

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

DEPARTMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



**TITLE OF THE PROJECT: EXAMINING FACTORS LEADING TO THE
PREVELANCE OF CHILD MARRIAGES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES: A CASE
STUDY OF SHAMVA, MADZIWA COMMUNITY**

BY

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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO BINDURA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL
FULLFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE
HONOURS DEGREE IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES AND GEOSCIENCE
(HBSc.DG)**

MAY 2025

Approval form

This research project is suitable for presentation to Bindura University of Science Education.
It has been checked for conformity with the departmental guidelines.

Supervisor's Signature..........

Date.....4/6/2025.....

Declaration

I, Joyline Zhangazha, do hereby declare that this dissertation titled “Examining the Factors Leading to the Prevalence of Child Marriages in Rural Communities: A Case Study of Shamva Madziwa Community” is my own original work. All sources used have been acknowledged appropriately through referencing.

Student’s signature

A rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student's signature. In the top-left corner, there is a small icon of a document with a checkmark and the text "You may want to print this page."

Dedication

This work is dedicated to all the girls and young women who have been affected by child marriage. May this research contribute toward creating a more informed and proactive society that champions the rights, dignity and future of every child. I also dedicate this dissertation to my parents and family, whose support, love and encouragement kept me going throughout this journey.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I thank the Almighty God for granting me strength, perseverance and good health throughout this academic journey.

I am also deeply grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Siziba, for his invaluable guidance and continuous encouragement, which were essential to the completion of this dissertation.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the Shamva Madziwa community for their openness and willingness to participate in this research. Special thanks to the local leaders, educators and parents who shared their experiences and perspectives with great honesty and courage. Their contributions enriched this study significantly.

I also wish to acknowledge the support I received from my university lecturers and peers in the Department of Sustainable Development. Their insights and encouragement were instrumental in refining my ideas and improving the quality of this work.

I am also grateful to my family and friends for their unwavering love, patience and emotional support during both the high and low moments of this research process. Their belief in me was my source of strength.

Abstract

This study examines the factors contributing to the prevalence of child marriages in the Shamva Madziwa community in Zimbabwe. Despite existing legal frameworks and national advocacy campaigns aimed at ending child marriage, the practice remains widespread, particularly in rural areas. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research investigates the socio-economic, cultural, environmental and institutional drivers of child marriage in the community. Data was collected through interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussions and observations involving local leaders, parents, teachers and affected girls.

Findings reveal that poverty, gender inequality, traditional customs, religion, environmental factors, legal and policy gaps, protection of the girl child, peer pressure and limited access to education significantly contribute to the continuation of child marriage. Weak enforcement of legal statutes and minimal community awareness of the long-term consequences further exacerbate the problem. The study also explores community perceptions, which reflect a mix of resignation, cultural justification and increasing concern, particularly among younger and more educated members of the community.

The impacts of child marriage identified include disrupted education, exposure to gender-based violence, health complications from early pregnancies, gender inequality, psychological consequences and restricted economic opportunities for girls. These effects perpetuate cycles of poverty and inequality. The study recommends culturally sensitive, community-driven interventions, enhanced education and livelihood opportunities for girls and strengthened enforcement of child protection laws. Overall, the research provides valuable insights into how deeply rooted social and economic factors influence child marriage and highlights the urgent need for inclusive, sustainable solutions.

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List of Acronyms

1. AIDS – Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
2. CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
3. CRC – Convention on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
4. FGDs – Focus Group Discussions
5. GDP – Gross Domestic Product
6. HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Virus
7. NGOs – Non-Governmental Organizations
8. SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals
9. UN – United Nations
10. UNAIDS – Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
11. UNHRC – United Nations Human Rights Council
12. UNICEF – United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Analyzing the prevalence of child marriages in Shamva, Madziwa Community, is the aim of this study. In order to do this, the study looked into the socioeconomic and cultural elements that contribute to the continuation of child marriages as well as the effects of these unions. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the study's background, purpose, scope, justification, problem statement, goals, objectives, research questions, terminology definitions and organizational structure.

1.1 Background of the study

Child marriage is mainly a global south concern that excessively affect rural communities in many developing countries. Child marriage remains a significant global issue, with millions of women affected by the practice. According to Mbaku (2020), the UNICEF Study of 2014 reviewed that more than 700 million women living today were married before turning eighteen, with over 250 million of them having entered marriage before turning 15. While recent data from UNICEF 2023 Report suggests a decline in child marriages, with an estimated 650 million women and girls affected (Indira, 2023), the practice persists, particularly in low-income and rural communities. According to UNICEF global database (2018), approximately 12 million girls get into child marriages each year across the globe. Child marriage demonstrates social norms which subordinates and discriminate girls and is an example of gender imbalance in society. Among the 10 nations with the highest rates of child marriages, South Asia and Southern Africa are the regions where the practice is most prevalent. Chae and Ngo (2017) state that poverty, poor educational opportunities, and gender inequality are major contributing factors to the high prevalence of child marriages in the South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa regions.

According to Johansson (2015), over 140 million girls were projected to become child brides between 2011 and 2020. If current trends persist, the number of child brides could rise due to population growth, particularly in regions where the practice remains deeply ingrained. Without significant intervention, the absolute number of child marriages will continue to rise despite potential reductions in the overall prevalence rate. This highlights the urgent need for

comprehensive strategies, including legal reforms, increased educational opportunities for girls, and community-based initiatives to shift social norms and protect vulnerable populations.

A 2014 UNICEF report stated that Zimbabwe is one of the four southern African nations with the highest rates of girl child marriages, with 39% of girls in Sub-Saharan Africa getting married before becoming 18, and 31% of girls in Zimbabwe getting married before turning 18. Girls residing in the rural areas are disproportionately affected by child marriage.

When the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) passed a resolution in July 2015, it unanimously agreed to "eliminate child, early, and forced marriages." Within the larger objective of gender equality, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) explicitly include the banishment of child marriage as one of its aims (5.3). International organizations and NGOs have made investments in creating interventions that increase awareness of the detrimental effects of child marriage, give parents incentives to delay their children's marriage, and give teenagers new chances to learn skills and alternatives to the conventional route of getting married young and becoming mothers.

Despite awareness and education on issues to do with child marriages and the introduction of legal frameworks has been spread to almost every corner, in radio station, television programs and also awareness campaigns. The challenge is that with all that knowledge out there, child marriages are still widespread in rural Zimbabwe. A girl's risk of marrying off as a child is believed to be influenced by several factors, including poverty, where families in rural communities often view marrying off their daughters as an alternative of saving money and household expenses or to benefit financially from the bride price (lobola), protect girls from losing their virginity before marriage and the associated family honor, and provide stability during unstable social periods (Chinyoka et al., 2018). Early marriages are also largely caused by the lack of economic and educational opportunities for girls in rural communities. When girls are not in school or do not have access to vocational training, marriage often becomes the only viable option. In communities such as Madziwa, where access to education is limited, girls are more likely to marry at a young age. This practice not only robs them of their childhood and adolescence but also compel them to shoulder adult duties and responsibilities before they are emotionally, financially and physically ready.

In Zimbabwe, child marriage is still a major problem, and its frequency varies significantly by location. Mashonaland Central has the highest rate of child marriage at 50%, followed by Mashonaland West (42%), Masvingo (39%), Mashonaland East (36%), Midlands (31%), and

Manicaland (30%), according to Chenge and Maunganidze (2017). According to Ndlovu and Olaborede (2018), many girls in Zimbabwe are married before 18 years, with the prevalence being higher in areas where poverty, traditional practices and weak legal enforcement are most pronounced. Addressing child marriage in these provinces requires targeted interventions, such as community engagement programs, policy enforcement and improving educational opportunities to empower young girls and reduce their vulnerability to early marriage. Mashonaland Central being the Province with high child marriages cases, Shamva District is mostly affected by this harmful practice, where socio-economic challenges, cultural norms and limited access to education play a significant role in perpetuating early marriages.

The consequences that are brought by child marriage are very severe. Child marriage often leads to early childbearing, which puts girls at a higher risk of complications related to pregnancy that includes maternal mortality, as their bodies are not developed fully. According to Allix L, the most prominent examples is of Memory Machaya's Case (2021), one of the most widely publicized cases of child marriage in Zimbabwe, a girl aged 14 years who lost her life whilst giving birth at an apostolic sect shrine in Marange, Manicaland Province. Memory was forced into marriage within the sect, where child marriages are common. Her death sparked outrage across the country, leading to protests and calls for stronger enforcement of child protection laws. Another case is of Anna Machaya (2022), following the commotion over Memory Machaya's death, another girl from the same family, Anna Machaya, aged 13, was also forced into marriage within the same apostolic sect. The case caused further public anger and exposed the ongoing nature of child marriages in certain religious communities.

The impact of child marriage extends beyond the individual girl and affects families, communities and societies. It perpetuates the cycle of poverty in rural communities, as girls who marry young are less likely to complete their education and secure employment, thus limiting their economic potential. (World Bank, 2017) suggest that global GDP could increase by \$4 trillion by 2030 if child marriage were eliminated, highlighting the economic burden that this practice imposes on developing countries. Additionally, the girl child usually gets affected greatly with most of them dropping out of school and failing to advance any careers. The negative health consequences of limited access to reproductive health information. Early childbirth is a major cause of death for girls aged 15 to 19 worldwide and adds to maternal mortality. Although Zimbabwe's overall HIV infection rate has decreased, it is still high at 15%, and the country has the sixth-highest number of teenage AIDS-related deaths worldwide,

according to UNAIDS. Compared to males and boys of the same age, women and girls aged 15 to 24 had about twice the prevalence of HIV.

The prevalence of child marriage in the Madziwa community of Shamva constitutes a significant case study due to its high frequency and the deep-rooted socio-economic and cultural factors that support the practice. Despite Zimbabwe's legal frameworks, such as the Constitutional Court ruling prohibiting child marriage and the Marriage Act, many girls in Madziwa continue to marry before the age of 18. This is often influenced by poverty, lack of educational opportunities and deep-rooted traditional norms that privilege early marriage over formal schooling. In addition, some families view child marriage as a survival strategy, ensuring financial stability through dowries or reducing household expenses. Studying this issue in Madziwa provides insight into why these laws remain ineffective at the community level and how social attitudes contribute to the persistence of child marriage. It also provides an opportunity to explore young women's experiences, perceptions of marriage and aspirations beyond the initial union. By examining structural barriers and potential solutions, this research can inform policy interventions and local initiatives tailored to Madziwa while contributing to broader efforts to eradicate child marriage in rural Zimbabwe.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Despite the existence of international and national laws prohibiting child marriage like the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Marriage Act Chapter (5:17), the practice remains widespread in rural areas of Zimbabwe, particularly in Shamva district. In Madziwa, child marriage continues to be common, highlighting deeper social and systemic issues that require further investigation. Girls in this community are often forced into early marriage due to a combination of factors including poverty, entrenched cultural expectations, and limited access to education. These factors deprive girls of opportunities for personal development and a better future. Despite the implementation of legal reforms and awareness-raising initiatives, early child marriage remains a pervasive challenge, with serious consequences for the girls involved, their families, and the community at large.

According to UNICEF's global database (2018), approximately 12 million girls worldwide enter into child marriage each year, including 125 million in Africa alone, before the age of 18. One in three women in Zimbabwe between the ages of 20 and 49 were married before becoming 18, and 5% were married before turning 15. One of the most common types of violence against

children is acknowledged to be this practice. It is especially common in impoverished and rural areas where social development is slower and females are frequently expected to marry young and take on domestic duties while guys pursue further schooling.

The continued practice of child marriage in the Madziwa community, despite the availability of legal protections, suggests that these measures have not been implemented effectively or adapted to the specific needs of rural areas. Most existing studies on child marriage in Zimbabwe focus on urban areas, leaving a significant gap in understanding the factors that contribute to child marriage in rural areas. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the socio-economic, cultural and educational factors that contribute to the high prevalence of child marriage in Madziwa.

The persistence of child marriage in Madziwa can be attributed to a combination of factors, including deeply rooted cultural norms that promote early marriage, financial burdens on families and limited educational opportunities for girls. Legal frameworks and interventions have failed to adequately address these entrenched practices, in part due to weak enforcement and a lack of community awareness or acceptance of the laws. Furthermore, the lack of alternative pathways for girls, such as access to education or opportunities for economic empowerment, leaves many families with no choice but to marry off their daughters.

Aiming to create interventions and policies that might successfully address this issue, this study intends to investigate and evaluate the fundamental causes of child marriage in Madziwa, Shamva. It will be feasible to suggest solutions that advance gender equality, enhance educational and girl outcomes, and eventually eliminate the cycle of child marriage in rural Zimbabwe by comprehending the reasons for child marriage in this community.

1.3 Main Objective of the study

1. To identify the factors that contribute to the prevalence of child marriages in Madziwa, Shamva.

1.4 Specific Objectives of the study

1. To identify factors that perpetuate child marriage, a spotlight on Madziwa community's Social, Economic and cultural factors,
2. To determine the community perceptions and attitude regarding early child marriages
3. To analyse the consequences and problems associated with child marriage.

4. To recommend potential community based interventions that could address the root cause of early marriages

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the factors that perpetuate child marriages in the Shamva Madziwa community?
2. What are the consequences of child marriages?
3. What are the people's opinions and perceptions on child marriages in rural communities?
4. What are the strategies that can be adopted to lessen child marriages in Shamva Madziwa Community and other rural communities in Zimbabwe?

1.6 Justification of study

Child marriage is a widespread practice worldwide, particularly in developing countries and rural areas. This practice has severe consequences for the physical, emotional and social well-being of children, especially young girls, who are excessively affected. Understanding the factors contributing to child marriages is crucial for developing targeted interventions and policies to address this critical issue.

Shamva, Madziwa is a rural community in Zimbabwe, a country where child marriage rates remain high, particularly in rural areas. Exploring the factors influencing child marriages in this community can provide valuable insights into the local dynamics and challenges faced by the community. Gaining a deeper understanding of the problem within this context can help policymakers and stakeholders develop more effective strategies to combat child marriages in similar rural settings.

While child marriage has been studied extensively in various contexts, there is a need for more in-depth, community-specific research to understand the unique factors contributing to this practice. The existing literature has primarily focused on national or regional trends, but there is a lack of studies that delve into the shades and complexities of child marriages within specific rural communities. Exploring the factors influencing child marriages in the Shamva, Madziwa

community can fill this gap and provide valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners working to address this issue.

The findings from this study can inform the development of targeted interventions and policies to address the root causes of child marriages in the Madziwa community and similar rural settings. By understanding the community-specific factors that drive child marriages, stakeholders can design more effective programs and strategies to empower young girls, change social norms, and promote the rights and well-being of children. The insights gained from this research can also contribute to broader efforts to eliminate child marriage in Zimbabwe and other countries facing similar challenges.

Addressing child marriage aligns with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 3 (excellent health and well-being), and SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions). Larger efforts to promote children's rights and welfare as well as equitable and sustainable development in rural regions are instantly supported by this study. It is highly relevant, up to date, and consistent with the broader development priorities to look into the reasons for child marriages in the Shamva Madziwa community.

