challenge that was encountered emanate from the assumption that the researcher had that, all high school students understand English. The challenge was minimized through the use of Shona language for them to understand. A challenge was also encountered with some girls who were not comfortable to talk about sexual

reproductive rights issues with a male researcher. However, a solution was obtained through the use of gestures such as head nodding.

3.13. CHAPTER SUMMARY.

This chapter covered the methodology used in data collection through identification and explanation of a research design used, as well as justifying it. The target population, sample size and sampling technique of this research were discussed in this chapter. The chapter also covered how data is going to be presented and analyzed. Ethical issues, feasibility, limitations and delimitations of this study were also covered under this chapter. The next chapter will cover the presentation, discussion and analysis of the collected data.

CHAPTER FOUR.

DATA PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION.

This chapter focuses on presentation, discussion and analysis of the data on the causes of school dropouts among female students under the DREAMS program, despite their school fees being paid and the strategies that can be used to improve the program to achieve school retention for

female students. Thematic analysis has been employed in analyzing data gathered through in-depth interviews.

Table 4.1 Participants Response Rate.

Respondents	Response Rate	Percentage
Beneficiaries	15 out of 15	100
Key Informants	6 out of 6	100
Total	21 out of 21	100

N=21

Table 4.1 indicate that; the response rate was successful. This was mainly because, unlike questionnaires, interview guides require the interview to visit the interviewee, which improve response rate. The familiarity of the researcher in the District of Rushinga also improves response rate.

4.2. Demographic Data.

Table 4.2 Distribution of participants by gender, age, educational level.

Distribution of participants by gender.				
Sex.	Frequency.		Percentage.	
Female	18		86	
Male	3		14	
Total	21		100	
Distribution of participants by age.				
14-19.	20-29.	30-39.	40-49	50-59.
10	5	1	2	3
Distribution of participants by educational level.				
PRIMARY EDUCATION.	SECONARY EDUCATION.	TEARTIARY EDUCATION.		
0	15	DIPLOMA.	DEGREE.	MASTERS.

	3	2	1

N=21

Table 4.2 presents the distribution of participants by sex. The research is dominated by female participants. The reason behind being that, the research targets female students, hence the need to give them an opportunity to articulate their concerns. The research also has a gender balance as 14% (3) of the participants are male participants. These males are only key informants with a vast knowledge in issues that affect both a girl child and boy child in education.

Table 4.2 also presents the distribution of participants by age. Participants between the age of 14-19 (10) constitute the highest percentage of the total population. The main reason being that, the research is centered on children of school going age, who have dropped out of school. The research is also centered on high school female students, who are more likely to be between the age of 14-19. The second group to dominate the research was 20-29 (5) age group. The third group to dominate the research was 50-59 (3) as they were chosen by the researcher due to their vast experience in child protection issues. 30-39 (1) and 40-49 (2) age groups constitute the least population in this research and this age group is mainly dominated by key informants.

Table 4.2 also presents the distribution of participants by their educational level. The highest population in this research were high school students and school dropouts. The main reason being that, the research is mainly centered on high school dropouts. Key informants with diplomas constitute the second highest population in this research. However, the researcher selected them because of their experience in child protection issues which exceed 5 years working in child protection settings. Key informants with degrees also constitute a significant number of participants in this research due to their knowledge in child protection issues. Only 5% (1) of the total population had masters in this research.

4.3 THEME 1. STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED BY THE DREAMS PROGRAM IN MITIGATING SCHOOL DROPOUTS AMONG FEMALE STUDENTS AT RUSHINGA HIGH SCHOOL.

4.3.1 School Fees Payment.

Fees payment was highlighted by all the participants in this research as one of the most innovative strategy to prevent school dropouts among female students. The key informants in

this research concurred that, fees payment have a greater impact to the realization of educational dreams by vulnerable female students. Beneficiaries of the DREAMS program acknowledged their privilege to be enrolled under the program.

Participant G, F (15), articulate that,

vabereki vangu vaive vave kukundikandikana kundibhadharira chikoro, asi pandakapinda muDREAMS ndipo pandakakwanisa kuenderera mberi''.

(I was supposed to drop out of school in form 1, because my parents were failing to pay my school fees. DREAMS came with an opportunity for me to continue pursuing my education.

Participant O, F (14) added that,

DREAMS yakandipa mukana wekuenderera mberi nechikoro nekundibhadharira fees.

*"*DREAMS program, gave me an opportunity to pursue my educational dreams through paying my school fees".

Key informant C, M (55) acknowledged that

"*DREAMS has transformed the lives of a girl child through fees payment as it was an obstacle to the realization of their dreams".*

The responses indicate that, payment of school fees have served female students from dropping out of school. The findings were akin to those of Kabiru, Motungo and Nzengya, (2021) who articulated that, low-income families do not afford money to pay for students' tuition.

4.3.2 Provision of School Uniforms.

The respondents concurred that, provision of school uniforms motivated female students in attending School.

Participant O F (14) claimed that,

"*Ndaigara ndichirovha nokuti zvainyadzisa kuuya kuchikoro ne uniform yakabvaruka, asi pandakapiwa itsva, andina kuzomborovha".*

(I usually skip attending school, because it was really embarrassing to come to school dressed in rags uniform).

Key informant D, F (45) indicate that,

> "*students have a tendency demotivating others from poor backgrounds by laughing at their torn uniforms*".

Key informant D, F (40) added that,

> "*school uniforms are a real challenge in rural schools, and the DREAMS program has rescued a lot of vulnerable female students from dropping out of school through provision of school uniforms.*

Beneficiaries of the DREAMS program acknowledged that, provision of school uniforms motivated them to attend school frequently.

The finding address a challenge claimed by Mhlaba (2021) who traced the causes of school dropouts in terms of cost of not only school fees but also other costs of school requirements such as stationery, uniforms and food.

The responses indicate that, provision of school uniforms by the DREAMS program improve school retention as it is a weapon to fight against discrimination that exist among students from extremely poor households.

