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FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

DEPARTMENT OF DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



**Exploring the Socio-Economic Factors Contributing to the Persistent Prevalence of
Early Child Marriages in Bindura District, Zimbabwe**

BY

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APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read this project and have approved its submission for marking after confirming that it confines to the Faculty of Science, Disaster Risk Reduction Department and HBSc DMS requirements.



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DECLARATION FORM

I, **DZINOTYIWEI BLESSING**, registration number **B210047B**, declare that this dissertation is the product of my own work and has not been previously submitted to any University other than Bindura University of Science Education. All the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

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Signature

Date

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband Patrick Chaitwa, my parents Godfrey Mapenzi, Lilian Dzinotywei and Uncle Jerryfanos Dzinotywei. Thank you for your undying support and love. I also dedicate this work to my three children Kirsty, Kinsel and Keimer Chaitwa. I would not have made it this far if it was not for your love, care and support. To my husband and mother, I'm grateful for your faith in me. You have been my pillars of strength through it all and you are much appreciated.

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May the Almighty bless you all!

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to critically explore the socio-economic factors contributing to the persistent prevalence of early child marriages and how it can be averted in Bindura District specifically Chipadze, Zimbabwe. The study used a sample size of 50 respondents. It assessed the social, economic and cultural factors contributing to these persistent early child marriages. The research outcomes demonstrate that traditional gender norms prioritizing early marriage for girls, the lack of educational and employment opportunities, and the entrenchment of intergenerational cycles of child marriage are the most prominent socio-cultural drivers of this issue, with 18, 21, and 25 participants, respectively, citing these as significant factors. Qualitative analysis was employed on data collected. A focus group discussion guide was administered to selected married women/children and parents, they were all completed for analysis. 15 key informant interviews were also used to source out information. The research findings show that the most noticeable effect was the disruption of education, with numerous participants emphasizing how child marriage forced young girls to drop out of school, taking away their opportunities for personal growth, skill development, and economic empowerment that education provides. In addition, it was also brought to light that there is a heightened vulnerability of child mothers to physical and sexual abuse within their marriages, a consequence of the inherent power imbalances and lack of agency that young girls often face. In order to reduce the cases of early child marriages, awareness campaigns and community engagement programs have been introduced as well as enforcement of legislative frameworks. The research findings show that there is great need for government and NGO assistance to help reduce these early child marriages.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Despite efforts to curb early child marriages in the country, Zimbabwe has continued to experience an upsurge of early child marriage cases. This challenge is a threat to the attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly looking at the need to protect the rights of children, women and girls. This study thus, looks into the main determinants of persistent prevalence of early child marriages in Zimbabwe, particularly focusing on Bindura District. This chapter provides an introduction where the background to the study, problem statement, research objectives, questions, delimitations and justification of the study are provided together with other important aspects.

1.2 Background to the study

The issue of early child marriages is a global concern, with significant prevalence in developing countries. According to a 2021 report by UNICEF, an estimated 12 million girls under the age of 18 are married each year worldwide (UNICEF, 2021). While this practice is more common in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, it is not limited to these regions. In Europe, although the rates of early child marriages are lower compared to other parts of the world, the problem persists, particularly among certain minority and marginalized communities. A 2019 study conducted in the United Kingdom found that approximately 3,000 girls under the age of 18 were married each year, with the majority being from South Asian and Middle Eastern backgrounds (Hester et al., 2019). Similarly, a 2020 report by the Council of Europe highlighted the prevalence of early child marriages among Roma communities in several European countries, including Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia (Council of Europe, 2020). These studies underscore the need for a deeper understanding of the socio-economic factors contributing to this issue, even in regions where it may not be as widely recognized.

The prevalence of early child marriages is particularly concerning in several Asian countries. A 2019 study conducted in India found that over 27% of girls were married before the age of 18, with the highest rates observed in the states of Rajasthan, Jharkhand, and Bihar (Raj et al., 2019). The authors attributed this to a complex interplay of socio-economic factors, including poverty, lack of educational opportunities, and deeply rooted cultural norms. Similarly, a 2020 report by the Asian Development Bank highlighted the issue of child marriages in Bangladesh,

where an estimated 59% of girls are married before the age of 18 (ADB, 2020). The report identified several contributing factors, such as the perceived notion of securing the family's financial future, the desire to protect girls from the perceived risks of premarital relationships, and a lack of enforcement of existing laws prohibiting child marriages.

In Nepal, a 2021 study found that the prevalence of child marriage was particularly high in the Terai region, where approximately 40% of girls were married before the age of 18 (Giri et al., 2021). The researchers attributed this to a combination of poverty, limited access to education, and the persistence of traditional gender norms that prioritize the marriage of girls over their education and economic empowerment. These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of the issue, with societal, economic, and cultural factors intersecting to perpetuate the practice of early child marriages. Furthermore, the study underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions that address the root causes and empower girls to make informed choices about their futures.

Early child marriage is more prevalent, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa where it has been on the rise for quite some time now. Increasingly, child marriage is being viewed as a symptom of the profound gender inequality that exists in Africa. It is a manifestation of gender inequality which constitutes discrimination based on sex and gender. Scholars like Ashiq (2022) is of the view that child marriage is a practice that reinforces gender inequality and the social constructions that entrench patriarchy and discrimination. Gender inequality lies at the root of child marriage and must therefore shape perspectives and inform approaches to ending it.