In order to help nations enact and implement effective laws and policies to end child marriages, it is crucial to examine the context in which the practice occurs as well as its causes and consequences. Hence, the findings of this research can inform the design and implementation of more effective interventions and policies aimed at reducing early child marriages for policymakers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community leaders working to address this issue. In addition, it will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on child marriage in Zimbabwe, offering a rural perspective that is often underrepresented in academic literature.

1.7 Definition of terms

A **child** is a young person who is below puberty stage, who is immature and irresponsible. Lansdown and Vaghri (2022) states that, a child means a human being below the age of 18 years.

Marriage is a formal or legal union of two people as partners or companions in a personal relationship specifically a woman and a man. Macagno (2017) defined a marriage as a union between a man and a woman where neither party owes child support or is in prison.

Therefore, any marriage involving a person or people under the age of 18 is a **child marriage** since 18 is the age at which consent is given or when a person is deemed responsible and mature. Child marriage is defined as a union of a child under the age of eighteen under the 1989 Convention on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (CRC). A child marriage is a type of forced marriage, claims Yahya (2014).

According to Besser and Miller (2013), a **rural community** is a region outside of towns and cities that is generally defined by a lower population density, economies centered on agriculture, and restricted access to resources and services including infrastructure and unique cultural customs.

1.8 Delimitations

Delimitations are the boundaries set by the researcher to define the scope of the study. For this research on the factors leading to the prevalence of child marriages in Shamva Madziwa, the delimitations are as follows:

1. **Geographical Scope:** The study is geographically limited to the Shamva, Madziwa community in Zimbabwe. This ensures that the research focuses specifically on the socio-economic, cultural and educational factors affecting this particular rural area, while not extending to urban centers or other regions of Zimbabwe.
2. **Population Focus:** The study focuses specifically on girls who have experienced or are at risk of child marriage in Madziwa. It also targets community members, local leaders, and educators who can provide insights into the contributing factors of early marriages in the area.
3. **Time Frame:** The study focuses on the current situation of child marriages within the community, with a specific look at the last 5 years. This timeframe provides relevant and recent data on the trends, interventions and outcomes of child marriage in the area.

1.9 Limitations

Limitations refer to the potential challenges or constraints faced during the research process that may affect the findings or the scope of the study. For this research, the limitations include:

1. **Access to Participants:** Gaining access to the girls involved in or at risk of child marriage may be challenging, as these individuals may be reluctant to speak due to the stigma, social pressure or fear of retaliation from their families or communities.

2. **Cultural Sensitivity:** Child marriage is a sensitive issue, particularly in rural communities where cultural norms strongly influence marriage practices. Some community members may be unwilling to participate or provide honest responses, which could impact the accuracy of the data.
3. **Time Constraints:** Given the scope of the research, time limitations may affect the ability to conduct in-depth interviews or surveys with a diverse range of participants, including parents, local authorities and educators, which may limit the comprehensiveness of the findings.
4. **Social and Economic Influences:** Some socio-economic and cultural factors contributing to child marriage are deeply ingrained and resistant to change, which could limit the effectiveness of proposed interventions in addressing the issue in the short term.

1.10 The Organisation of the Study

There are five chapters in this work. The backdrop, problem statement, objectives, and research questions, as well as the study's justification, definitions of important terminology, limitations, and delimitations, are all included in the introduction to the research that is given in Chapter 1. With an emphasis on global, regional, national, and local perspectives, the factors that contribute to the prevalence of child marriages, the consequences of child marriages, potential solutions to address child marriages, the methodological review, and the gaps in the literature, Chapter 2 examines the pertinent literature on early child marriages. Research design, data collection methods, procedure, ethical issues, observational methodologies, and data processing and analysis procedures are all covered in Chapter 3. The research findings and analysis are presented in Chapter 4, and the conclusion, ideas, and recommendations are given in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Child marriage is recognized globally as one of the most serious violations of children's rights. It not only limits girls' educational and social development, but also exposes them to risks such as health complications, domestic violence and limited economic opportunities. Hence, this section outlines the theories that outlines the complexities of child marriages, the global, regional, national as well as local (Madziwa Community) perspectives on the issue of Child Marriages.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is essential for understanding the underlying social and cultural structures that contribute to child marriages in rural communities. The primary theoretical lenses relevant to this study are Socialization theory, Gender Theory, Social Norms Theory and Structural Functionalism. These frameworks provide insights into the persistent nature of child marriages by analysing the power dynamics, social expectations and structural inequalities within Shamva, Madziwa community.

2.1.1 The Socialization Theory

The socialization theory suggest that parents only does not have an effect on a child's personality development in the long term. Rather, it suggests that various factors contribute to a child's development, including parents, peers, schools and the wider social and cultural environment. These factors can shape the child's views on life, which can lead to a child marriage. The notion was introduced by Belsky et al. (1991) as two paths that, depending on the situation, encourage successful reproduction. Insecure ties to parents, behavioral issues, early puberty, advanced sexuality, unstable pair relationships, and a lack of commitment to raising children are all linked to one pathway. The opposite describes the alternative pathway . The study suggests that a child's environment and the treatment they receive from people around them, including their parents can contribute to child marriage. For instance, if the child's mother or grandmother was a child bride, this experience may be normalized within the family and increase the likelihood of the child being married early as well. Poverty and greed for bride

price can also contribute to child marriage. Additionally, child abuse in the family from the members can also be a factor in causing child marriages

2.1.2 Gender Theory

According to Maharaj (1995) the Gender Theory by Connell 1987 focuses on how society constructs roles, responsibilities and expectations based on gender, leading to unequal power relations between men and women. This framework is particularly useful in understanding child marriage, as the practice often stems from patriarchal values that prioritize male authority and view women and girls as subordinates. In the context of rural communities like Shamva, Madziwa, the role of girls is largely domestic and reproductive, limiting their self-sufficiency and capability to challenge early marriages. Patriarchy refers to a system where men hold primary power and women are often relegated to inferior roles. In rural Zimbabwe, patriarchal structures dictate that girls are often married off at a young age to fulfil domestic responsibilities and uphold traditional gender roles (Kurebwa and Kurebwa (2018). This male-dominated power dynamic means that decisions about marriage are often made by fathers or male relatives, without considering the girl's consent. Girls in rural communities are socialized to accept marriage as their ultimate goal and destiny, often limiting their access to education and personal development. This gendered expectation reinforces the idea that marriage is the most viable option for girls, contributing to the persistence of child marriage.

In the context of Shamva Madziwa, gender theory helps explain why girls are often seen as economic assets, whose marriages can benefit the family through lobola (bride price). This economic dimension of gender inequality also interconnects with cultural and social norms, worsening the practice of child marriage.

2.1.3 Social Norms Theory

Social Norms Theory is pivotal in understanding how collective behaviors and community expectations perpetuate child marriage. According to Bicchieri and Mercier (2014), social norms are the unwritten rules that govern behavior in a society, where individuals conform to these norms to gain approval or avoid disapproval. In rural communities, child marriage is often sustained by these norms, as families and individuals follow established practices to maintain social standing or adhere to traditional values. Social norms around marriage in rural areas like Shamva, Madziwa are based on the belief that girls should be married early to avoid premarital relationships, preserve family honor and ensure economic stability. Failure to marry off a daughter early can lead to social stigma, both for the girl and her family. This reinforces the practice even when it contradicts legal frameworks. Additionally, in many cases, child

marriage persists because families and communities believe that this is the "right thing to do" according to their traditions and customs. These norms are transmitted across generations, making it difficult to break the cycle without extensive interventions.

The application of Social Norms Theory in this study helps to uncover how societal pressures and expectations play a significant role in perpetuating child marriages. In Shamva, Madziwa, community members may adapt to these norms even when they understand the legal and health implications, because defying the norm can lead to loss of status.

2.1.4 Structural Functionalism Theory

Structural Functionalism is a sociological theory which examines how various components of a society work collectively to ensure stability and order. This theory, as developed by Talcott Parsons (2017), it suggests that family, education and religion are the institutions which contribute to societal cohesion. In the case of child marriage, structural functionalism can be applied to understand how marriage serves as a stabilizing institution within rural communities, where economic and social functions are fulfilled through marital unions. In many rural communities, marriage is viewed not only as a personal choice but also as a social institution that serves key functions such as economic stability, reproduction and maintaining family honor. For impoverished societies, marriage can reduce the financial burden on the household, as the bride's family may receive lobola and no longer have to support the girl financially (Mushunje and Mazhambe, 2024). Child marriage is often justified as a way to preserve social order by ensuring that girls are married within socially acceptable time frames, fulfilling their expected roles in society. From this perspective, child marriage serves a functional role in maintaining cultural continuity, even if it contradicts national laws or modern values.

While structural functionalism helps to explain why child marriage persists as a socially functional practice in some communities, it also highlights the limitations of this system, particularly in terms of individual rights and human development. This study will explore how the functional roles of child marriage in Shamva, Madziwa can be replaced with alternative practices that uphold human rights and gender equality.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

A child is a young, immature and irresponsible human being who has not yet reached the legal age of majority or puberty. Unless a country's laws specify a lower legal age for maturity, a person under the age of 18 is considered a child under the African Charter on the Rights and

Welfare of the Child and the United Nations Convention on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. A legally or publicly recognized connection between two people typically a man and a woman is called marriage. Child marriage is more common among young girls and happens when one or both parties are under the age of 18. Since 18 is the age of consent and when a person is regarded as responsible and mature, a marriage involving one or more people under that age is deemed a child marriage.

2.3 Review of the related literature

The literature review adopts a funnel approach, which begins with a broad discussion of child marriage as a global phenomenon and gradually narrows down to the specific context of the Shamva, Madziwa community in Zimbabwe. The review first explores the global prevalence of child marriage, emphasizing the common themes and patterns across different societies. The regional viewpoint is then discussed, with particular attention paid to sub-Saharan Africa, which has the highest rates of child marriage worldwide. Next, the national backdrop of Zimbabwe is discussed, emphasizing the particular causes of child marriage and initiatives to stop it. The research concludes by focusing on the Shamva Madziwa community and describing the regional elements that continue child marriage in spite of legislative and regulatory measures. The Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Committee) decided that the minimum age of marriage should be 18 years old, based on the definition of a child in Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. According to Zimbabwe's Constitution, a person must be at least eighteen years old to get married. Due to religious and cultural beliefs, child marriages are common in rural communities, particularly in the Shamva and Madziwa populations.

2.3.1 Global Issues Related to Child Marriage Around the world

Child marriage remains a global persistent problem, affecting millions of girls in different regions. According to Gupta (2018), more than 700 million women alive today were married before the age of 18, 37 000 children are at the risk of getting married daily and nearly 15 million each year. The global incidence of child marriage is particularly alarming in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where socio-economic conditions, cultural practices and inadequate legal frameworks contribute to the perpetuation of early marriage. This prevalent problem has prompted global initiatives such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, which aims to eliminate child marriage and promote gender equality by 2030.

However, despite several international efforts, child marriage continues to be a significant challenge, with its negative consequences felt across multiple sectors, including education, health and economic development (Raj et al., 2017). Malhotra and Elnakib (2021) have examined the connection between poverty and child marriage, arguing that in resource-poor settings, families may view child marriage as a strategy to alleviate economic burdens. Raj et al. (2017) indicate that child marriage, particularly in developing countries, has severe consequences including increasing the risk of maternal mortality, domestic violence and mental health problems for child brides.

With an estimated 223 million women married before turning 18, India has one of the greatest absolute numbers of child brides in the world (Ahman and Vollmer, 2024). Families continue to marry off daughters at a young age, frequently citing financial difficulties or worries about a girl's safety and honor, despite the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006) setting the minimum legal marriage age at 18 for girls and 21 for boys. This is difficult to enforce because poverty and traditional customs are strong.

Bangladesh also has one of the highest child marriage rates in the world, with over 54, 9% of girls married before age 18 (Rahman et al, 2022). The country's Child Marriage Restraint Act (2017) prohibits the practice but includes exceptions for special circumstances, which has led to continued early marriages. Economic hardship, gender discrimination and natural disasters, such as floods and cyclones, often push families to marry off daughters to reduce financial burdens or protect them from perceived risks.

2.3.2 Regional Issues Related to Child Marriage in Africa

Child marriage is prevalent in rural and poor areas where cultural norms and practices have a significant influence on marriage decisions. According to the Yaya et al, (2019), approximately 39% of girls in sub-Saharan Africa are married before the age of 18, with higher rates observed in countries such as Nigeria, Chad, Guinea and Mali. These statistics reflect regional trends where child marriage is often seen as a solution to poverty and social expectations. In many African communities, including Zimbabwe, girls are often seen as economic assets and early marriage is seen as a way to secure their future and ease the financial strain on the family.

Khan et al, (2019) argue that cultural beliefs about femininity and gender roles also perpetuate child marriage, as girls are expected to take on domestic roles and bear children at a young age. Furthermore, the prevalence of child marriage in African countries is influenced by the lack of access to education, which significantly contributes to girls' vulnerability to early marriage. In

rural areas, where educational facilities are limited, parents often prioritize marriage over education. For example, a study by Schaffnit et al, (2019) found that girls in rural Tanzania were more likely to marry early due to limited schooling opportunities. Niger also has a high child marriage rate in the world, with about 76% of girls married before 18 (Marrow, 2016). Extreme poverty and deeply entrenched cultural norms fuel early marriages. Many families believe that marrying off their daughters early ensures economic stability and preserves family honor. In Ethiopia, 40% of girls are married before 18 (John et al, 2019). The Child marriage law Enforcement remains weak in rural Ethiopia, where child marriage is considered a traditional practice. Some communities practice "telefa" (abduction marriage), where girls are kidnapped and forced into marriage.

2.3.3 National Issues concerning child marriages in Zimbabwe

According to Chenge and Maunganidze (2017), in Zimbabwe, Mashonaland Central has the highest child marriage rate at (50%), followed by Mashonaland West (42%), Masvingo (39%), Mashonaland East (36%), Midlands (31%) and Manicaland (30%). Child marriage is a major concern, especially in rural areas where cultural norms, poverty and limited educational opportunities interconnect to create an environment conducive to early marriage. Sayi and Sibanda (2018) found that one in three women aged 20-49 were married before the age of 18, with a notable difference between rural and urban areas. Ndlovu and Olaborede (2018) argued that girls' challenges in accessing education are compounded by poverty, gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices, which contribute to the continued prevalence of child marriage in rural communities. In rural communities like Madziwa, Mudzi, Mbire and many others child marriage is widespread, due to poverty, traditional practices, and limited access to educational resources. Helliher, (2020) highlights the role of poverty as a significant factor in child marriage in rural Zimbabwe, noting that many families see child marriage as a way to relieve economic pressures.

Certain religious sects, especially apostolic groups, play a significant role in perpetuating child marriage. Some sects encourage polygamous marriages where young girls are married off to older men under the belief that it is divinely ordained. While the government has taken steps to regulate religious practices, enforcement remains difficult due to resistance from religious leaders. Poverty remains a major driver of child marriage in Zimbabwe. In rural areas, many families view bride price (lobola) as a financial benefit, leading to early marriage arrangements. The economic downturn, worsened by high unemployment rates and inflation, has pushed families to marry off daughters in exchange for financial security.