4.3.3 Provision of Sanitary wear.

Provision of sanitary wear was acknowledged as one of the best strategies to deal with the challenge of female school dropout during the research. Key informants especially female ones concur that lack of sanitary wear was one of the main reasons for absenteeism before the DREAMS program intervene.

Key informant F, F (50) articulated that,

> "*female students from poor backgrounds can't afford to buy sanitary wear and the only coping strategy they have was to be absent during their period days*".

Her response was akin to the response of key informant D, F (45) who articulated that,

> "*adequate sanitary wear has improved school attendance for vulnerable girls*".

The researcher observed that, female students were showing signs of embarrassment when answering questions relating to sanitary wear. However, the criticality of sanitary wear to them can never be doubted as participant K, F (16), articulated that,

Provision of sanitary wear improved our hygiene at school.

The responses are a clear indication that, lack of sanitary wear affect school attendance. Even though they were no participants who highlight lack of sanitary wear as a direct cause to school dropout, its influence on the long run cannot be undermined. Lack of sanitary wear lead to school absenteeism, which can ultimately result in school dropout if not properly handled. This correlates with the findings of Stoilova, Cai , Aguilar-Gomez, Batzer, Nyanza EC, Benshaul-Tolonen (2022) who articulated that, girls who have no access or cannot afford sanitary wear suffer from inadequate menstrual hygiene management which have a negative impact on their education.

4.3.4 Sexual Reproductive Rights Education.

Key informants acknowledged the influence that sexual reproductive health rights education have in school retention.

Key informant E, F (31) responded that,

"*we realized that, parents have traditional beliefs that prevent them from discussing sexual reproductive health rights issues with their children and we want to take that responsibility at school*".

Key informant D, F (45) articulated that,

"*sexual reproductive rights education assists female students in making informed decisions*".

However, female students were showing unwillingness to negotiate safe sex but were showing interest in abstinence until they got married.

Participant L, F (17) articulated that,

Ndakadzidziswa nezve nzira dzese dzekuzvidzivirira pabonde asi ndakasarudza kusariita kusvikira ndaroorwa.

(I have learned about all forms of contraception but l selected abstinence until l get married).

The responses were similar to the findings of Millanzi, Kibusi, Osaki (2022) who claimed that, adolescents exposed to integrated reproductive health lesson materials in a problem-solving pedagogy have the ability to practice safe sex through negotiating condom use and also have the ability to withstand sexual pressures and abstain from sexual activities. Maslow's hierarchy of needs supported the importance of sexual and reproductive education as sex is viewed as a basic need in the hierarchy. It is the researcher's sentiments that discussion of sexual reproductive rights issues is very crucial in schools as it is culturally impossible with the biological parents but only with an aunt. However, as children no longer live in extended families due to industrialization, they face a challenge in accessing sexual reproductive rights information.

4.4 THEME 2. CAUSES OF SCHOOL DROPOUTS AMONG DREAMS BENEFICIARIES.

DREAMS beneficiaries, like other students drop out of school for a variety of reasons, despite their school fees being paid in time. Key informants and other participants outlined a variety of factors that led to the existence of school dropouts despite payment of school fees.

4.4.1 Poverty.

One of the most mentioned cause of school dropouts by the respondents was poverty.

Participant P, F (16) articulated that,

> *"Kushaikwa kwechikafu chekudya kuchikoro nekumba ndiro dambudziko hombe ratinaro sevana veDREAMS"*.

(Shortage of food to eat at school and at home is the biggest challenge we are facing as DREAMS beneficiaries).

Key informant C, M (55) claimed that,

> "*most children came from extremely poor households where they struggle to find something to eat. They ended up having a new school uniform, without fees arrears but with extreme hunger, which is an antecedent of school dropout*".

Due to poverty, some guardians expect relief from the DREAMS program and failure to do that, ended up in victimization of the beneficiaries.

Participants H, F (17) claimed that,

> *"Ndainyimwa chikafu natete vachiti piwai neve DREAMS"*.

 (I was denied access to food by aunt, claiming that DREAMS should provide us everything).

Poverty proved to be an obstacle to educational attainment for most beneficiaries of the DREAMS program. Female students have a variety of needs that are beyond fees payment, provision of school uniforms and sanitary wear. The finding support Mhlaba (2021) who traced the causes of school dropouts in terms of cost of not only school fees but also other costs of school requirements such as stationery, uniforms and food.

Access to food was one of the main challenges faced by these children due to poverty. This is in line with the Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which places food as a basic component of life that needs to be fulfilled for a person to live and pursue his or her other dreams.

4.4.2 Sexual Abuses.

Female students are the most victims of sexual abuses in Rushinga District as claimed by the key informants. Key informants also outlined that, cases of sexual abuses usually are unreported as the perpetrators are mostly relatives. However, unreported cases have worrying consequences such as the risk of contaminating sexually transmitted diseases especially HIV & AIDS. Key informants concur that, the most immediate cause of school dropout in relation to sexual abuse was discrimination.

 Key informant C, M (55) claimed that,

> *"whether the child got pregnant or not, the fear of discrimination has forced many students to drop out of school"*.

This concurred with the views of participant W, F (19) who claimed that,

> *"zvinonyadzisa kuita pamuviri uri pachikoro, nekuti chero shamwari dzako hadzizode kutamba newe"*.

(It is very embarrassing to be pregnant while still at school, even your friends will start to discriminate you).

 Key informant A articulate that,

> "*the academic performance of sexually abused children is very poor and this usually prompted them to drop out of school*".

The response was akin to the findings of Mennen, Weybright and Aldridge (2022) who articulated that, sexually abused children's cognitive capacity and memory ratings and academic success are lower than their counterparts. The responses of the participants are in line with the arguments of Abraham Maslow in his hierarchy of needs in which he stressed the importance of love and belongingness. Therefore, many female students drop out of school because they feel they no longer belong to a group of their peers and their teachers no longer love them.

4.4.3 Child Marriages.

Child marriage has become a norm in Rushinga District as claimed by key informants. Statistics at Rushinga High School indicate that, 15 to 17 years is the age group mostly affected by child marriages.