2.3.4 Local Perspective on Child Marriages in Shamva Madziwa

Shamva Madziwa is a rural area where economic hardships push families to see marriage as a coping mechanism. Many families struggle to afford school fees, leading them to marry off daughters as a way to reduce household expenses. The economic difficulties in the community have been worsened by climate change impacts, such as droughts that affect agricultural livelihoods. Traditional customs like Kuzvarira (pledging a girl for marriage in exchange for financial or social security) are still practiced in some families. Additionally, some cases of Ngozi (offering a girl in marriage to settle spiritual debts) continue to occur in remote parts of the community. These customs, passed down through generations, make it difficult to eliminate child marriage entirely.

Girls in Shamva Madziwa often face limited access to quality education due to factors such as long distances to schools, lack of menstrual hygiene facilities and early pregnancies leading to school dropouts. Once girls drop out, the likelihood of early marriage increases. Some parents prefer to marry off daughters rather than support their continued education, reinforcing the cycle of child marriage. Many families in Shamva Madziwa lack awareness about the legal age of marriage and the negative consequences of child marriage. Despite national laws prohibiting child marriage, enforcement at the community level remains weak due to limited resources and resistance from traditional leaders who still support early marriage practices.

2.4 Consequences of Child Marriages

Child marriage has far-reaching negative consequences, particularly for the young girls involved. In the rural communities, where child marriages are prevalent, the effects are deeply entrenched in the social, economic and health of society. Below are the key consequences:

2.4.1 Educational Disruption

One of the most immediate and damaging consequences of child marriage is the disruption of education for girls. Once a girl is married, she is often expected to abandon her schooling to focus on household responsibilities and childbearing. This loss of educational opportunities prevents girls from gaining the skills and qualifications necessary to improve their economic prospects and breaks the cycle of poverty. Studies have shown that girls who are married off early are less likely to return to school, contributing to low literacy rates and limiting the potential for future employment (Nguyen and Wodon, 2014). The lack of education also diminishes their capacity to make informed decisions about their health and family life, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage.

2.4.2 Health Risks

Child marriages expose young girls to significant health risks, including early pregnancies and complications during childbirth. Girls under the age of 18 are more likely to experience complications such as obstructed labor, which can lead to conditions like obstetric fistula, severe bleeding and even death. When access to quality healthcare is limited, these risks are particularly pronounced. Adolescent mothers are also more susceptible to maternal mortality and their children face higher risks of infant mortality due to inadequate prenatal care and the mother's young age (Baxter and Moodley 2015). Additionally, child brides are more vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, as they may lack the knowledge and power to negotiate safe sex practices with older partners.

2.4.3 Economic Disempowerment

The economic consequences of child marriage are profound, as early marriage often limits girls' ability to contribute to their families' economic well-being. Child marriage worsens economic vulnerability by denying girls the opportunity to develop their full potential through education and employment. As a result, these young women are more likely to remain in a cycle of poverty, reliant on their husbands or families for financial support. Additionally, early marriage often leads to early motherhood, further reducing opportunities for economic independence. The community as a whole suffers as the potential economic contributions of women are diminished, contributing to ongoing poverty (Silumba, 2018).

2.4.4 Psychological and Emotional Impact

Child marriage also has significant psychological and emotional consequences for young girls. Being thrust into adult roles, including wife and mother, at a young age can lead to emotional trauma, feelings of isolation and depression. Many child brides report experiencing emotional abuse, neglect and even physical violence from their older spouses, with little recourse to seek help or escape the situation. The loss of childhood, combined with the pressure to assume adult responsibilities, often leads to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression and low self-esteem (John et al, 2019). The lack of support networks and resources for mental health in rural areas exacerbates these challenges, leaving many young girls to suffer in silence.

2.4.5 Gender Inequality and Marginalization

Child marriage reinforces gender inequality, as it excessively affects girls and denies them the opportunity to participate fully in society. Child brides are often expected to conform to traditional gender roles, such as homemaking and child-rearing, which limit their autonomy and decision-making power. This perpetuates a cycle of dependency and marginalization,

where girls are viewed primarily as wives and mothers rather than individuals with their own aspirations and potential. As child brides are often denied access to education and economic opportunities, they are further marginalized within their communities, perpetuating a culture of inequality.

2.4.6 Increased Vulnerability to Domestic Violence

Girls who are married under age are mostly face domestic violence. In rural communities like Madziwa, the power imbalance in marriages between young brides and older husbands contributes to a higher prevalence of intimate partner violence. Child brides often lack the social and legal protections necessary to escape abusive relationships, as divorce or separation may be stigmatized and support services are limited. The emotional, physical and sexual abuse faced by child brides further erodes their well-being and sense of security.

2.5 Possible Solutions to Address Child Marriages

To reduce the prevalence of child marriages in rural communities such as Shamva, Madziwa, a comprehensive approach involving various stakeholders, government, community leaders, families and civil society must be implemented. Below are key possible solutions:

2.5.1 Promoting Access to Education

Education plays a critical role in delaying marriage and empowering girls. Strengthening educational systems and ensuring that girls have access to quality education can significantly reduce child marriages. This is done by

1. **Building More Schools in Rural Areas:** In rural Zimbabwe, schools are often far from homesteads, discouraging attendance. Constructing schools closer to rural communities will make education more accessible.
2. **Safe School Environments:** Schools should be established away from shopping centers and bars to reduce exposure to men who may entice young girls into early marriage. The proximity of Schools to such environments highlights the need for safer learning environments.
3. **Financial Support for Schooling:** Providing scholarships, free school uniforms and school feeding programs for girls from low-income families can reduce the economic pressures that push families to marry off their daughters early. Empowering local businesses to sponsor educational materials can further ease the financial burden on families (Haider, 2020).

2.5.2 Economic Empowerment of Families

Economic hardship is a significant factor driving child marriages in rural communities. Empowering families economically can reduce the pressure to marry off young daughters according to Save the Children (2018). Some possible solutions include:

1. **Vocational Training Programs for Women:** Offering vocational training for mothers and young girls can provide alternative economic opportunities, reducing reliance on early marriages for financial stability.
2. **Microfinance and Livelihood Support:** Providing microloans and financial support to families can help them generate income through small businesses, lessening the need to marry off daughters for economic reasons.
3. **Cash Transfers for Vulnerable Families:** Cash transfer programs targeting poor households, contingent on keeping girls in school, can provide immediate relief and prevent child marriages.

2.5.3 Strengthening Legal Frameworks and Enforcement

Existing laws that set the minimum age for marriage need to be enforced more strictly to reduce child marriages (Svanemyr et al 2013). In rural areas like Madziwa, cultural and religious practices often take precedence over national laws. Strengthening legal protections for girls is essential, including:

1. **Raising Awareness about the Legal Marriage Age:** Engaging local leaders, including chiefs, church leaders, and community members, to raise awareness of national laws that prohibit child marriage is crucial. Involving influential local figures can ensure that the laws are respected.
2. **Enforcing Child Marriage Laws:** Authorities need to strengthen the enforcement of laws prohibiting child marriage. This includes penalizing those who marry off girls under the legal age or who facilitate early marriages.
3. **Birth and Marriage Registration:** Enforcing birth and marriage registration will help track and prevent child marriages. Every marriage should be registered to ensure both parties are of legal age.

2.5.4 Community Consciousness and Behavioral Change Programs

A change in cultural norms and beliefs is essential to curbing child marriage (Amin et al 2016). Community education campaigns can change harmful attitudes toward child marriage by:

1. **Engaging Traditional and Religious Leaders:** Leaders, particularly those in apostolic sects, hold significant influence over community behaviors. Engaging them in anti-child marriage campaigns can help challenge harmful cultural and religious beliefs that promote the practice.
2. **Promoting Gender Equality:** Community-based programs promoting gender equality can help shift traditional views that girls are only valuable as wives and mothers. Educating both men and women about the importance of treating boys and girls equally, especially regarding education and economic participation, can empower girls to delay marriage.
3. **Awareness Campaigns for Parents and Families:** Educating parents about the risks of child marriage, including the health and economic impacts on their daughters, can discourage them from arranging early marriages. Support groups for parents and caregivers can be established to provide alternative pathways for their daughters' success.

2.5.5 Sexual and Reproductive Health Education

Providing comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education is essential for preventing early pregnancies, which often lead to child marriages (Petroni et al 2017). These programs should focus on:

Family Planning and Sexual Health Education: Raising awareness on the effects of engaging in early sexual activities and early pregnancies to girls and boys is essential in reducing early marriages. Teaching young girls about contraception and family planning options can also help prevent early pregnancies, a common precursor to child marriage. Programs should target both girls and boys to promote responsible sexual behavior.

2.5.6 Establishing Safe Spaces for Girls

Creating safe environments for girls in can help protect them from the pressures leading to child marriage. These include:

1. **Girls' Clubs and Peer Support Groups:** Establishing girls' clubs where young women can meet, share experiences and learn about their rights will give them a platform for empowerment. These clubs can offer training in leadership, financial literacy and reproductive health. These kind of clubs are also essential in both Primary and Secondary Schools where girls are empowered through guidance and counselling as they will be growing up.

2. **Safe Shelters:** Providing shelters for girls fleeing child marriage or domestic violence can help protect them from harmful situations. Safe shelters can be run in partnership with local NGOs or government agencies, offering not only safety but also education and vocational training opportunities.

2.6 Literature Gaps

While there is extensive literature on the socio-cultural and economic factors contributing to child marriages in rural communities, there are notable gaps in the current research:

1. Limited focus on localized case studies

Much of the literature on child marriage in Zimbabwe takes a national or regional perspective, neglecting localized studies such as Shamva, Madziwa. This study will provide insights into the specific dynamics of child marriage within this community.

2. Inadequate exploration of the role of education

While some studies mention education as a factor, there is limited in-depth analysis of how specific educational barriers, such as distance from schools, school locations and affordability, influence child marriages in rural areas.

3. Gender-specific economic impact analysis:

Few studies have quantitatively assessed how the economic value of girls in rural households (such as through bride price) directly impacts marriage decisions. This study will analyze this aspect more critically, particularly focusing on the decision-making processes within families.

2.7 Objectives of the Study to Fill these Gap:

This study seeks to bridge the gaps identified by focusing specifically on the Madziwa community in Shamva, applying both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The study will explore the interaction between cultural, economic, environmental, political and educational factors and provide a detailed analysis of how these contribute to child marriages in this rural area. Additionally, this study will also suggest some community-based interventions and strategies on reducing child marriages.

2.8 Conclusion

A complex interaction of sociocultural norms, economic difficulties, environmental variables, and political considerations drives child marriages in rural communities such as Madziwa. Although the literature now in publication offers a thorough analysis of the causes of child

marriages, it frequently concentrates on general regional viewpoints, leaving large gaps in our knowledge of the unique dynamics of particular communities. By offering a thorough case study of the Shamva, Madziwa community and utilizing both qualitative and quantitative approaches to present a comprehensive view of the problem, this study aims to add to the body of literature. The study's targeted focus is intended to help guide policy actions that are specific to the difficulties that rural Zimbabwean communities face.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methods that were used to carry out a study in Shamva, Madziwa community. It discusses firstly, the research design, materials used, procedure, methods of observation and interpretation and data processing and analysis. The chapter in hand generally seeks to table the plans and methods that were used for conducting the study.

3.1 Research Design

With an emphasis on the Shamva, Madziwa community, this study examined the factors influencing the high number of child marriages in rural areas using a case study research methodology. The case study design was deemed appropriate for this study because it allows for a comprehensive, contextual exploration of complex social processes. Gerring (2006) defines a case study as an in-depth analysis of a particular instance with the goal of shedding light on a larger class of situations. Some authors, such as Yin (2009), claim that a case study is a research technique that yields a thorough, multidimensional understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context. The same author looks at how a case study is a popular research design that is used extensively in many different domains, particularly the social sciences. It captures the subtleties and lived experiences of people in the community, facilitating a thorough knowledge of the local socio-cultural, economic, and institutional elements promoting child marriages

This research adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather rich, diverse data. The quantitative component aimed to provide measurable insights into the extent of child marriages, while the qualitative data captured the perspectives and lived experiences of the affected individuals. By using this approach, the study aimed to produce both breadth and depth in understanding the factors contributing to child marriages.

3.2 Materials used

The research utilized several instruments for data collection including, structured questionnaires, structured interviews, observations and focus group discussions (FGDs). These materials were developed based on a review of existing literature on child marriages and adapted to suit the local context.

3.2.1 Structured Questionnaires

According to Adam, (2021), structured questionnaires is the primary measuring instrument in survey research and it has a close relationship with quantitative analysis. A total of 20 structured questionnaires were designed to gather demographic data and measure key factors such as education level, income, cultural practices and attitudes toward marriage. These

questionnaires contained both open ended questions, to enable the collection of the quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaires were divided into sections covering personal demographics, economic background and attitudes toward child marriages.

3.2.2 In-depth Semi-Structured Interviews

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 key informants, including traditional leaders, religious figures, school administrators, government officials and social workers. Wilson et al (2016) define in-depth interviews as a confidential conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee, allowing for free and honest responses without the influence of other interviewees. According to Fryer et al (2012), in-depth interviews are a useful technique to gain a clear understanding of a participant's perspective on a research topic. These interviews provided detailed insights into institutional, cultural and policy factors contributing to child marriages.

3.2.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):

A focus group discussion (FGD), according to Masadeh (2012), is a semi-structured data collection technique in which a group of participants is purposefully chosen to discuss problems and concerns based on a list of important themes developed by the researcher or facilitator. Two focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with teenagers, specifically those who were already married or at danger of being married young. Eight individuals, ages 13 to 18, participated in each FGD, guaranteeing a gender balance. FGDs were employed to collect viewpoints from young people regarding the social norms, influences, and causes of child marriages.

3.2.4 Observations

Direct observations were conducted during interviews, FGDs and in daily community settings. The researcher noted body language, tone of voice and non-verbal communication, which helped provide context for the verbal responses. To ensure accuracy, the researcher used a combination of methods and tools to record observations. Audio recordings were made using a smartphone recorder, while field notes were written immediately after each session in a dedicated observation notebook. In some cases, brief jottings were made discreetly during interviews or FGDs and later expanded into detailed notes. These observation notes with audio transcripts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of participant feelings, attitudes and reactions to the questions posed.

3.3 Procedure

The procedure for data collection was organized into several stages to ensure systematic and thorough data gathering.

3.3.1 Seeking Data Collection Authorization from Authorities

Before commencing data collection, the researcher ensured that proper authorization was obtained from relevant authorities to conduct the study. This process was critical for maintaining ethical standards, ensuring compliance with local regulations and gaining the trust of both participants and the community.

3.3.2 Preliminary Literature Review

Prior to fieldwork, a comprehensive review of academic articles, reports and policy documents on child marriages in Zimbabwe and other rural communities was conducted. This provided a foundational understanding of the issue and guided the development of research instruments.

3.3.3 Sample Determination

The selection of participants for this study was guided by the research objectives and the qualitative approach, which aimed to explore the underlying causes and consequences of child marriage in the Madziwa community. A purposive sampling method was employed to identify and engage individuals who were considered to have relevant knowledge, experiences or roles in relation to the phenomenon under study. This approach allowed the researcher to focus on participants who could offer rich, detailed insights into the social and cultural dynamics surrounding child marriage. To determine the sample, the researcher conducted initial consultations with local leaders and community-based organizations to identify key groups and individuals involved or affected by child marriage. Based on this, 30 participants aged between 18 and 60 were selected, including traditional leaders, religious figures, parents, survivors of child marriage, teachers, social workers and representatives from local government.

3.3.4 Data Collection

Structured Questionnaires: A total of 20 Structured Questionnaires were administered in person to adult community members, ensuring that individuals from different economic and social backgrounds were represented. Assistance was provided for respondents with limited literacy. These questionnaires gathered demographic data and measured key factors which leads to child marriages, it's consequences and the community's attitudes toward child marriage.

Interviews: The researcher conducted 10 Interviews in person, lasting approximately 30 minutes per session. Interviews were recorded, with participants' consent, for accurate

transcription and analysis. Key informants with significant influence in the community, such as traditional leaders and health professionals, were selected for one-on-one interviews. These interviews contained questions on the factors perpetuating child marriages, the consequences and the recommendations to prevent child marriages.

Focus Group Discussions: The researcher had 2 Focus Group Discussions with groups of adolescents particularly those at risk of child marriages, already married and random community members, allowing them to openly share their thoughts and experiences regarding child marriages in a supportive environment. They lasted between 20 and 30 minutes and notes were taken.

Observations: The researcher observed behaviors and social interactions during community gatherings, interviews and FGDs using smartphone recorder and an observation notebook to take notes. These observations aimed to capture unspoken cultural norms, gender roles and other non-verbal cues related to child marriages.

3.4 Ethical considerations

3.4.1 Informed consent

The procedure of obtaining informed consent guarantees that participants are aware of the implications of taking part in a study and empowers them to make an informed choice regarding their participation. This can be accomplished by getting them to sign a consent form. To guarantee that participants get respectful treatment and that their rights are upheld, informed consent is required. As a result, before speaking with the respondents in this study, the researcher gave them consent forms.

3.4.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important ethical consideration in research, particularly when dealing with sensitive topics such as child marriage. In this study, the researchers safeguarded that the information obtained from girls or women who married at an early age was kept confidential. To protect the participants' identities, no names were used instead of their real names in any documentation of the information gathered. This was done to maintain secrecy and to ensure that the participants' privacy was respected. By maintaining confidentiality, the researcher ensured that the participants were not subjected to any harm or negative consequences as a result of their participation in the study.

3.4.3 Generosity

Since child marriage is a delicate issue, the researcher also used generosity, which comprises the researcher's dedication to minimizing psychological suffering for young females. Because child marriage is a delicate topic, the researcher also utilized the principle of beneficence in this study, which entails the researcher's dedication to reducing psychological harm to young girls. The researcher took measures to minimize any potential psychological harm to the participants, given the sensitive nature of the topic being discussed. This approach ensured that the participants were not subjected to any unnecessary stress or discomfort as a result of their involvement in the study, thereby upholding their well-being.

3.5 Methods of Observation and Interpretation

3.5.1 Questionnaires

The questionnaires contained both closed and open ended questions. Responses from the closed ended questions were analyzed quantitatively. Data were coded and entered into Microsoft excel the categorized based on socio-economic variables such as income, education, occupation. Descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages were used to summarize the data.

3.5.2 Interviews

Responses from interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis. This method involved identifying recurring themes (e.g., cultural beliefs, economic pressures) and comparing them across different respondents to see how institutional and social factors contribute to child marriages.

3.5.3 Focus Group Discussions

The FGDs provided detailed perspectives from adolescents and the data was analyzed by grouping similar responses. The researcher also noted non-verbal communication, such as hesitations or body language, to understand the pressures and social stigmas associated with child marriage.

3.5.4 Observations

Observations were noted in field journals and analyzed alongside the qualitative data. For example, during community events, it was observed that young girls were often given adult responsibilities, which could contribute to early marriage. Additionally, the power dynamics between genders were observed, providing insights into the social norms that perpetuate child marriages.

3.6 Data Processing

Data processing involves converting raw data into a usable format for analysis, ensuring that the findings are valid, reliable, and meaningful. This section focuses on the steps taken to prepare the collected data for subsequent analysis.

3.6.1 Sorting the Data

Sorting the data was a crucial step in organizing and focusing on the most relevant information in relation to the research question. The data was organized by:

Key Factors: Responses related to economic pressures, cultural beliefs and educational background were prioritized as these factors were identified as contributing to the prevalence of child marriages in the community.

Demographics: Information about respondents' age, gender, income levels, and education were categorized to ensure diversity in the sample and to capture a variety of perspectives across different demographic groups.

Sorting the data in this manner ensured that the focus remained on the specific factors driving child marriages within the Madziwa community.

3.6.2 Performing Quality Control Checks on Data

Quality control was implemented to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data:

Data Entry Checks: Data entry was double-checked to eliminate errors. A random sample of responses was reviewed to ensure that the recorded data matched the original responses from the participants.

Missing Data: Any missing data was addressed through a systematic approach. Forms with critical missing responses were either excluded from the final analysis or, if feasible, completed using imputation techniques to ensure the integrity of the dataset.

3.6.3 Categorizing, Coding and Data Master Sheet

After sorting and ensuring data quality, the next step was categorizing and coding the data for easier analysis:

Categorizing: Data was grouped into relevant themes, such as economic factors (e.g., poverty), cultural influences (e.g., traditions supporting early marriage), and educational levels (e.g., school completion rates). This helped identify the primary areas contributing to child marriages.

Coding: A coding system was employed to assign numerical or symbolic labels to each category. For example:

"1" represented poverty as the primary cause of child marriage.

"2" represented cultural beliefs that promote early marriage.

"3" represented lack of educational opportunities as a contributing factor.

Data Master Sheet: A master sheet was created, which compiled all categorized and coded data. This master sheet was used to organize the dataset and prepare it for statistical analysis.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of examining the categorized data to identify patterns, relationships, and insights that can answer the research questions. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the factors leading to child marriages in the Madziwa community.

3.7.1 Descriptive Analysis

Quantitative data from surveys was analyzed using descriptive techniques to summarize the frequency of responses. For example, the percentage of respondents who identified poverty as a cause of child marriage was calculated, allowing the researcher to identify the most frequently mentioned factors.

3.7.2 Statistical Analysis

To explore the relationships between various factors, statistical analysis was conducted. A Chi-square test was applied to examine the association between education levels and the likelihood of supporting or experiencing child marriages. This helped to determine whether certain factors were statistically significant in influencing the prevalence of child marriages in the community.

3.7.3 Thematic Analysis

Qualitative data from interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and observations were analyzed using thematic analysis. This approach helped to identify common themes related to the socio-economic, cultural, and educational factors driving child marriages. The findings from qualitative data were compared to the quantitative results to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying issues.

3.7.4 Observational Insights

Observational insights were used to supplement and contextualize the interview and FGD data. These insights helped to uncover unspoken cultural norms, community dynamics, and the real-life experiences of individuals affected by child marriages, enriching the overall findings.

3.8 Data presentation

Data representation refers to the methods used to visually and descriptively present the analyzed data, making it easier to interpret and draw meaningful conclusions. In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data were represented using various techniques to ensure clarity and depth.

Graphs: Bar graphs were used to visually symbolize the occurrence and distribution of responses to survey questions. For instance, bar graphs were used to display the proportion of respondents citing poverty, cultural beliefs or lack of education as key drivers of child marriage.

Charts: Pie charts were also used to visually represent the frequency and distribution of responses to survey questions. For example, pie charts were used to indicate attitudes towards child marriages and also the factors that determine suitability for marriage in Madziwa Community.

Tables: Tables were created to present statistical results, such as the outcomes of the Chi-square tests, in an easy-to-understand format. These tables allowed for an indication of the demographic characteristics such as education levels, marital status and employment status.

Direct Quotations: For qualitative data, key findings were illustrated using direct quotations from participants. These quotations provided insight into personal experiences and community perceptions, adding context and emotional depth to the themes that emerged during analysis.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the research design, the materials used for data collection, the procedures followed and the methods of observation and interpretation employed in this study. By combining surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, and observations, the research gathered both numerical data and deeper insights into the cultural and social factors contributing to child marriages in Shamva Madziwa. This comprehensive approach enables other researchers to replicate the study or apply its methodology to similar context.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

The study's conclusions, which came from focus groups, questionnaires, interviews, and observations, are presented in this chapter. The study concerns concerning the causes of the high rate of child marriages in the rural Shamva Madziwa community are covered in this chapter. In particular, it covers the respondents' demographics, their understanding of child marriages, signs of marital readiness, the factors that support the practice in the Shamva Madziwa community, the causes and consequences of child marriages, and their opinions of the practice. By examining these subjects, the chapter offers a thorough grasp of the causes of child marriages in the research region, emphasizing the complexity of the problem and providing ideas for possible solutions.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The study targeted married or unmarried girls and women under 30 in the Madziwa community of Shamva. Women over the age of eighteen who had been married before turning eighteen were also included. The study also included key informants, such as local government representatives, school teachers, community health workers, and traditional leaders, who had pertinent knowledge about the practice of child marriage in Shamva Madziwa.

Table 4.1: Demographic characteristics

n: 30

CHARACTERISTICS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Age		
20-30	12	40%
15-19	9	30%
31+	9	30%
Gender		
Female	24	80%
Male	6	20%

Religion		
Apostolic Sect	21	70%
Pentecostal	3	10%
Catholic	6	20%
Educational Level		
Primary Level	15	50%
Secondary Level	6	20%
No formal Education	9	30%
Employment Status		
Employed	9	30%
Unemployed	21	70%
Marital Status		
Married	9	30%
Divorced	6	20%
Not Married	15	50%

4.1.1 Age Distribution

The study involved participants from diverse age groups to capture a range of perspectives. The largest group (40%) comprised respondents aged 20–30 years, who provided valuable insights as young adults who may have experienced or observed child marriages. Respondents aged 15–19 years (30%) represented those most at risk of child marriages, while the remaining participants (30%) were older individuals (31 years and above), such as parents and community leaders and health workers.

4.1.2 Gender Composition

The majority of respondents were female (80%), reflecting the gendered nature of child marriages. Male respondents (20%) included fathers, brothers and local leaders who contributed perspectives on societal norms and family decision-making.

4.1.3 Marital Status

The marital status of respondents was diverse. Approximately 30% were married, 50% were single and 20% were divorced or widowed. Among the married respondents, many were women who had entered into marriage before reaching 18 years, providing firsthand accounts of their experiences and the contributing factors.

4.1.4 Educational Background

Educational attainment varied among respondents, with 50% having only primary education, 20% secondary education and 30% with no formal education. These findings reflect the limited access to education in rural communities like Shamva Madziwa, which contributes to the prevalence of child marriages.

4.1.5 Employment Status

Employment status was different among respondents, 30% of the respondents for this study were employed. Most of those who were employed were working within the commercial farms for different farm operations and domestic work. 70% were unemployed and these were either engaged in subsistence farming as their primary source of livelihood or involved in informal trade. The reliance on agriculture and informal economic activities highlights the economic vulnerabilities that may drive families to marry off their daughters.

4.1.6 Religion

The participants came from a variety of religious backgrounds. The bulk of participants (70%) said they were linked with the Apostolic Sects, followed by Catholicism (20%) and Pentecostal groups (10%). The Apostolic Sects comprised the largest group of responders, with Johanne Masowe and Johanne Marange being the two most prominent congregations within this category. It is commonly known that certain cults advocate child marriage.

4.2 Perceptions and attitudes regarding child marriages in Shamva, Madziwa community.

The study engaged various community members, including girls, boys, married women, divorced individuals, health workers and school teachers, to explore perceptions and attitudes toward child marriage practices in the Shamva Madziwa community.

4.2.1 Awereness on the meaning of a Child in Shamva Madziwa Community

The definition of a child varies across legal and cultural frameworks. According to Zimbabwe's Children's Act (2002), a child or minor is defined as "a person under the age of eighteen years," while a young person refers to "a person who has attained the age of sixteen years but has not attained the age of eighteen years." However, in Shamva Madziwa, knowledge of this legal

definition is limited. Less than 41% of respondents were aware of the legal definition of a child, with the majority (59%) associating childhood with stages such as puberty or socioeconomic dependency.

This cultural perception of childhood, tied to physical and economic milestones rather than legal age, reflects a significant gap in legal knowledge and awareness. This finding highlights the urgent need for community education and awareness campaigns to ensure a broader understanding of the legal definition of a child and the consequences of child marriage, as these misconceptions contribute to the persistence of the practice in the community.

Here are a sample of responses from different community members in Shamva Madziwa when asked, "What is a child?" in a Focus group discussion

1. Teenage Girl (16 years old):

"A child is someone who hasn't started menstruating yet. Once a girl starts menstruating, she's ready to be a woman and can even get married."

2. Married Woman (24 years old):

"A child is someone who depends on their parents or guardians. When they can take care of themselves or get married, they are no longer children, even if they are young."

4. Community Leader:

"In our culture, a child becomes an adult when they can handle responsibilities like marriage or farming. Age doesn't matter as much as their ability to contribute to the family."

3. Health Worker:

"Legally, a child is anyone under 18 years, but many people here think a child is someone who hasn't reached puberty or can't contribute to the household. This belief is why child marriages continue."

5. School Teacher:

"Most parents and children here don't understand that being under 18 makes someone a child legally. They judge adulthood by physical changes like puberty or when a girl can bear children."

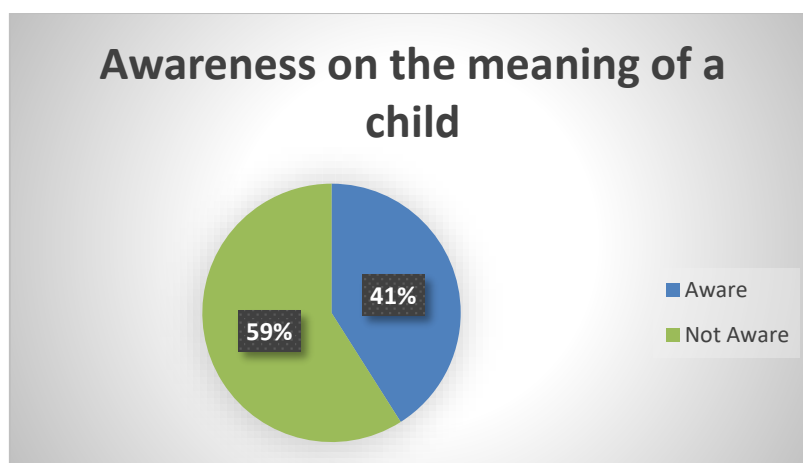


Figure 4.1: Awareness on the meaning of a child

4.2.2 Knowledge on Child Marriage in Shamva Madziwa Community Shamva

According to a community study, members of the Shamva Madziwa group were significantly ignorant of what constitutes child marriage. While some respondents thought it related to marriages under the age of 13, the majority of respondents defined child marriage as marriages under the age of 16. This misinterpretation is troubling because Zimbabwe's Customary Law of Marriage stipulates that a girl must be 16 years old to marry, and a boy must be 18 years old. This goes against the 2013 amendment to the Zimbabwean Constitution, which defines child marriage as any union including a person younger than 18. Many respondents thought child marriage happened before the age of sixteen, which may be explained by this disparity.