Key informant E, F (31) articulated that,

> "*Child marriages derail our efforts as female students in Rushinga District prioritize marriage than education*".

Key informant C, M (55) claimed that,

> "*the undervalue of education in Rushinga District makes it very rare for a child to continue pursuing education while in a marriage*"

Key informant B, M (40) also argued that,

> "*the responsibilities that a female child has in a marriage such as child bearing and rearing and other household makes it very rare for a child to continue pursuing her education after being married*".

This was akin to the view of Uddin (2021) who examined the effects of child marriages on school dropouts from a family life course perspective which consist of family residence transition after marriage, early marital sexuality and pregnancy, child bearing and rearing and family responsibilities.

Participant M, F (21) claimed that,

"Ndakazongoroorwawo nekuti vamwe vese vandaitamba navo vaive vaenda kuvrume".

 (I was married because all my friends were married).

Participant Q, F (18) also claimed that,

"Ndakadokerwa ndine mukomana, vabereki vangu vakandidzinga".

(I came home late, and they decided to send me back to my boyfriend).

The responses fill the gap left by Samkange (2022) who acknowledged that, it is often difficult to establish whether dropouts are a result of child marriages or it is dropping out of school for other reasons which force female children into child marriages as child marriages proved to be the driving force of school dropouts in Rushinga.   Guardians also have a share in child marriages as they influence their children to be married for their personal benefit, to get bride price. Some female students decide to be married for the sake of getting love and belongingness they are denied by their guardians.

4.4.4 Child Labor.

Respondents concurred that, child labor have a role in school dropouts among female students under the DREAMS program.

Participant F, F (18) claimed that,

"ndinotanga ndaenda kumunda ndisati ndaenda kuchikoro, nguva yekuverenga inondinetsa".

(Before going to school, I work in the field, to the extent that my time for reading is limited).

Key informant D, F (45) articulated that,

"the academic performances of our students are mainly affected by child labor as children are denied time for their academic studies especially during the rainy season where they will be working in the fields of their guardians".

This was in line with the description of child labor by Batool and Bilal (2022) which try to answer the question that, which work done by children should be classified as child labor. They argued that, the employment of children at an early age that inhibits their mental and physical

growth deprives them of their fundamental rights, and education is considered child labor. Students also take child labor as a coping strategy to their needs which are not met.

Participant K, F (16) claimed that,

> "*ndakaona zvirinane kundoseenza ndine 15 years kuti ndikwanise kutenga chikafu pamwe chete nekuchengetawo amai vangu*".

(I considered it as the best to be employed as a house maid at the age of 15 for the sake of buying food for myself and my mother).

The responses indicate that; female students have some of the needs that are not met by the DREAMS program. Therefore, the utilize every opportunity that arises to fulfill their needs and they ended up in child labor. The findings support the views of Batool and Bilal (2022) who traced the correlation of poverty with child labor claiming that, parents living in poverty tended to expose their children to child work. This resonates what was propounded by Abraham Maslow in his hierarchy of needs, human beings thrive to fulfill their unmet needs in every possible way.

4.4.5 Poor Academic Performance.

Poor academic performance has acted as a catalyst for school dropouts among female students, key informants agreed.

Participant N, F (20) also articulated that,

> "*ndakaona kuti chikoro chaindinetsa ndikati regedzai ndigare zvangu pamba*".

(My academic performances were very poor, therefore l decided to drop out of school).

Participant Q, F (20) had the same sentiments as she articulated that,

> "*Ndainyara nekusagona chikoro kwandaiita kusvira ndarega*"

"I was embarrassed by my poor performance until l decided to drop out".

Key informant A, M (52) had the same views as he articulated that,

> "*female students portray themselves as housewives, without a responsibility of being breadwinners but child bearing, therefore, when their academic performance is poor,*

they see no reason in continuing pursuing education rather than dropout and get married".

The responses are a clear indication that, poor academic performance play a paramount role in female school drop outs. The responses resonate the findings of Rahman (2021) who cited grade repetition, low academic performance and deviant behavior as the main causes of low interest in school that ultimately lead to dropouts.

Poor academic performance contributes towards lack of interest in education. Rahman (2021) had previously cited poor academic performance as a cause of low interest in school that ultimately lead to dropouts.

Poor academic performance also reduces self-esteem of a girl child, affecting the need to self-actualize as Maslow highlighted the need for self-esteem to self-actualize.

4.4.6 Lack of Interest.

Lack of interest from students was another interesting area that was mainly mentioned by key informants. They agreed that, the DREAMS program deserve credit for trying to serve thousands of female students from dropping out of school, but the challenge was lack of interest from the students. Key informants cited selection criteria as the source of problem, as students are selected on the basis of vulnerability status not on how interested are they in education.

Key informant A, M (52) claimed that,

"*it's very sad that some of the female students under this program are not even interested in their school work".*

Key informant F, F (50) also reiterated that,

"*they were given opportunities at the expense of other students who are interested in succeeding, it's very sad".*

Key informant D, F (45) was mainly concerned with the causes of lack of interest in academic studies as he remarked that,

"*poor academic performance, grade repetition and lack of employment after graduating are the root causes of lack of interest that require attention".*

The researcher deduced the paramount effect of lack of interest to school dropout as it is directly linked to other causes of school dropouts. It is of interest to note that, lack of interest has its roots from, poor academic performance, walking long distances, poor relationships with teachers and lack of employment in the market. This was supported by Rahman (2021) who cited grade repetition, low academic performance and deviant behavior as the main causes of low interest in school that ultimately lead to dropouts.

4.4.7 Lack of Exposure.

Lack of exposure was another interesting area that was articulated by key informants.

Key informant D, F (45) articulated that,

> "*most of our students lack exposure as they have never visited a town*".

This was also supported by key informant C, M (55) who articulated that,

> "*these children lack role models; therefore, their main intention is to be subsistence farmers*".

Key informant F, F (50) articulated that,

> "*Lack of exposure has resulted in child marriages, which is a direct cause of school dropout in Rushinga District*".

The responses, it can be deduced that, lack of exposure has hampered the future of young girls. Children in Rushinga are mainly exposed to subsistence farming. Therefore, they lack role models who can inspire them to be Lawyers, Doctors and Social Workers. The importance of role models was emphasized in the Social Learning theory.

4.4.8 Lack of motivation.

Respondents concurred that, economic meltdown have bear a greater contribution towards school dropouts of female students under the DREAMS program as they lack motivation.

Participant R, F (20) state that,

> "*Vamwe vakadzidza avasi kuenda kubasa, saka ndakaona zvirinane kuita zvekutengesa*".

Participant S (20) shared the same opinion as she claimed that,

"Kuroorwa kuri nane pane kudzidza kusingabhadhari"

(It's better to be married than to pursue education that cannot pay".

(Whether you are educated or not, there is no employment, therefore I decided to be a vendor).

Key informant C, M (55) articulated that,

"*students are no longer motivated to pursue higher levels of education due to unemployment*".

The responses reflected the findings of Ngamaba, Lombo, LOMBO, and Viviar, (2021), who articulated that, numerous students drop out, because of lack of motivation and inspiration they receive from their teachers will affect their confidence and productivity. However, their argument was based on poor performance from teachers rather than poor economy that was mentioned by the participants of this research. Participants were convinced that, people in the informal sector, which require less education have a higher income than those in the formal sector, which require higher educational qualifications. This resonates what was propounded by B.F Skinner in his motivational theory, where he states that, human beings specifically children require motivation. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, human beings also work towards securing secure job for safety reasons. Therefore, when the formal sector which offers a secure job, with fixed salaries, bonuses, pensions and compensation when injured at work failed to offer its expectations, nothing will motivate female students to pursue education.

4.4.9 Health Challenges.

Respondents concurred that, some health complications have forced some female students to drop out of school.

Participant I, F (18) also claimed that,

"*utano hwangu hwaive husingandibvumire kufamba rwendo rwakareba kuenda nekudzoka kuchikoro*".

(My health condition doesn't allow me to walk a long distance to and from school, therefore l decided to drop out).

Key informant F, F (50) claimed that,

"children with chronic illnesses require special needs and most of them dropout because their needs are not met under the DREAMS program".

"Students who experience absenteeism challenges are those who have chronic illnesses and they also end up dropping out of school".

The responses are a clear indication that, female students under the DREAMS program, like other students are affected by health complications. This correlate the view of Mokoena and Van Breda (2021) who propounded that, illness affect the learner's academic performance and concentration as well as their general sense of wellbeing and self.

4.4.10 Long Distances to School.

Long distance from school has affected a portion of female students under the DREAMS program. Children with chronic illness are the most affected as mentioned by participant I F (18) who claimed that,

"utano hwangu hwaive husingandibvumire kufamba rwendo rwakareba kuenda nekudzoka kuchikoro".

(My health condition doesn't allow me to walk a long distance to and from school, therefore l decided to drop out).

Key informants articulated that long distance has mainly affected Advanced Level students as High Schools in ward 24 are located in Rushinga Urban.

Key informant F, F (50) articulated that,

"Our A Level students are affected by long distances as they walk about 10 km per day since there are no high schools outside Rushinga Urban".

Key informant D, F (45) articulated that,

Long distances, expose female students to many risks especially sexual abuses.

The responses indicate that, some female students under the DREAMS program are affected by long distances that also exposes them to other risks such as sexual abuses. Children with chronic illnesses are the most disadvantaged group by long distance.

4.4.11 Less Significance of Education in the Society.

The society has the most influential role in educational attainment for a girl child as the key informants propounded.

Key informant F, F (50) articulated that,

"*Rushinga society has nothing that motivates the girl child to pursue education*".

Key informant E, F (31) propounded that,

"*In Rushinga, education for girls has never been given its undisputed value, therefore girls usually get married at teen ages, to conform to their societal values*".

Key informant D, F (45) shared the same view as she articulated that,

"female students at Rushinga High School dropout because they are not receiving support that they must receive from their families due to less significance of education in the District".

The responses indicate that the attitude of the society towards girl education has serious hampered hopes mitigating school dropouts among female students.

4.4.12 Parent/Guardian's Educational Level.

The educational qualifications of a parent or a guardian have a greater impact on school dropout or school retention of a female child, key informants explained.

Key informant C, M (55) articulated that,

"*children from low educated households have a high possibility of dropping out of school because they lack motivation from their parents or guardians*".

Key informant A M (52) articulated that,

"*children from low educated households are usually the victims of child labor as the as the parents/guardians deny the time for academic studies, in preference of household chores*".

Key informant D, F (45) also indicated that,

"*low educated parents undermine education for girls as they hold a traditional belief that girls are housewives who need no education*".

The level of education of a parent/guardian proved to be of paramount importance to the school retention of a girl child. This was supported by Dagane (2021) who articulated that, educated parents have the ability to support their children in completing their assignements and can monitor the learning materials and educational progress of their children as well as maintaining a good relationship with the teachers. Educated parents motivate their children to purse high levels of education whilst low educated parents are not aware of the importance of being educated. Motivation is very crucial as explained by the Record of Information in the Department of Social Development, where questions on how parents motivate their children are asked.

4.5 THEME 3 STRATEGIES THAT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED TO REDUCE SCHOOL DROPOUTS IN THE DREAMS PROGRAM.

4.5.1 Improving communication between children and their guardians.

Key informants call upon the DREAMS program implementers to try to improve communication between children and their guardians. They agreed that discussions on issues such as sexual reproductive rights are essential on every household.

Key informant C, M (55) articulated that,

"*the DREAMS program should invent an educational program targeting parents and guardians to improve communication on sexual reproductive rights which is essential at household level to reduce issues of teen pregnancies*".

Key informant F, F (50) also highlighted that,

"*communication build social cohesion that is essential for a family to support the girl child in her education*".

Key informant E, F (31) share the same opinion as she articulated that,

"The family need to support their children, regardless of being under DREAMS or not, and the best way to support them is through communication about sexual reproductive rights".