Such findings highlight the urgent need for education and awareness campaigns to address misconceptions about the legal definition of child marriage and its implications. These efforts are critical in combating the harmful practice of child marriage and safeguarding the rights and well-being of children in the Shamva Madziwa community.

A few respondents in the study correctly stated that:

"The constitution sets the minimum age of marriage for girls at 18 years."

Moreover, many community members associate the term "child" with very young children, such as toddlers, which further contributes to their inability to recognize the prevalence of child marriage.

A participant in a focus group discussion remarked:

"As soon as a girl finishes primary school or reaches puberty, she is considered an adult and ready for marriage."

Another one stated that:

“A child marriage is a marriage where one part is less than 16 years”

The study also revealed concerning statistics regarding community perceptions:

Only 25% of respondents agreed that a girl below the age of 18 is a child and not mature enough for marriage. About 45% believed child marriage involves marrying someone under 16 years. Alarming, 30% felt it was acceptable to marry someone when she has reached puberty.

These findings demonstrate a significant gap in awareness about the legal and social implications of child marriage in Shamva Madziwa. This lack of knowledge places many young girls at risk of being married off at an early age. Effective education and awareness-raising initiatives are essential to challenge these harmful practices and ensure the protection and empowerment of children in the community.

4.2.3 Factors that demonstrate suitability for Marriage in Shamva Madziwa Community

The study found that perceptions of suitability for marriage in the Shamva Madziwa community are shaped by cultural norms, socioeconomic conditions and physical development rather than by legal or psychological considerations. Community members identified several indicators they associate with a person being "ready" for marriage, revealing deep-rooted cultural beliefs that perpetuate child marriage.

1. Physical Maturity (puberty)

For many respondents, (35%) the onset of puberty was a primary indicator of readiness for marriage. Both men and women in the community commonly believe that as soon as a girl begins menstruating, she is physically ready to bear children and, therefore, to be married. One respondent noted:

"Once a girl's body has developed and she starts her period and able to bear children, she is no longer a child and can handle the responsibilities of a wife."

2. Completion of Primary School

Education was frequently linked to marriage readiness, with (30%) respondents indicating that a girl who has completed primary school is considered mature enough to get married. This perspective reflects a limited valuation of education beyond basic levels, particularly for girls. A participant in a focus group discussion stated:

"If a girl finishes primary school and doesn't continue with secondary education, what else is there for her to do? Marriage becomes the next step."

3. Parental and Community Approval

The approval of elders, parents, or guardians was also seen as a significant indicator. Many respondents (20%) mentioned that once a girl is deemed ready by her family or the community, she can be married, regardless of her age. One elder remarked:

"A girl's readiness for marriage depends on her family's judgment. They know when she is ready to handle the responsibilities."

4. Lack of Alternative Opportunities

Some respondents (15%) highlighted that in cases where girls are not in school or have no employment opportunities, marriage is often seen as the only viable option. This reflects systemic issues such as poverty and limited access to education or vocational training. A respondent highlighted this by saying:

"When there is nothing else for a girl to do, marriage gives her a purpose and a home."

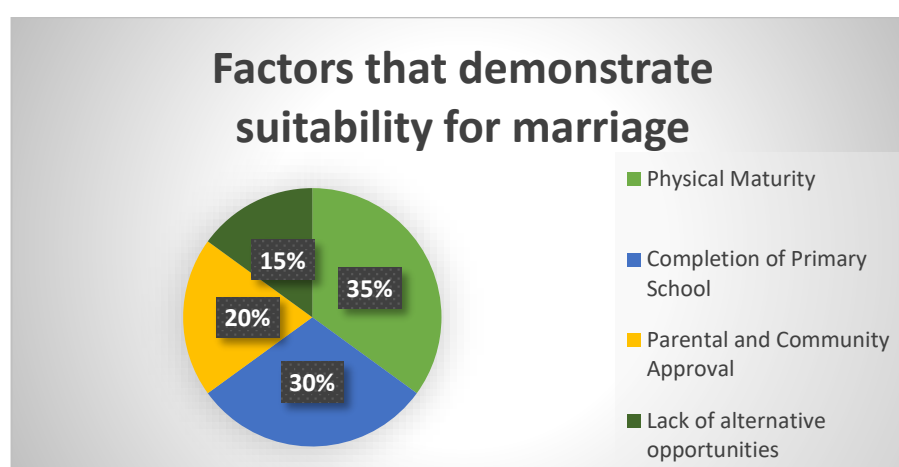


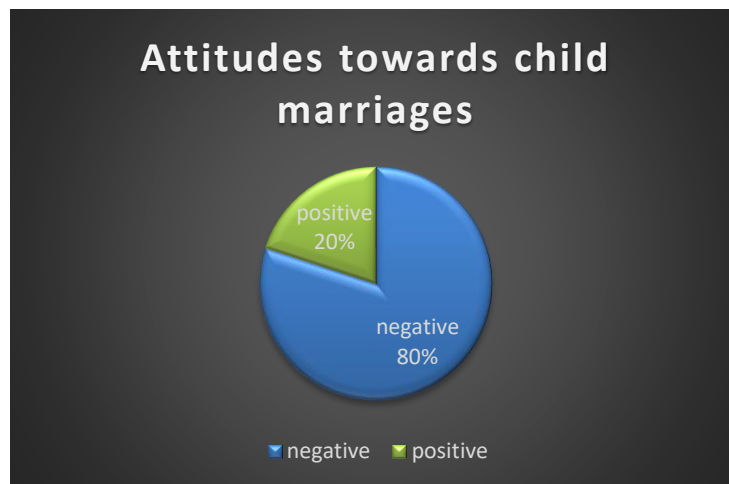
Figure 4.2 Factors that demonstrate suitability for marriage **n=30**

These culturally and socially driven indicators of marriage readiness fail to account for the emotional, psychological and legal maturity required for marriage. They perpetuate harmful practices like child marriage, undermining girls' rights to education, health and personal development. Addressing these perceptions requires targeted interventions, including community education on the legal age of marriage and the long-term negative impacts of early marriage on girls and their families.

4.2.4 Respondents' Attitudes towards Child Marriages in Shamva Madziwa Community

The study revealed a wide range of attitudes toward child marriage in Shamva Madziwa, reflecting the complex interplay of cultural, economic and personal factors. While the majority of respondents (80%) expressed negative attitudes due to the harmful impacts of child marriage, a minority (20%) continued to support or rationalize the practice, often citing cultural or religious beliefs. This information was collected through structured interviews.

Figure 4.3 Attitudes towards child marriages in Shamva, Madziwa Community *n=30*



4.2.4.1 Negative Attitudes towards Child Marriage

The majority of respondents strongly opposed child marriage, highlighting its devastating effects on young girls and society as a whole. Many respondents lamented that child marriage deprives girls of their childhood, education, and future opportunities. Girls are forced to take on adult roles and responsibilities prematurely, often leading to poor health outcomes, interrupted education and psychological trauma.

One girl shared her personal experience:

"It was never my wish to get married at a young age. I wanted to finish school, pursue a career and become a better woman in society. But my parents couldn't afford my school fees, so they pressured me to marry. I admire my age mates going to school."

Respondents noted that many girls in early marriages end up in abusive relationships, often in polygamous settings, leaving them with no means of escape. This can have long-lasting effects on their mental health and well-being.

A village health worker expressed their frustration:

"It's a shame that a grown man can feel sexually attracted to a girl young enough to be his daughter. Child marriage is rape and a criminal offense."

Respondents identified patriarchy as a driving force behind child marriage. The dominance of men in decision-making perpetuates harmful practices and denies girls the opportunity to control their own lives. One participant noted:

"Patriarchy allows men to make decisions about girls' lives, including forcing them into marriage. This system disrespects the value of the girl child."

4.2.4.2 Support for Child Marriage

Despite the widespread opposition, some respondents expressed support for child marriage, demonstrating the complexity of the issue. A minority of respondents defended child marriage based on cultural or religious beliefs, viewing it as a tradition or a moral obligation. For example, one girl stated:

"It's a tradition and religion, what can we do about it. If the Holy Spirit commands me to get married to an older man there's nothing I can do but to accept."

Financial hardships often lead families to view child marriage as a means of reducing economic burdens. Some parents see marrying off their daughters as a way to secure their future. For example, one man stated:

"Educating the girl child is a waste of time, I better educate my boy child who contributes back to the family rather than a girl child who later gets married. It's better to marry her off earlier to secure her future"

4.3 Factors leading to the prevalence of child marriages

4.3.1 Poverty

One of the main causes of underage marriages in Shamva Madziwa is poverty. Numerous households in the town are below the poverty line, indicating the pervasiveness of economic difficulties. Marrying off their daughters frequently turns into a survival tactic for families who are having difficulty meeting their fundamental necessities. Parents see child marriage as a way to ease the household's financial strain or as a chance to receive instant financial respite through bride price payments, which can take the form of cash, groceries, or livestock.

For instance, one woman shared her experience:

Respondent 1:

"My parents struggled to buy food for us and life at home was unbearable. At 15, I was married off to a man twice my age. My parents said the bride price would help feed the family. But after the marriage, I realized my husband could not provide either and now I have a child to take care of, with no income or support."

Another major factor contributing to the continuation of child marriages is parents' incapacity to pay for their children's education. Due to financial limitations, girls who drop out of school frequently end up idle and unable to access prospects for economic independence. As a result, the only apparent way out of their terrible situation is marriage. An additional participant shared her experience:

Respondent 2 (Woman):

"I got married when I was 14 years old after my parents failed to pay my school fees. My secondary school experience was unpleasant because I was always being sent home for not paying fees. I dropped out in Form 2 and it didn't take long before I got married. I saw marriage as my escape from poverty."

In some cases, parents marry off their daughters to older, wealthier men to establish economic ties with affluent in-laws who might offer financial or material assistance in the future. Young girls are thus regarded as a source of income or a financial breakthrough for their families.

Respondent 3 (Parent):

"We don't have jobs or money. When someone comes and offers us something for our daughter, we see it as the only way out of our struggles. We know it's not ideal, but what else can we do when we can't even feed our children?"

The economic hardships in Shamva Madziwa not only make child marriage a perceived solution for families but also perpetuate the cycle of poverty. Girls married at a young age are often unable to pursue education or gain meaningful employment, leaving them dependent on their husbands and vulnerable to further economic instability.

4.3.2 Lack of Education

The lack of access to quality education is a critical factor contributing to the prevalence of child marriages in Shamva Madziwa. Education plays a fundamental role in empowering girls by equipping them with knowledge, skills and opportunities for economic independence. However, in this community, limited access to educational facilities, financial barriers and

cultural attitudes that undervalue girls' education have resulted in high dropout rates among young girls.

One participant shared her story:

Respondent 4:

"I had to leave school in Grade 7 because my parents could not pay for secondary school fees. I stayed home for almost a year doing nothing and eventually, my aunt introduced me to a man who became my husband. I was only 13 at the time. If I had continued with school, I think my life would have been different."

Without education, girls lack the tools necessary to become financially independent and are more likely to see marriage as their only viable option. Staying in school often delays marriage, as it provides girls with a sense of purpose and an environment where they can envision alternative futures. In contrast, when girls drop out, they face idleness and societal pressures that make early marriage more appealing or inevitable.

The cultural perception that girls' education is less valuable than boys' education further compounds the issue. Many parents in Shamva Madziwa prioritize educating their sons, whom they view as future breadwinners, while daughters are expected to marry and depend on their husbands for financial support. As a result, girls are pulled out of school to reduce household expenses or to prepare for marriage.

Respondent 5 (Man):

"Educating a girl is not that important and doesn't benefit the family in the long run. Once she gets married, her husband will take care of her. It's better to spend money on the boys who will stay and look after us when we're older."

This mindset not only limits opportunities for girls but also perpetuates the cycle of poverty and early marriage. Uneducated girls are more likely to marry young, bear children early, and remain dependent on their spouses, perpetuating generational cycles of poverty and disempowerment.

4.3.3 Peer Pressure

Peer pressure is a critical factor driving child marriages in Shamva Madziwa. Girls in Shamva Madziwa are frequently influenced by their peers to engage in early relationships. These relationships are often fueled by material gifts such as food, clothing or money, which are

highly valued in the context of poverty. Social norms in the community glorify these behaviors, creating an environment where young girls feel encouraged to pursue relationships as a means of gaining status or resources. One respondent shared her story:

Respondent 6 (woman):

"Most of my friends had boyfriends who gave them nice things. I felt like I wasn't part of the group because I didn't have anyone giving me gifts. When a man approached me with offers of food and money, I agreed to be with him. Before long, I became pregnant and had no choice but to marry him."

In addition to peer influence, the prevalence of sex work in Shamva Madziwa further exacerbates the problem. Some children grow up observing their mothers or other women in the community engaging in transactional relationships as a survival strategy. This exposure normalizes such behavior, making young girls more susceptible to entering similar arrangements.

Respondent 7 (parent):

"As a single mother, I've had to do what I can to feed my children, even if it means relying on men for help. My daughter sees this and thinks it's normal to depend on men, but it worries me that she's already following the same path."

For boys, peer pressure manifests in different ways. Many young men view fatherhood as a marker of masculinity and social status. To gain acceptance among their peers, some teenage boys deliberately impregnate their partners. Unlike adolescent mothers, these boys often have self-serving motives for becoming fathers, such as seeking validation from friends or asserting their masculinity.

Respondent 8 (man):

"In our village, you're not seen as a man unless you have a child. My friends teased me for not having one, so when my girlfriend got pregnant, I felt proud to join the group of young fathers."

4.3.4 Gender Inequality

Gender inequality is a fundamental factor contributing to the prevalence of child marriages in Shamva Madziwa. In many households, girls are viewed primarily as future wives and mothers rather than individuals with their own aspirations. This perception limits their opportunities for

education and personal development, as families often prioritize investing in boys' education while preparing girls for marriage.

Respondent 9 (man):

"Educating a boy makes sense because he will take care of the family in the future. Girls will get married and leave, so why waste money on their education?"

Additionally, patriarchal norms in Shamva Madziwa often place significant pressure on girls to conform to societal expectations of obedience and submission. Girls are taught from an early age to prioritize family honor and uphold cultural traditions, which include early marriage. In many cases, refusing marriage proposals is not an option, as it may be seen as defiance or a source of shame for the family.

Respondent 10 (woman):

"When I turned 15, my family told me I had to marry a man who had paid bride price. I didn't want to, but they said it was my duty to respect our culture and the family's wishes. I had no choice but to agree."

4.3.5 Protection of the girl child

Certain families in Shamva Madziwa believe that getting married young will protect their girls, especially in light of growing worries about HIV and other STIs. Families in rural Zimbabwe, where there is limited access to healthcare facilities and health education, frequently view marriage as a means of protecting their daughters from early sexual activity hazards, violence, and sexual exploitation.

In the face of economic instability and the spread of diseases like HIV, some families believe that marrying off their daughters will ensure their safety and secure a future for them. The growing prevalence of sexual violence and exploitation, particularly in vulnerable communities, exacerbates these fears. In such environments, early marriage is often seen as a means of controlling a girl's sexual activity and safeguarding her reputation within the community.