However, their views differ from that of Carl Rogers, who saw dependency on family as a potential barrier to growth (Usher 1989) cited by MacDougall (2002). However, despite this, the role of family in offering emotional support that every child need cannot be disputed. Maslow's hierarchy of needs indicate that, human beings need to feel love and belongingness, which can be guaranteed through communication.

4.5.2 Strengthening teacher-guardian relationship.

Key informants recommended the need to strengthen the relationship between the teacher and the guardians of the children under the DREAMS program. They argued that, communication between the two allow them to excise every possible way to keep the child in school.

Key informant F, F (50) articulated that,

"*students have a tendency of blaming their parents for failing to attend school, accusing them of giving them a lot of work to do*".

Therefore, through communication, the teacher will be able to magnify the source of the problem. However, the key informants also didn't deny that guardians can be blamed for the failure of a girl child to attend school.

Key informant D, F (45) also articulated that,

"*in circumstances where the guardian can be blamed for the failure of the child to attend school, the teacher can utilize the relationship between him/her with the guardian to advocate for the child to be given her time to attend school and to study*".

Key informant A, M (52) share the same opinion as he articulated that,

"Improvement of teacher-guardian relationship can yield better results in school retention as the two can assist each other on monitoring the school attendance of their child".

Improving communication between the teacher and the guardians can serve a lot of students from dropping out of school as it gives the teacher an opportunity to analyze the source of the problems that are being encountered by the child and try to address them.

4.5.3 Comprehensive package.

Key informants and other participants recommends for a diversity of services when the resources permit. Some of the services that were most mentioned were sanitary wear, bicycles and food hampers.

Key informant D, F (45) claimed that,

> "*there is the need to consider food for these vulnerable girls because they are at risk of being sexually abused in exchange of food*".

Key informant B, M (40),

> "*Wheelchairs for children with disabilities need to be considered under this scheme*".

Participant I, F (18) claimed that,

> *If possible, the program should consider bicycles for children who walk long distances.*

When resources permit, diversification of services is very essential, considering a variety of needs that a girl child have. CAMFED has also already implemented it as it offers a variety of services such as school uniforms, sanitary wear, bicycles just to mention a few. Diversification of services should be considered in line with the basic services for human survival that were outlined by Abraham Maslow such as food, shelter and health services.

4.5.4 Improving access to Sexual Reproductive Rights Education.

Access to sexual reproductive rights is an essential component of a health life that was outlined by the key informants. They argued that, to attain a teen pregnancy and a child marriage free society, sexual reproductive rights education should be accessed at household level, in schools and in clinics.

Key informant A, M (52) claimed that,

> "*barriers to accessing sexual reproductive rights at household level, in school and in clinics should be removed to mitigate teen pregnancies and child marriages*".

Key informant B, M (40) also articulated that,

> "*there is need for engaging stakeholders in reproductive health issues especially the Ministry of Health, to educate children on reproductive health issues*".

Key informant F, F (50) views the family and school as the best institutions to offer sexual and reproductive health education as she articulated that,

> "*There is discrimination in Clinics, therefore, sexual and reproductive health education should be provided at school and at home*".

Sexual reproductive health education proved to be very essential to mitigate school dropouts among female students under the DREAMS program as it reduces teen pregnancies and child marriages which are direct causes of school dropouts. Sexual reproductive health education need to be strengthened in a school curriculum at all levels to address a problem cited by Samkange (2022) that, child marriages in Zimbabwe are caused by lack of reproductive health education in schools.

4.5.5 Guidance and Counselling.

Key informants acknowledged the role of guidance and counseling teachers in school retention. Key informant E, F (31) articulated that,

> "*we need professional guidance and counseling teachers who are mainly equipped with knowledge on sexual reproductive issues as they are the most drivers of female school dropouts*".

Key informant B, M (40) also reiterated that,

> "*guidance and counseling teachers need to have at least a certificate in counseling*".

Key informant C, M (55) proposed the need for educational social workers in schools by articulating that,

> "*had it not been of economic challenges in Zimbabwe, each school must have an Educational Social Worker to deal with social issues that face our children*".

Guidance and counseling have also been suggested by Samkange (2002) who claimed that, guidance and counselling have to be part of the school curriculum and must be provided by professionals, with counseling qualifications.

4.5.6 Awareness Campaigns.

Awareness campaigns against teen pregnancies, child marriages and sexual abuses were proposed by the key informants. They acknowledged the existence of these awareness campaigns in Rushinga but they advocated for more frequency and high stakeholder engagement.

Key informant F, F (50) claimed that,

> "*the DREAMS program need to organize awareness campaigns frequently and engage all child protection stakeholders such as the Police, Ministry of Health and the Department of Social Development".*

Key informant A, M (52) also articulated that,

> "*Awareness campaigns should not be done in schools only but in communities, because they are the perpetrators of child marriages and sexual abuses".*

Key informant D, F (45) shared the same sentiments as she articulated that,

> *"Reasons for school dropouts are not at school but are in the society, therefore, awareness campaigns should target these communities where sexual abuses and child marriages are rampant".*

The responses indicated the paramount importance of awareness campaigns in fighting against female school dropouts. The role of awareness campaigns cannot be disputed since they address the direct causes of female school dropouts, teen pregnancies, child marriages and sexual abuses.

4.5.7 Strengthening household economy.

Strengthening household economy was one of the strategies that were recommended by the key informants to fight social problems that female students encounter at home.

Key informant A, M (52) articulated that,

"*it is very difficult to cater for all vulnerable children in a family, therefore these children suffer emotionally starring at their siblings struggling to meet educational needs, hence the need to strengthen the household economy through projects*".

Key informant C, M (55) articulates that,

"*the program need to capacitate female children and their families to be capable of meeting their own needs without the help of anyone*".

Key informant D, F (45) articulated that,

"*Projects offer a permanent solution to poverty, therefore, they should be initiated at household level*".

The responses indicate the paramount importance of capacity building through strengthening household economy as it helps to assist many children in a family. Capacity building also help to build resilience in female children to be able to face any shock without the assistance of the government or NGOs. The responses indicate that human beings have the capacity to work towards fulfilling their needs if conditions that permit them to do so have been created, the same way Maslow view human beings in his hierarchy of needs.

4.5.8 Skills Training.

Key informants and other participants emphasized the importance of skills training to improve attitude of female students towards school.

Key informant B, M (40) articulate that,

"*some of the students have lack of interest in education because of their academic performance but their confidence can be boosted by courses such as dress making, hair dressing and welding*".

Key informant C, M (55) also articulates that;

"*children have different talents that can be utilized to change their attitudes towards education*".

Participant L, F (17) articulated that,

"*mabasa emaoko anotibatsira kuti tizvvitire zvinhu zvedu nekuti mabasa arikunetsa*".

(Skills training help us to start our own businesses since there is unemployment).

The research identified skills training as an ingredient to achieve school retention as previous researches were mainly concerned with provision of material resources to vulnerable children. Child Protection Society has implemented the idea in Rushinga District and vulnerable children are acquiring a lot of skills that are useful in life. The responses also resonate the views of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow that, people are basically good entities striving to fulfil their potential. Moreover, training skills is also the main aspect in Developmental Social Work that is gaining prominence in modern Social Work.

4.5.9 Capacitating female students to start projects.

Projects are essential in reducing school dropouts among female students under the DREAMS program.

Participant H, F (18) claimed that,

> "*zvirinane kuti titange maprojects edu anotipa mari kuitira tigokwanisa kutenga zvatinenge tichida*".

(It's better for us to start our own projects that can generate income for us to buy our needs).

Key informant F, F (50) supported the idea, articulating that,

> "*initiation of projects that a girl child participate in its implementation is a strong weapon to fight poverty as well as dependence syndrome*".

Key informant B, M (40) articulated that,

> "*A girl child need to be empowered as they will face a lot of challenges throughout their life*".

It is the researcher's sentiments that, capacitating children to start their own projects bear fruits as far as education for girls is concerned as girls will not be exposed to risks associated with poverty.

Capacitating students to start their own projects as a way of reducing school dropouts among female students is a new dimension that was discovered by the researcher from the responses of

the participants. This paradigm represents a shift from offering remedial social services by Social Workers to Development. Projects offer sustainable results that extend beyond high school life.

4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY.

The Chapter provided data presentation, discussion and analysis of the findings for this study. The main findings that the researcher obtained were that, the DREAMS program has a variety of educational interventions meant to benefit a girl child as a precautionary measure to school dropout. Some of these measures include, school fees payments, provision of school uniforms, provision of sanitary wear and sexual reproductive health education. The findings also indicated that, the girl child still dropout of school despite all these efforts by the DREAMS program to achieve school retention among female students. The respondents managed to came up with the main factors that are forcing a girl child out of school such as poverty, sexual abuses, child marriages, poor academic performance, lack of interest, lack of exposure, lack of motivation, health challenges, long distance from school, less significance of education in the society and parent/ guardian's educational level. Lastly, respondents identified strategies to improve the situation of vulnerable girls by the respondents were, improving communication between children and their guardians, strengthening teacher-guardian relationship, diversification of services, improving access to sexual reproductive rights education, guidance and counseling, awareness campaigns, strengthening household economy, skills training and capacitating female students to start their own projects. The next chapter will provide a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION.

This chapter contains a summary of the of this study. The chapter also serves to make conclusions on the main findings of this project. Recommendations are also part of this chapter as they serve the purpose of assisting the implementation of this program in future. The government and other non-governmental organizations who are into child protection can also benefit from the recommendations highlighted in this project, in their quest to mitigate school dropouts among female students.

5.2 SUMMARY.

The aim of this study was to assess the DREAMS educational interventions on mitigating school dropouts among vulnerable girls. The objectives of this study were to identify strategies implemented by the DREAMS program to mitigate school dropouts among female students at Rushinga High School, examine the reasons why school dropouts still exist in the DREAMS program and to explore the strategies that can be implemented to reduce school dropouts in the DREAMS program. The research was guided by the motivational theory propounded by Abraham Maslow. Phenomenological research design was used in this research. Purposive sampling technique and stratified random sampling were used to select the sample from total population. The study was contacted with female students and school leavers from Rushinga High School in Rushinga District. 15 students from Rushinga High School who dropped since 2021 participated in this research. 34 students who are still benefiting from the DREAMS program at Rushinga High School also participated in this research to have a clear picture of the challenges they face to the point of dropping out of school. 6 key informants from Department of Social Development, National Aids Council and Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education also participated in this research.

Key findings.

The research managed to identify that the DREAMS program implemented various strategies that were considered helpful in combating school dropouts among female students at Rushinga High School.

The interventions include'

- school fees payments.
- provision of school uniforms.
- provision of sanitary wear.
- sexual reproductive health education.

The services that are being provided by the DREAMS program have a positive impact on school retention. However, the efforts of the program are in some instances hindered by the factors that were identified under objective 2 of this study.

The second objective identified the causes of the existence of school dropouts among DREAMS beneficiaries, despite its efforts to mitigate them.

The reasons that were identified by the respondents include,

- Poverty.
- sexual abuses.
- child marriages.
- poor academic performance.
- lack of interest.
- lack of exposure.
- lack of motivation.
- health challenges.
- long distance from school.
- less significance of education in the society.
- parent/ guardian's educational level.

The reasons for dropping out of school that were mentioned by the participants mainly emanate from the community. Hence the need for focusing on the community when addressing them.

The respondents managed to came up with the strategies that can be implemented to reduce school dropouts in the DREAMS program.

Some of the strategies identified by the respondents were,

- improving communication between children and their guardians.
- strengthening teacher-guardian relationship.
- diversification of services.
- improving access to sexual reproductive rights education.
- guidance and counseling, awareness campaigns.
- strengthening household economy.
- skills training.
- capacitating female students to start their own projects.