Respondent 11: Parent

"With so many young girls being taken advantage of or exposed to sexually transmitted diseases, I thought that marrying off my daughter early would keep her safe. At least she would be with one man which makes her less exposed to STI's."

This perception of early marriage as a protective mechanism can be especially prevalent in families where resources are scarce and the community lacks access to sexual health education or counseling. Parents may feel that by marrying off their daughters, they are reducing the risk of their involvement in risky sexual behavior, which could lead to HIV or unwanted pregnancies.

Respondent 12 (girl):

"My parents always told me that getting married young would protect me from the dangers of the world. They said I would be safer with a husband and I would not face the same risks as other girls who didn't marry early."

However, while families may see child marriage as a form of protection, it often exposes girls to greater risks. The safety and security that families hope for may be undermined by the challenges that come with early marriage, such as domestic violence, limited opportunities for education and the risk of contracting diseases in the context of unprotected sexual activity.

4.3.6 Culture and Tradition

In Shamva Madziwa, culture and tradition play a significant role in shaping the persistence of child marriages, often perpetuating harmful practices that have adverse effects on young girls. Some traditional customs, such as Kuripa Ngozi (avenging spirit) and Kuzvarira, are seen as mechanisms to resolve familial disputes or maintain family ties. However, these practices often result in young girls being married off at an early age, sometimes against their will and perpetuate gender inequality and exploitation.

Kuripa Ngozi is a deeply ingrained cultural practice that involves marrying off a girl to a relative of the deceased as a means of appeasing the avenging spirit (Ngozi) of the deceased. In Shamva Madziwa Community, some households are still upholding this Shona culture. It is believed that if a person is murdered or dies under certain circumstances without fulfilling their obligations, their spirit may cause harm or misfortune to the living family members. To pacify this spirit, a girl, often a young one, is married to a relative of the deceased.

Respondent 13 (girl):

"My family told me that I had to marry an older man from the family my uncle had committed murder years back to settle the family's issues and calm the spirit. I was scared and confused, but my parents said it was for the good of the family, so I had no choice."

Another traditional practice which was mentioned by the respondents which is contributing to child marriage which was mentioned was Kuzvarira, a custom in which a family pledges their young daughter or even unborn daughter to a rich family to settle debts. The girl sometimes do not even attend school because she is born married, as soon as she reaches puberty she is sent to the family of her husband.

Respondent 14 (Girl):

"When I turned 14, I was sent to a man older than my father who was considered my husband since I was very young. I was told that I was born married and I didn't understand at that time, but my parents were firm about it. I had to go to him, even though I didn't want to."

4.3.7 Religion

The Johanne Marange sect, a religious group with a strong presence in Shamva Madziwa, teaches that marriage to older men is spiritually sanctioned and even encouraged for young girls. According to the sect, these marriages are believed to be in accordance with divine will and are often justified through claims of divine revelations or specific interpretations of religious texts. These practices are deeply entrenched in the community, where religious beliefs are regarded as sacred, and following them is seen as a moral duty. For many families, the decision to marry off their daughters is influenced more by religious convictions than by the personal desires or rights of the girls themselves.

Respondent 15 (girl):

"My parents arranged my marriage when I was 14. They said it was God's plan and that I was chosen to marry this older man to fulfill God's will. I didn't understand why I had to marry at that age, but I had no say. They told me it was for my spiritual growth."

This reflects how the doctrine of the sect overrides the rights and desires of the girls involved, positioning marriage as a religious duty rather than a personal choice. The pressure to conform to religious beliefs often leaves young girls with limited options, with many forced into early marriages under the guise of spiritual guidance.

Religious leaders in the sect play a pivotal role in reinforcing these practices. For many parents, the influence of religious leaders and the fear of spiritual consequences make it difficult to consider alternative paths for their daughters.

Respondent 16:

"The church leader told my family that it was my destiny to marry at 15. My parents believed it was a blessing from God, so I didn't argue. I felt trapped because the church said it was the right thing to do."

However, not all religious groups in the Shamva Madziwa condone child marriages. Respondents from Christian denominations, such as the Roman Catholic Church and Pentecostal churches, strongly opposed child marriage, emphasizing that it is a violation of both religious values and children's rights. These respondents highlighted that their faith promotes the sanctity of marriage and explicitly prohibits unions involving underage girls.

Respondent 17: A Roman Catholic Church participant

"In our church, marriage is sacred and should involve mature individuals who are ready to handle the responsibilities of family life. Child marriage is against our beliefs, and we actively discourage it by educating our members."

Similarly, respondents from Pentecostal churches expressed disdain for child marriage and pointed to their church policies, which often include disciplinary actions against members who engage in such practices. They emphasized the importance of counseling and rehabilitation for young girls who may fall into such situations.

4.3.8 Legal and Policy Gaps

One of the most significant challenges in combating child marriage in Shamva Madziwa is the weak enforcement of the laws that prohibit it. Even though the legal minimum age for marriage is 18, many families and communities continue to marry off young girls, often with little regard for the law. The lack of effective enforcement mechanisms at the local level allows child marriage to persist without consequences. Local authorities, such as village heads, chiefs and police in Shamva Madziwa Community, often fail to intervene in cases of child marriage, either due to lack of resources or because they are influenced by traditional and cultural practices.

Another critical gap is the lack of awareness among both families and young girls about their legal rights. Many families, especially in rural communities like Shamva Madziwa are not well-informed about the legal age of marriage or the protection afforded to children under Zimbabwean law. As a result, they may continue to marry off their daughters, unaware that it is illegal. Without access to information, girls are left vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, as they may not know they have the right to refuse marriage or report the situation to authorities.

Respondent 18 (girl):

"I didn't know that I had the right to say no. My family told me I had no choice and I didn't understand that the law was supposed to protect me."

In Shamva Madziwa, resource allocation for programs aimed at preventing child marriage is often inadequate. Despite the availability of policies to combat child marriage, the lack of financial and human resources severely hampers the implementation of these policies. There is limited funding for child protection programs, such as education campaigns, legal support and awareness initiatives, which leaves gaps in the ability to prevent and address child marriages.

Schools in Shamva Madziwa are underfunded, with limited access to education for girls, which is a key factor driving child marriages. Additionally, there is insufficient infrastructure for offering services such as counseling, legal aid and shelter for victims of child marriage. This lack of resources means that girls who are at risk or who have already been married off often do not have access to the support they need to escape or prevent early marriage.

Community leader shared:

Respondent 19

"We know child marriage is harmful, but we just don't have the funds or support to offer alternatives to these families. Without the resources to provide education and support, some parents see early marriage as the only way to protect their daughters."

4.3.9 Environmental Factors

Long Distance to Schools

In Shamva Madziwa, many children, especially girls, face significant challenges in accessing education due to the long distances between their homes and schools. Schools in Madziwa community are often located far from residential areas and the journey to school can be physically demanding and dangerous. For many girls, traveling long distances to school is not only tiring but also exposes them to potential harm, such as sexual violence, harassment and exploitation. The fear of these dangers, combined with the difficulty of commuting daily, may lead some girls to drop out of school altogether.

Respondent 20: former student at Madziwa Mine Secondary

"I had to walk 10 kilometers to get to school and it was very difficult. I felt unsafe on my way, especially as I had to pass by lonely areas. Eventually, I dropped out of school and got married, as it felt like the safest option."

For many families, the costs of sending their children to school, including transport, uniforms, and school fees, are too high. In such situations, parents may prefer to marry off their daughters, particularly when they perceive marriage as a safer or more viable option than sending their children to school in challenging conditions.

Lack of Basic Amenities at Schools

The lack of basic amenities, such as sanitation facilities, clean drinking water and adequate classrooms, further complicates the educational experience for girls in Shamva Madziwa. Many schools in the region are under-resourced for example Ming Chang Primary School. This affects the quality of education and the retention rates of girls. Inadequate facilities such as toilets that are not private or safe for girls contribute to the discomfort and humiliation some girls experience at school, leading to increased absenteeism and in some cases, school dropout.

Respondent 21: former student at Ming Chang Primary

"The toilets at school were not girl friendly, no water and sanitary ware for emergency and I would skip school when I was menstruating because I felt embarrassed. I eventually dropped out because of how uncomfortable I felt. Marriage seemed like an escape."

The lack of resources for girls' specific needs at school, such as menstrual hygiene products or gender-sensitive teaching, also contributes to the vulnerability of young girls to early marriage. This lack of support systems in schools makes it difficult for girls to stay in school and continue their education, which is a major protective factor against child marriage.

Proximity of Schools to Shopping Centers and Bars

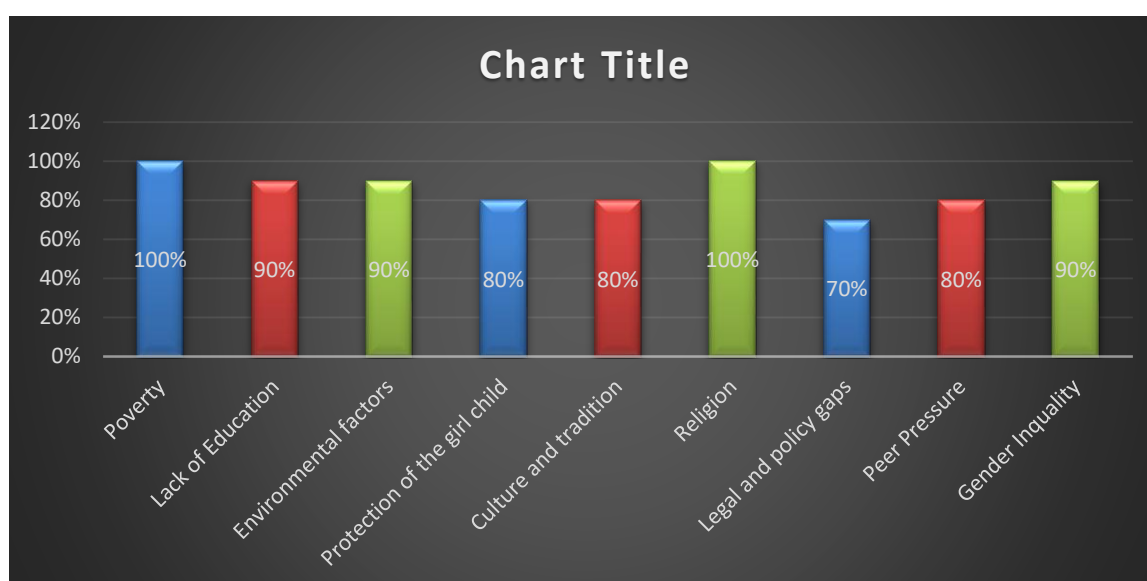
The proximity of schools to shopping centers, bars and other places where alcohol is consumed further increases the risk of early marriage in Shamva Madziwa. In rural areas, where social spaces like bars are often located near schools, young girls are exposed to negative influences that can lead to early relationships and sexual activity. These establishments, which attract older men, can encourage relationships between young girls and older individuals, sometimes leading to sexual exploitation or coercion.

Respondent 22: community member:

"I have seen girls hanging out near the bars after school, often receiving money or gifts from older men. This kind of behavior leads to relationships that later end in child marriages."

For many young girls, these interactions with older men may seem harmless or even appealing, as they are often offered material rewards such as money, gifts or food. The normalization of these relationships, coupled with the lack of supervision or alternative safe spaces for girls, increases the likelihood that they will enter into early marriages or engage in transactional sex.

Figure 4.4 Factors leading to the prevalence of Child marriages in Shamva Madziwa Community **n=30**



The factors contributing to child marriages were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions whilst observing people's body language. This was done with community members including, health care workers, teachers, government officials, community leaders as well as married, single and divorced girls and women. After collecting the factors that perpetuate the prevalence of child marriage in Shamva, Madziwa Community, structured questionnaires comprising of these factors were designed to come up with the most contributing factors through frequency.

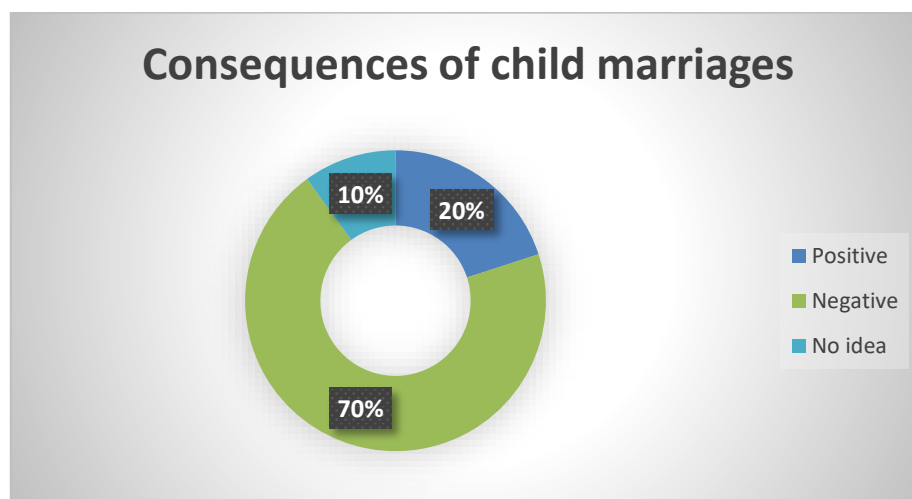
The bar graph above shows the frequency of the factors contributing to child marriages. From the Study, the most contributing factors were poverty and religion with 100%, followed by lack of education, gender inequality and environmental factors with 90%, followed by Protection of the girl child, culture and tradition and peer pressure with 80%. Legal and policy gaps were the least contributing factors to child marriages in Madziwa community.

4.4 The consequences and problems associated with child marriage.

Child marriage has devastating consequences, not only for the girl child but also for the entire Shamva Madziwa community and its development processes. This harmful practice perpetuates gender inequality and discrimination against girls, which severely impacts their health, education and economic opportunities. The effects are both immediate and long-term, creating a cycle of poverty and social stagnation that is difficult to break. It is enthusiastic that a majority of respondents (70%) recognized child marriage as a serious form of violation of children's rights and discrimination of girls, but it is concerning that a significant minority (20%) believed that child marriage has positive impacts and (10%) had no idea if child marriage has any effect.

Figure 4.5: Consequences of Child marriages

n=30



4.4.1 Negative Impacts

4.4.1.1 Educational Disruption

Educational disruption is one of the most significant effects of child marriages in Shamva Madziwa. Girls who are married off at a young age are often forced to leave school, cutting short their academic quests and dreams. Marriage places them in roles where education is no longer prioritized, as they are expected to focus on household responsibilities, child-rearing and satisfying the needs of their husbands. This sudden end to their education has lifelong consequences, limiting their ability to access formal employment opportunities and economic independence.

One girl recounted her experience:

"I loved going to school and I dreamed of becoming a nurse. But when I got married at 15, my husband said education was no longer important. I had to drop out and now I feel stuck."

The lack of education among child brides not only affects their individual potential but also impacts their families and communities. Educated women are more likely to contribute to the economic and social development of their communities

Additionally, respondents in the community highlighted how the societal expectation to prioritize marriage over education for girls further entrenches this issue. One teacher noted:

"Many parents in this community still believe that a girl's ultimate goal is to get married. Even when girls are performing well in school, they are pulled out once they reach puberty because the family wants to avoid the shame of having an unmarried daughter."

The disruption of education due to child marriages also contributes to the cycle of gender inequality, as girls are denied the chance to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to participate fully in society. Without education, they lack the tools to advocate for their rights or challenge the traditional norms that perpetuate their marginalization.

4.4.1.2 Health Risks

Child marriage exposes young girls in Shamva Madziwa to numerous health risks, many of which can have lifelong consequences. Early marriages often lead to early pregnancies, which pose significant dangers to the health of adolescent mothers. Their bodies are often not fully developed to handle the physical demands of pregnancy and childbirth, increasing the risks of maternal mortality, obstructed labor and obstetric fistula.

A local health worker shared:

"We see many young girls, some as young as 14, coming to the clinic with severe complications during pregnancy or delivery. Most of these issues could have been avoided if they had waited until they were older."

In addition to maternal health risks, child brides are also more vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. Their limited power in relationships often leaves them unable to negotiate safe sexual practices, increasing their susceptibility to diseases. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of adequate reproductive health education in rural areas like Shamva Madziwa.

A young woman reflected on her experience:

"My husband was much older, and I couldn't refuse his demands. I ended up getting pregnant quickly and now I'm also dealing with health issues I don't fully understand."

4.4.1.3 Gender Inequality and Marginalization

Gender inequality and marginalization are deeply rooted in the practice of child marriages in Shamva Madziwa, perpetuating cycles of discrimination against girls. Early marriage is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality, as societal norms and traditions often prioritize the future of the boy child neglecting the girl child. These norms prioritize girls' roles as wives and mothers over their education, autonomy and personal development.

One participant noted:

"In our community, boys are encouraged to pursue education and careers, while girls are told that their place is in the home. Marriage is seen as the ultimate goal for girls, even if they are still very young."

The economic dimension of gender inequality is also significant. Many girls in Shamva Madziwa are married off as a way to relieve financial burdens on their families, with little regard for their well-being or aspirations. This commodification of girls reinforces the idea that they are less valuable than boys, whose education and economic potential are often prioritized.

One mother admitted:

"I had to marry off my daughter because we couldn't afford to send her to school. It's different for boys; they are expected to take care of us when they grow up."

Furthermore, child marriages perpetuate the marginalization of women by trapping them in a cycle of poverty and dependence. Married girls are less likely to gain access to education, meaningful employment, or leadership opportunities, which limits their ability to contribute to community development or advocate for their rights.

4.4.1.4 Economic Disempowerment

Child marriages in Shamva Madziwa significantly contribute to the economic disempowerment of young girls, leaving them with limited opportunities to achieve financial independence. When girls are married off at an early age, they are often forced to leave school and abandon their education, which is crucial for acquiring skills and qualifications needed for formal

employment. This lack of education and skills limits their ability to access economic opportunities, trapping them and their families in cycles of poverty.

One participant highlighted her experience:

"I was married at 16 and I never completed secondary school. Now I can't find a job, and my husband doesn't earn much. I depend on him for everything, but it's not enough to take care of our family."

Child brides are often expected to prioritize domestic responsibilities, such as child-rearing and household chores, over economic activities. This reinforces traditional gender roles that prevent women from economic income generating activities. Consequently, their economic potential remains untapped, hindering not only their personal development but also the overall economic growth of the community.

Moreover, respondents noted that early marriages often lead to financial instability within families. Adolescent mothers and their young husbands frequently lack the resources or maturity to manage family finances effectively, which can result in economic hardships. One male participant explained:

"Most of us who marry young struggle to make ends meet. We don't have stable jobs or land to farm, and it becomes very hard to provide for our families."

The ripple effects of economic disempowerment are felt across generations. Children born to economically disadvantaged families often face limited access to education, healthcare, and basic needs, and perpetuating cycles of poverty. Furthermore, the community loses out on the economic contributions that could have been made by empowered, educated women.

4.4.1.5 Increased Vulnerability to Domestic Violence

Child marriages in Shamva Madziwa significantly increase the vulnerability of young girls to domestic violence. The practice of marrying girls off at a young age often results in power imbalances within the marriage, where the young bride has little control or agency over her life. This dynamic places girls at high risk of physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Given their young age, lack of maturity and limited life experience, these girls are often unable to navigate or challenge abusive behaviors by their husbands.

A participant shared:

"I got married at 15, and at first, everything seemed okay. But soon, my husband started to beat me whenever I didn't agree with him or didn't meet his expectations. I was too scared to speak up because I thought my family would be ashamed of me."

Community health workers in Shamva Madziwa have observed an alarming trend in which child brides come to health clinics seeking treatment for injuries inflicted by their husbands. However, they rarely report the abuse, often due to fear of rejection, stigmatization, or the belief that the abuse is justified within the context of marriage.

One healthcare worker said:

"Many of these young girls have been conditioned to accept abuse as a normal part of marriage. They do not know that it is wrong, and they are afraid to speak out because they fear being ostracized by their communities."

Sexual violence, including marital rape, is another significant concern. In these marriages, girls are often forced to have sex with their husbands, even if they are unwilling or too young to fully understand the implications. This not only exposes them to physical harm but also has long-term consequences on their mental and sexual health.

One respondent explained:

"I had to endure everything in silence. I was forced into sex with my husband, even though I was not ready. When I told him I was scared, he said that was my duty as a wife. I felt so powerless and helpless."

4.4.1.6 Psychological and Emotional Consequences

Child marriage in Shamva Madziwa has severe psychological and emotional consequences for young girls, often leading to long-term trauma. The girls who enter marriage at a young age are not developmentally prepared for the emotional, physical, and social challenges that come with early marital responsibilities. As a result, they often experience anxiety, depression and a sense of isolation that can affect their mental health for years.

One respondent shared:

"When I got married at 15, I was overwhelmed. I didn't know how to handle the responsibilities of being a wife and a mother. I often felt like I was living in a world of my own, without any support. It was like my dreams were crushed."

The emotional toll on child brides often starts with the sense of powerlessness they experience in their marriages. The inability to assert themselves can lead to emotional distress, and many suffer from low self-esteem and a lack of confidence.

Additionally, child brides often experience feelings of isolation. Many are separated from their families or face the challenge of living in households where they have limited support networks. The emotional impact of being removed from their childhood environment and thrust into adult responsibilities can cause deep sadness and loneliness. One participant described her feelings:

"I missed my friends, my family and everything I knew. But once I was married, I felt like I was alone. My husband's family never accepted me and I couldn't go back home because my parents had told me I was now a grown woman."

The pressure to conform to adult roles at such a young age creates significant emotional strain. Young girls are forced to balance responsibilities that are too advanced for their developmental stage, resulting in overwhelming stress and mental exhaustion.

4.4.2 Perceived Positive Impacts of Child Marriages

Some respondents in Shamva Madziwa cited perceived advantages of child marriage, often rooted in cultural and socio-economic norms. One of the most frequently mentioned benefits was the economic relief it provides to families through the payment of bride price (lobola), which can help alleviate immediate financial pressures. For families living in poverty, marrying off daughters is viewed as a way to reduce the financial burden of their care, shifting responsibilities to the husband's family.

A father explained,

"When my daughter got married, the cattle we received helped us pay off debts and meet some household needs. It felt like a solution to our financial struggles."

Additionally, child marriage is sometimes seen as a means of preserving family honor and protecting a girl's chastity in communities where premarital relationships are highly stigmatized.

A mother shared,

“We married our daughter early to protect her from engaging in relationships that could bring shame to the family.”

In some cases, families see child marriage as an opportunity to forge alliances with wealthier or influential families, thus improving their social standing.

One community elder noted,

“Marrying into a well-off family can open opportunities for us and strengthen our ties with respected families in the area.”

While these perceived advantages provide short-term gains for families, they often come at the expense of the girl’s autonomy, well-being and future opportunities. The economic benefits are temporary and the practice perpetuates cycles of poverty, inequality and harmful gender norms, limiting the girl’s potential and exposing her to physical, emotional and psychological harm.

4.5 Possible Mitigation Strategies to Curb Child Marriages

Addressing child marriage in Shamva Madziwa requires a multi-faceted approach that targets the root causes and incorporates various stakeholders. The following strategies are crucial to reducing the prevalence of child marriages and mitigating their impact on the community.

4.5.1 Strengthening Legal Frameworks and Enforcement

Zimbabwe has laws prohibiting child marriage, such as the Marriage Act, which sets the minimum marriageable age at 18. However, gaps in enforcement remain a challenge. It is essential to strengthen the enforcement of existing laws and ensure that violators are held accountable, educate communities about these laws to increase awareness and deter the practice and train law enforcement officers and local authorities to recognize and act against cases of child marriage.

A local social worker stated:

“We have the laws in place, but many families and communities still ignore them. We need to focus on enforcement and creating awareness about the consequences of child marriage.”

4.5.2 Promoting Access to Education

Education is a key factor in preventing child marriages. Girls who remain in school are less likely to marry early, as education provides them with knowledge, skills, and opportunities. Strategies include reducing or eliminating school fees and providing financial support to families through scholarships or bursaries, providing safe and accessible schools, particularly

in rural areas and implementing policies that allow young mothers to return to school after childbirth.

A former child bride shared:

"If I had stayed in school, I would not have married so young. Education is the only way to escape this cycle."

4.5.3 Economic Empowerment of Families

Poverty is a major driver of child marriage, as families often marry off their daughters to alleviate financial burdens. Economic empowerment initiatives can include providing income-generating projects for families, especially single mothers, offering vocational training for girls to equip them with skills for self-sufficiency and supporting savings and credit schemes in rural communities to reduce economic pressure.

One respondent highlighted:

"Many families marry off their daughters because they feel they have no other options. If we support these families financially, it can reduce the pressure to marry off their children."

4.5.4 Community Awareness and Advocacy

Changing social norms and attitudes that perpetuate child marriage requires targeted advocacy efforts. Community leaders, traditional leaders, and religious figures should be engaged to conduct awareness campaigns on the negative effects of child marriage, promote positive cultural practices that value education and empower girls and challenge harmful traditional practices, such as Kuripa Ngozi or Kuzvarira, that contribute to early marriages.

A village head commented:

"We need to work together to educate our communities about the dangers of marrying off young girls. It starts with changing how we think and value our daughters."

4.5.5 Providing Comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health Education

Lack of awareness about sexual and reproductive health contributes to early pregnancies and child marriages. Introducing age-appropriate health education can empower girls with knowledge about their bodies and rights, reduce teenage pregnancies through family planning and contraceptive access and create safe spaces where young people can discuss sexual health issues openly.

A participant noted:

"Many girls marry early because they become pregnant and don't know how to prevent it. Education about these issues is critical."

4.5.6 Strengthening Support Systems for Victims

Child brides often lack the support needed to escape abusive marriages or rebuild their lives. Interventions include establishing shelters and counseling services for survivors of child marriage, providing legal aid and support for girls seeking to annul early marriages and creating mentorship programs where survivors can share their experiences and encourage others.

Another girl said that

"It would have been so helpful if there were safe shelters in our village because we do not even like being in these marriages but we are still staying because we do not have any other place to go since our parents won't take us back "

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the findings of the study on child marriage in the Shamva Madziwa community, highlighting the key factors sustaining the practice. Poverty and religious beliefs emerged as the most significant influences, with many participants explaining that financial hardship and religious teachings played a central role in encouraging early marriages. These were closely followed by limited access to education, gender inequality and environmental challenges, which together created conditions that increased girls' vulnerability to early marriage. Other contributing factors included the protection of the girl child, cultural and traditional expectations and peer pressure, which also played notable roles in shaping community attitudes and decisions. Legal and policy gaps were mentioned less frequently but were acknowledged as underlying issues that allow the practice to continue. In addition to causes, participants also described the psychological, emotional and economic consequences of child marriage, such as trauma, missed educational opportunities and intergenerational poverty. Despite a few participants expressing views that early marriage might offer benefits like family stability or economic relief, these perceptions were outweighed by the long-term negative impacts. Respondents also shared recommendations to address the issue, including strengthening education for girls, improving legal enforcement and supporting families economically.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION/ CONCLUSION/ RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews the findings of the study, assesses the methodology and draws conclusions in line with the research objectives. It also compares the findings with previous research, highlights areas of agreement and disagreement and presents recommendations to the Madziwa Community as well as the Government for practical interventions.

5.1 Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate the complex interplay between social, cultural, economic, environmental, and religious elements that sustain child marriage in Shamva, Madziwa Community. Since families sometimes marry off their daughters to ease financial difficulties or to take advantage of dowry payments, poverty was found to be a significant contributing factor. This is in line with more extensive studies on child marriage in rural Zimbabwe that emphasize the connection between early marriage and poverty. However, the report emphasizes that poverty and illiteracy go hand in hand. Since education is a vital tool for postponing marriage and strengthening females economically and socially, girls who drop out of school because of financial difficulties or societal pressures are more likely to get married.

Peer pressure was cited as another important factor, especially in communities where social norms encourage early dating and pregnancy. Adolescents are often influenced by their peers and local social dynamics that normalize this type of behavior. For example, proximity to bars and shopping malls exposes children to predatory behavior, which increases their vulnerability to exploitation. Cultural practices such as Kuripa Ngozi and Kuzvarira compound the problem by institutionalizing child marriage as a solution to family or social conflict, thereby perpetuating cycles of gender inequality and marginalization. Similarly, religious factors, particularly the influence of the Johanne Marange sect, also strengthen child marriage, presenting it as a divine obligation that comes before the well-being and autonomy of girls. While some respondents strongly oppose child marriage, particularly those associated with Catholic and Pentecostal churches, the study highlights the lack of consensus across religions and cultures, which creates challenges for community interventions.

Environmental factors, such as long distances to schools and lack of basic amenities, act as barriers to education and make marriage a more viable option for struggling families. These results are consistent with previous studies, but also provide unique local perspectives specific to Shamva Madziwa. Although the methodology was successful in capturing community perspectives, it has limitations, such as potential underreporting due to the sensitivity of the topic which may not fully uncover trends or long-term impacts.

Additionally, the study highlights significant areas of disagreement, particularly among religious groups, demonstrating the need for targeted engagement that respects cultural beliefs while protecting children's rights. The findings highlight the importance of implementing holistic, context-specific interventions that address the leading factors of child marriage such as poverty, lack of education and harmful cultural practices, while fostering collaboration between community leaders, religious groups and policymakers.

The study's conclusions also have significant ramifications for further research. Evaluating the efficacy of current interventions, fortifying the legal system, and expanding neighborhood projects that give girls and families economic empowerment should be the main priorities. Developing gender-responsive solutions may benefit from more research on how boys and men contribute to or hinder child marriage. The study emphasizes how crucial it is for stakeholders including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, religious leaders, and community members to work together in order to eliminate the structural injustices that encourage child marriage in Shamva Madziwa.

5.2 Conclusions

This study concludes that child marriage in Shamva, Madziwa Community is the result of systemic inequalities, sociocultural norms and environmental vulnerabilities that threaten the rights, sovereignty and well-being of girls. Poverty, lack of education, harmful cultural practices and religious misconceptions combine to perpetuate this harmful practice. These factors not only deprive children of their childhood, but also reinforce continued poverty, gender inequality and domestic violence in the community. While some cultural and religious groups openly condemn child marriage, broader social norms and economic hardship continue to drive its prevalence.