The strategies that were recommended are community centered, which require community participation. Some of the strategies also require a lot of material resources for implementation. Hence the need for partnership between the government and NGOs.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS.

5.3.1 The DREAMS program managed to improve the chances for a girl child to complete high school.

The researcher concluded that, the strategies implemented by the DREAMS program in education improved school retention among female students at Rushinga High School. The positive outcome came from addressing the most pressing needs of a girl child through fees payment, provision of school uniforms, provision of sanitary wear and sexual reproductive health education. The researcher was convinced that the DREAMS program came up with an intervention that is much appreciated at Rushinga High School. However, the study also managed to highlight some of the shortfalls of the program that resulted in the existence of school dropouts as explained in detail under the objective 2.

5.3.2 School dropouts still exist in among female students under the DREAMS program as a result of some shortfalls of the program, as well as factors that are beyond its control.

Through this study, it came to light that, school dropouts still exist among female students under the DREAMS program due to a variety of reasons. The main reasons for the existence of these

dropouts were highlighted by this study. The study highlighted poverty, sexual abuses, child marriages, poor academic performance, lack of interest, lack of exposure, lack of motivation, health challenges, long distance from school, less significance of education in the society and parent/ guardian's educational level as the main causes why school dropouts still exist among DREAMS beneficiaries. These causes don't only require efforts from DREAMS implementers but require efforts of the government, parents/guardians, teachers, students and any other child protection stakeholders.

5.3.3 There are strategies that can reduce school dropouts of female students under the DREAMS program, if properly implemented.

This study managed to come up with improving communication between children and their guardians, strengthening teacher-guardian relationship, diversification of services, improving access to sexual reproductive rights education, guidance and counseling, awareness campaigns, strengthening household economy, skills training and capacitating female students to start their own projects as some of the strategies that if implemented, it might bear fruits on school retention. These strategies require the efforts of all child protection stakeholders in a collaborative and coordinated way in addressing the challenges facing children under the DREAMS program that are forcing them to dropout despite their school fees being paid.

4.3.4 The need to address vulnerability.

Through this study, it can be concluded that, educational interventions must aim at addressing vulnerability for them to be effective in mitigating school dropouts. This was witnessed in this research as respondents opted for diversification of services that address vulnerability as a whole for example school fees, uniforms and sanitary wear provision at school and food handouts at household level. The respondents also proposed a developmental approach of fighting against vulnerability that encompasses empowerment of a girl child through initiation of projects at personal and household level. A girl child is also vulnerable to sexual abuse, which require implementation of policies such as the Sexual Offences Act, to protect her.

4.3.5 The problems of female students mostly emanate from their respective communities.

Through this study, it can be concluded that, many challenges faced by female students under the DREAMS program, emanate from their respective communities. The DREAMS program had done justice in addressing the needs of a girl child at school through school fees payment,

provision of school uniforms and sanitary wear. However, despite all these efforts, school dropouts still exist because of child marriages and sexual abuses that are being practiced at community level. In addition to that, the negative attitude of the community towards education also has a negative outcome in school retention as vulnerable girls' dropout of school because they are portrayed as housewives in their communities.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.4.1 Collaboration and Coordination.

Collaboration and coordination have a lot of advantages when implementing any program meant to benefit the disadvantaged. When implementing the DREAMS program in Rushinga District, NAC have to collaborate and coordinate with child protection government ministries such as DSD, NGOs such as CAMFED, and the community is the key. Some of the benefits associated with collaboration and coordination are avoidance of duplication of services and diversification of services. In Rushinga District, if collaboration and coordination can be practiced in implementing educational assistance interventions, the pressing needs of a girl child can be met since there is a variety of organizations that offer different services to a girl child such as Msasa which is specializing on gender based violence issues (GBV), Child Protection Society (CPS) which is equipping the youth with various life skills, REPSSI, which is offering psychosocial support to children, just to mention a few.

5.4.2 Participation of a Girl Child.

One of the key to a successful implementation of programs is active participation of those who are going to be affected by the program. In this case, a girl child must not be taken a passive recipient of services. Therefore, NAC have to create a platform for their active participation in planning and implementation of the program. The views of a girl child must not be taken for granted. It is a girl child who must identify their areas of vulnerability and how their challenges can be addressed. Through their active participation, female students are motivated to reach their maximum potential to make the whole program a success.

5.4.3 Community Engagement.

The success of every program, lies within its ability to recognize key stakeholders, who can influence its success or hinder its progress. Community is one of the key stakeholders who are often undermined in most programs, yet it has the ability to hinder the success of any program.

In this case, NAC need to engage the community the planning and implementation phase of the program to gain support that emanate from the family. In addition to that, there are some of the problems that emanate at home that require a dialogue with the parents/guardians for example frequent absenteeism of children, while working in the field especially during the rainy season.

5.4.4 Involvement of Social Workers.

Social Workers have proved for decades to be experts in child protection issues. Their training, which consist of certain modules such as Child Welfare are crucial to their knowledge in child protection issues. Some of them also have experience in working in child protection settings such as the Department of Social Development that enhanced their expertise in child protection issues. Therefore, NAC should consider their involvement in the planning and implementation of their program.

5.4.5. Strengthening household economy.

Household economy need to be strengthened to reduce some of the problems that emanate from home. These problems include shortage of food at home. Household economy can only be improved through collective action. The Department of Social Development have a role of providing free food to the vulnerable households where vulnerable girls came from. The government also need to release funds for starting projects. NGOs also have the role to play such as construction of dams for nutritional gardens to flourish.

5.4.6. Girl Child Empowerment.

The researcher recommends girl child empowerment to achieve school retention. A girl child need to be empowered economically, socially and politically. Empowerment usually has been taken as economic empowerment but it also encompasses the social aspect of life, where knowledge is power and the political aspect of life, where decision making is the key. Therefore, girls under the DREAMS program, just like other girls need to be empowered in all aspects of life to boost their chances of making informed decisions. The government of Zimbabwe has the main responsibility of empowering every girl child especially those in rural areas.