Addressing this problem requires a multifaceted approach that combines legal reforms, economic support, community awareness and education for both boys and girls. Efforts to address child marriage must prioritize empowering girls through education and life skills, while

actively encouraging communities to challenge harmful traditions and beliefs. In addition, stakeholders should implement existing child protection laws and invest in community-based interventions to stop the continuity of poverty and inequality that sustains child marriage. By addressing these issues holistically, Shamva Madziwa can move towards a creating a future where every child has freedom pursue opportunities without the constraints of early marriage. This study achieved its goals, but highlights the need for more research to explore the long-term impacts of child marriage and to evaluate the effectiveness of current interventions, thereby providing a sustainable approach to eradicating this harmful practice.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations for the Madziwa community:

1. **Promote awareness and education:** Community leaders, including religious and cultural figures, should prioritize awareness campaigns to educate parents, girls and boys about the negative effects of child marriage. These campaigns should highlight the importance of education and children's rights.
2. **Strengthen community structures:** Establish child protection committees in the community to monitor and prevent cases of child marriage. These committees should work closely with local schools, health centers, and law enforcement to provide support to children at risk.
3. **Empowering girls and families:** Initiatives that provide vocational training, mentoring programs, and income-generating projects for women and families can help reduce the financial pressures that lead to child marriage. Girls who have access to economic opportunities are less likely to marry early.
4. **Encourage alternative dispute resolution:** Harmful cultural practices such as Kuripa Ngozi and Kuzvarira should be discouraged. Community dialogues involving elders and leaders should focus on alternative ways to resolve conflicts that do not violate children's rights.
5. **Mobilize religious institutions:** Work with religious leaders and institutions to discourage practices that encourage child marriage. Faith-based organizations should actively advocate for child marriage and support families to value girls' education and empowerment.

5.3.2 Recommendations for the government:

1. **Strengthen law enforcement:** Enforce laws prohibiting child marriage by ensuring that perpetrators, including those who facilitate child marriage, face legal consequences. The government should improve the capacity of law enforcers to monitor and act against cases of child marriage in rural areas.
2. **Invest in education:** Provide resources to build more schools closer to rural communities and improve the availability of basic amenities such as clean water, adequate sanitation, and educational materials. Scholarships and financial assistance programs should be expanded to support families in need and ensure that girls stay in school.
3. **Economic empowerment programs:** Initiate targeted poverty alleviation programs in rural communities, such as vocational training, microfinance programs, and agricultural support for families, to address the financial pressures that lead to child marriage.
4. **Cultural and religious dialogue:** Support initiatives that engage traditional and religious leaders to combat harmful practices and harmonize cultural norms with the protection of children's rights. Ministries can work with non-governmental organizations to facilitate open dialogue within communities.
5. **Community support networks:** Establish and fund local child protection centers that provide counseling, health services, and legal assistance to victims of child marriage. These centers should also serve as safe spaces for children at risk.
6. **Strengthen health interventions:** Provide sexual and reproductive health education in schools and communities to equip young people with knowledge about their rights, health and choices. Improve access to health facilities, especially maternal and child health services.
7. **Improve data collection and monitoring:** Establish mechanisms to monitor trends in child marriage and evaluate the impact of interventions. Data collection should inform the design of policies and programs that address the root causes of child marriage.
8. **Policy support and budget allocation:** Allocate more resources to child protection programs and support a coordinated national approach to ending child marriage. Strengthen existing policies and develop new ones that address the multiple causes of child marriage. By combining efforts at the community and government levels, it is possible to address the causes of child marriage in Shamva Madziwa.

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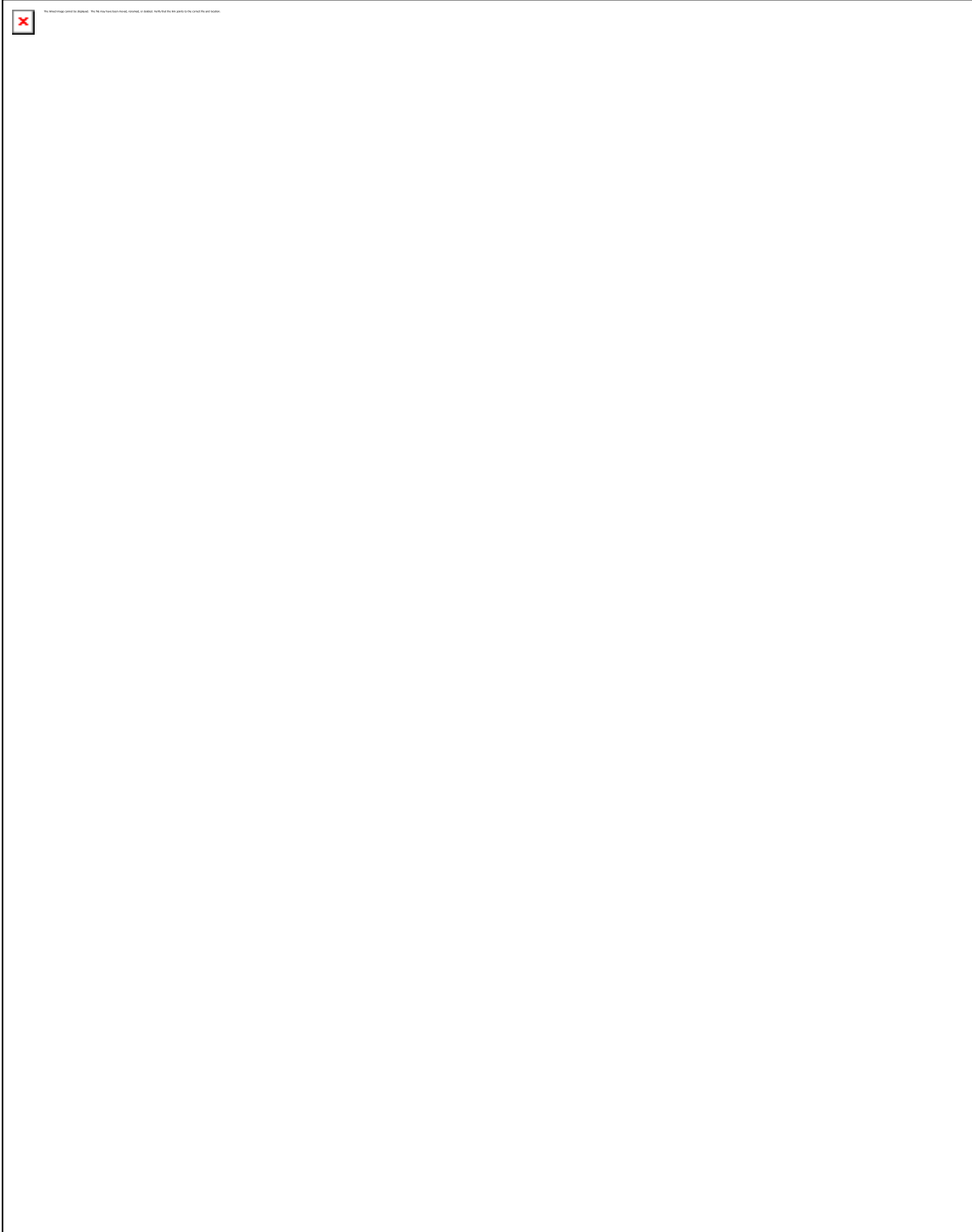
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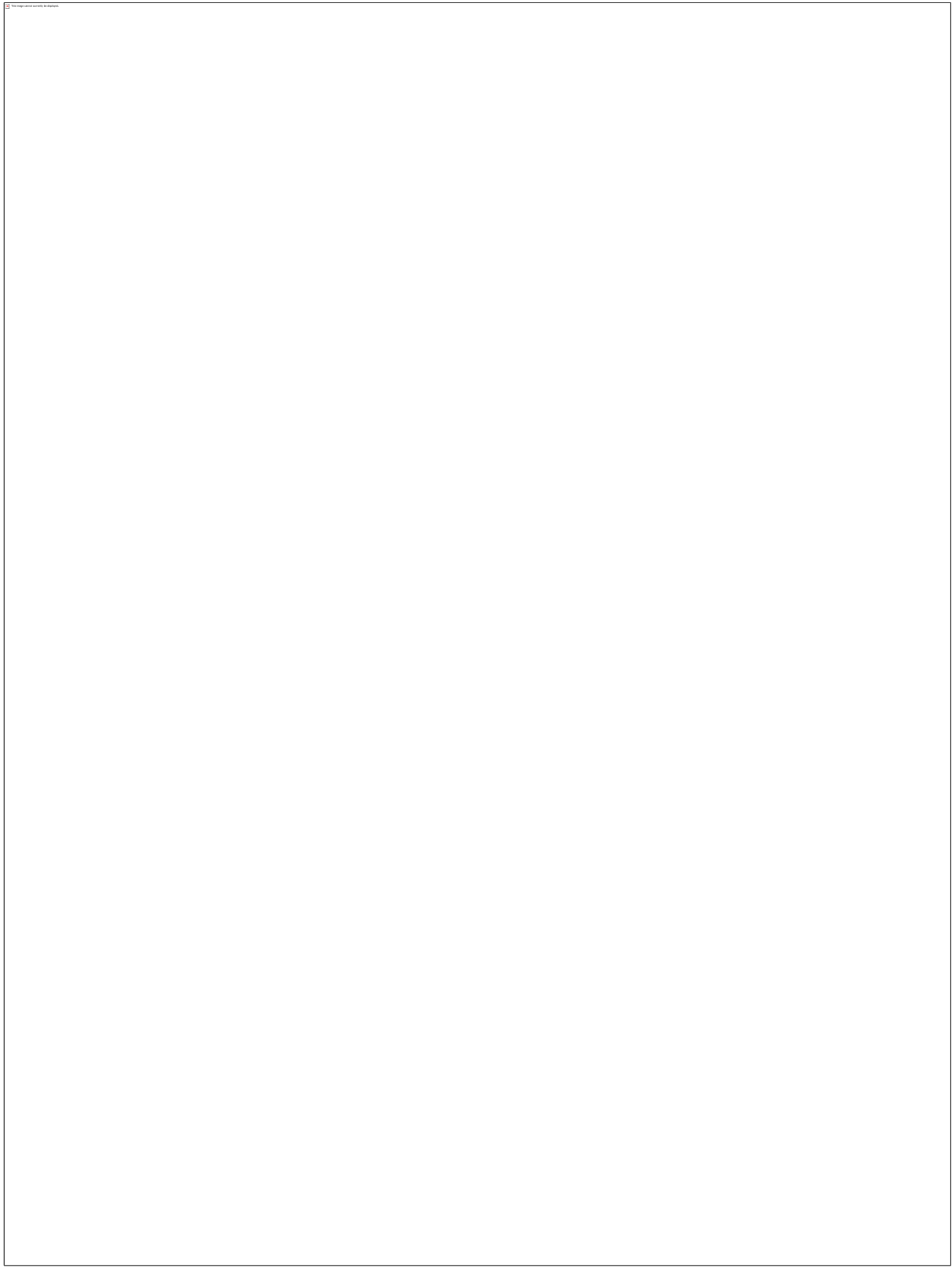
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Letter from Bindura University



APPENDIX B: Letter of permission to conduct research

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the content of the letter of permission to conduct research. The box occupies most of the page area below the title.

APPENDIX C: Consent Form Template

Title of Research: Examining the factors leading to the prevalence of child marriages in Shamva Madziwa Community.

Researcher: Joyline Zhangazha

Bindura University of Science Education

Participant Information:

I am inviting you to participate in a study that aims to understand the causes, perceptions, and consequences of child marriage in Madziwa. Participation is completely voluntary and you may choose not to answer any questions or withdraw at any time without penalty.

Your responses will remain confidential.

No personal names will be used in the report.

Consent Statement:

By signing below, I confirm that:

I have read or had explained to me the purpose of this research.

I voluntarily agree to participate.

I understand I can withdraw at any time.

I understand that my information will be kept confidential.

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

APPENDIX D: RESEARCH TOOLS

1. Interview Guide

Section 1: Factors Perpetuating Child Marriage

1. What social factors do you believe contribute to early marriages in this community?
2. In what ways does poverty or financial hardship influence early marriage decisions?
3. Are there any cultural or traditional beliefs that encourage early child marriage?
3. How does family or community pressure influence decisions about marriage?

Section 2: Community Perceptions and Attitudes

1. What is a child?
2. What is a child marriage?
3. What are the factors that determine suitability for marriage in the community?
4. Are child marriages seen as a positive solution to problems like poverty or teenage pregnancy?

Section 3: Consequences and Problems

1. What are the effects of child marriage on the girl child?
2. What are the common health challenges faced by girls who marry early?
3. How does early marriage impact a girl's emotional and mental well-being?

Section 4: Community-Based Interventions

1. What do you think the community could do to prevent early marriages?
2. What role can traditional leaders, churches play in reducing child marriages?
3. What are the legal reforms that could help raise awareness against child marriage?

2. Questionnaire

(Please tick the correct answer)

Section A: Demographic Information

1. **Age:** 15-19 ☐ 20-30 ☐ 31+ ☐
2. **Gender:** F ☐ M ☐
3. **Employment status:** Employed ☐ Unemployed ☐
4. **Marital Status:** Married ☐ Single ☐ Divorced ☐
5. **Religion:** Apostolic ☐ Pentecostal ☐ Catholic ☐
6. **Education:** Primary level ☐ Secondary Level ☐ No formal Education ☐

Section B: Causes of Child Marriage

1. What do you think are the main causes of child marriage in your community? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Poverty
- ☐ Cultural practices
- ☐ Lack of education
- ☐ Religious beliefs
- ☐ Peer pressure
- ☐ Protection of the Girl child
- ☐ Gender Inequality
- ☐ Environmental Factors
- ☐ Legal and Policy gaps

☐ Other (Specify):

2. Does poverty influence parents to marry off their children early?

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Are there cultural beliefs that encourage marrying girls at a young age?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please explain:

Section C: Community Attitudes

1. In your opinion, how does the community view early marriages?

☐ Acceptable

☐ Unacceptable

☐ Necessary due to circumstances

☐ No opinion

2. Should child marriage be prevented?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why?

Section D: Effects of Child Marriage

1. What challenges do you think girls face when they marry early? (Tick all that apply)

☐ Health complications

☐ Education Disruption

☐ Economic Disempowerment

☐ Emotional problems

☐ Domestic violence

☐ Gender Inequality and Marginalization

2. Do you think child marriage affects the community's development?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Explain:

Section E: Recommendations

1. What solutions would you recommend to reduce child marriages?

.....
.....
.....

2. Should more community programs on education and awareness be introduced?

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Focus Group Discussion Guide

1. What does child marriage mean to you?
2. What social, economic or cultural factors which lead to early marriage in our community?
3. How is child marriage viewed by the majority in Madziwa?
4. What are the consequences for girls who marry early?
5. What actions can the community take to reduce child marriages?
6. What programs could be introduced to support young girls to stay in school?
7. If you had the power to change one thing to reduce child marriage in Madziwa, what would it be?

APPENDIX E: Plagiarism Report