5.4.7. Strengthening implementation of Legislations that protect a girl child.

In Zimbabwe, there are many policies that protect a girl child that only need to be strengthened in their implementation. Some of the policies that protect a girl child in Zimbabwe include, the Sexual Offences Act, the Children's Act Chapter 5:06, the Criminal Law (Codification and

Reform) Act [Chapter 9:23] and the Child Labor Act. These policies have a capacity to protect children from all forms of abuses such as sexual abuses but their Implementation is questionable in Zimbabwe. Corruption has created an environment that is not suitable for the growth of a girl child in Zimbabwe as the law enforcing agents are being paid at the expense of justice. The government has the role to play in creating a society where the policies are not only formulated, but implemented. It is also the duty of Social Workers to advocate for the implementation of policies to achieve social justice. Through implementation of child protection policies, cases of child exploitation will decrease and the chances of school retention will increase.

5.4.8 Further Studies on the DREAMS program.

The researcher observed that, there was little research on the DREAMS educational intervention. The researcher recommends further studies on the impact that the program have to the benefiaries. In this case, the level of academic performance for children under this program can be measured. If the results indicate that, the academic performance of the beneficiaries is poor, its causes can be identified as well as coming up with strategies to improve it. The main reason behind that is, educational interventions are not being carried out for the sake of helping vulnerable children to graduate from high school but rather, to transform their life.

5.5 CONCLUSION.

The Chapter covered the summary of the whole study, that include the objectives of the study, theoretical framework, methodology as well as the findings of the study. The chapter gave conclusions that were informed by the findings in this study. Recommendations were also part of this chapter to improve the educational situations of vulnerable girls as well as adding knowledge to the social work profession.

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Appendix A.

KEY INFORMANT IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE.

Introduction letter to the participants and consent form.

My name is Nomore Makuva. I am a 4th year student at Bindura University of Science Education studying towards attaining a Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in Social Work. Research is one of the prerequisite in completing a Social Work Degree. Therefore, l am carrying out a research titled, '**An assessment of educational interventions on mitigating school dropouts on vulnerable girls. A case of DREAMS at Rushinga High School in Rushinga District'.** Your consent in participating in this research is greatly respected and at any point you feel uncomfortable in participating in this research, you are free to withdrew or choose not to answer some of the questions. The researcher is using interviews as a method of collecting data, which requires a face to face dialogue with you as the key informant. The interview shall not take more than 30 minutes.

Key informant's signature………………………….

Date……………………………………….................

SECTION A.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FOR KEY INFORMANTS.

1 Sex……………………

2 Age……………………...

3 Marital Status………………………

4 Designation………………………....

5 Religion……………………………

6 Experience………………………….

SECTION B:

2.1 What are the strategies that have been implemented by the DREAMS program to mitigate female school dropouts.

SECTION C.

3.1 What are some of the factors that led to school dropouts among female students under the DREAMS program?

Prompts:

Does family background have any contribution to school dropouts?

Does the society have a contribution in school dropouts?

SECTION D:

4.1 In your own view, what strategies can be implemented to reduce school dropouts for female students under the DREAMS program.

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix B.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE PARTICIPANTS.

Introduction letter to the participants and consent form.

My name is Nomore Makuva. I am a 4th year student at Bindura University of Science Education studying towards attaining a Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in Social Work. Research is one of the prerequisite in completing a Social Work Degree. Therefore, l am carrying out a research titled, '**An assessment of educational interventions on mitigating school dropouts on vulnerable girls. A case of DREAMS at Rushinga High School in Rushinga District'.** You consent in participating in this research is greatly respected and at any point the respondent feels uncomfortable in participating in this research, they are free to withdrew or choose not to answer some of the questions. The researcher is using interviews as a method of collecting data, which requires a face to face dialogue with you. The interview shall not take more than 30 minutes.

Participant signature……………………….

Date……………………………….....…...

SECTION A.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FOR THE RESPONDENTS.

1 Sex……………………………………

2 Age……………………………………

3 Level of education……………………….

4 Religion……………………………….

SECTION B.

2.1 What are the strategies that have been implemented by the DREAMS program to mitigate female school dropouts.

SECTION C.

2.1 What are the main reasons for school dropouts among DREAMS beneficiaries?

Prompts

What are the challenges that you face at home that may lead to school dropout?

Does health related challenges have any contribution towards school dropouts.

How motivated were you as a beneficiary of the DREAMS program?

Have you ever been exposed to sexual abuse, child labor or child marriage?

SECTION D.

4.1 In your own view, what are the areas that need to be improved to reduce the challenges you face and minimize school dropouts.

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX C. APPROVAL LETTER.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

P. Bag 1020
BINDURA, Zimbabwe

Tel: 263 - 71 – 7531-6, 7621-4

Fax: 263 – 71 – 7534

socialwork@buse.ac.zw

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

Date 28/11/22

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST TO UNDER TAKE RESEARCH PROJECT IN YOUR ORGANISATION

This serves to advise that MASHMA HOMOGE Registration No.

B1953632 is a **BACHELOR OF SCIENCE HONOURS**

DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK student at Bindura University of Science Education who is conducting a research project.

May you please assist the student to access data relevant to the study and where possible conduct interviews as part of the data collection process.

Yours faithfully

Dr. M. Zembere
A/CHAIRPERSON – DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

APPENDIX D. DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT COODINATOR APPROVAL LETTER

All correspondence to be addressed The District Development Coordinator Reference:

Telephone:- 2392 (066212)
Email:ddcrushinga@gmail.com

ZIMBABWE

MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR
RUSHINGA DISTRICT
P BAG 2110
RUSHINGA

26 January 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

Permission has been granted to NOMORE MAKUVA (B1953632), a student from Bindura University of Science Education to undertake an academic research in Rushinga District.

Kindly assist in any way possible.

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT CO-ORDINATOR
RUSHINGA DISTRICT OFFICE

2 6 JAN 2023

L. R. Dube
P BAG 2110, RUSHINGA
District Development Coordinator - Rushinga

NOMORE MAKUVA (B1953632).

by Nomore Makuva

NOMORE MAKUVA (B1953632).

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