While the prevalence of early child marriages has been well-documented in various regions of the world, it remains a significant concern in Zimbabwe as well. A 2020 study conducted in the Mashonaland Central Province, where Bindura District is located, found that the rate of child marriage in the region was as high as 32% (Sibanda et al., 2020). The researchers attributed this to a combination of socio-economic factors, including poverty, limited access to education, and the persistence of traditional gender norms that place a higher value on the marriage of girls over their pursuit of education and economic independence.

Similarly, a 2021 report by the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZimStat) highlighted the disparities in child marriage prevalence across different regions of the country. The report found that the Mashonaland Central Province, which includes Bindura District, had one of the highest rates of child marriage, with approximately 34% of girls married before the age of 18

(ZimStat, 2021). The report emphasized the need for targeted interventions and policy reforms to address this issue, particularly in regions where the practice is deeply entrenched. Looking at how the studies continue to point onto the continued prevalence of child marriages, this study focuses on understanding the socioeconomic factors leading to the persistent prevalence of child marriages in Bindura District.

1.3 Problem statement

Despite the global recognition of the harmful impacts of early child marriages and the efforts made to address this issue, the practice remains prevalent in many parts of the world, including Zimbabwe. According to the Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey (2019), the Mashonaland Central Province, where Bindura District is located, has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the country, with approximately 34% of girls married before the age of 18 (ZimStat, 2021). This is particularly concerning given the various international and national policies and initiatives that have been put in place to end child marriages. For instance, Zimbabwe has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, both of which call for the elimination of child marriages (UNICEF, 2021). Additionally, the country has enacted the Marriages Act, which sets the legal age of marriage at 18 years (Government of Zimbabwe, 2021). However, the persistence of this practice in the Bindura District suggests the need for a more nuanced understanding of the socio-economic factors that continue to drive child marriages in this specific context, despite the existing efforts and policies. This study aims to address this knowledge gap by exploring the compound interplay of societal, cultural, and economic influences that contribute to the prevalence of early child marriages in Bindura District, Zimbabwe.

1.4 Aim and objectives of the study

1.4.1 Aim

The general aim of this study is to explore the socio-economic factors contributing to the persistent prevalence of early child marriages in Zimbabwe

1.4.2 Research Objectives

- i. To assess the social, economic and cultural factors contributing to persistent early child marriages prevalence in Chipadze, Bindura District.
- ii. To examine the effect of child marriages in Chipadze, Bindura District

- iii. To evaluate the effectiveness of existing interventions and policies towards ending early child marriages prevalence in Chipadze, Bindura District

1.4.3 Research Questions

- i. What are the social, economic and cultural factors contributing to persistent early child marriages prevalence in Chipadze, Bindura District?
- ii. What is the effect of child marriages in Chipadze, Bindura District?
- iii. How effective are the existing interventions and policies towards ending early child marriages prevalence in Chipadze, Bindura District?

1.5 Justification of the study

This study on the rate of early child marriage in Bindura District, Zimbabwe, is relevant for a number of reasons. To begin, the high prevalence of child marriage in Mashonaland Central Province, which includes Bindura District, is a serious problem that necessitates an in-depth review. Despite the existence of national and international legislation and programs targeted at ending this detrimental practice, the continuation of child marriages in this region indicates that a deeper appreciation of the underlying variables is required.

Early child marriages have far-reaching repercussions for both the people involved and the larger community. Child brides frequently lack basic rights such as education, healthcare, and economic opportunity. They are also more likely to experience domestic violence, sexual abuse, and pregnancy-related health issues (UNICEF, 2021). This study can give useful insights into the socioeconomic elements driving this issue in Bindura District, allowing for more focused and successful actions to protect the rights and well-being of girls and young women.

This research is consistent with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably SDG 5, which focusses on attaining gender equality and empowering women and girls. The study's results can help to design evidence-based policies and initiatives that address the core causes of child marriages while also promoting girls' rights and empowerment in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the findings of this study can be used to influence initiatives in other sections of the nation, or even throughout the world, where comparable difficulties exist.

1.6 Delimitation of the study

The study focuses on a number of issues being guided by the geographic, temporal and contextual scopes.

1.6.1 Geographic Scope

The study will focus on Bindura District in Zimbabwe's Mashonaland Central Province. This particular emphasis is supported by the high prevalence of child marriage reported in this region, as emphasised in the Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey.

1.6.2 Temporal Scope

The project will gather data and analyse the existing state of early child marriages in Bindura District from 2019 to 2024. This is in agreement with the most recent known national-level data on child marriage prevalence in Zimbabwe.

1.6.3 Contextual scope

The study looks at a variety of socioeconomic factors, including as poverty, access to education, cultural norms and practices, and the impact of current policies and initiatives targeted at reducing child marriage in Bindura District. However, it will not dive into larger political or legal issues that are not directly relevant to the study's subject.

1.7 Definition of key terms

1.7.1 Early Child Marriage

Early child marriage, often known as child marriage, is a common and ongoing practice that involves the official or informal union of people under the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2021). The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines child marriage as "a formal marriage or informal union before the age of 18" (WHO, 2020). This practice is very popular in some parts of the globe, such as Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, and is frequently motivated by a complex interaction of poverty, gender inequity, and traditional cultural values (Raj & Boehmer, 2013).

1.7.2 Child

Various international and national legal frameworks interpret the word "child" differently. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a child is defined as "every human being under the age of eighteen years, unless majority is attained earlier under the applicable law" (UN, 1989). This term is generally accepted and used by many nations, including Zimbabwe, which has ratified the UNCRC. Furthermore, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) defines a child as "every human being below the age of 18 years" (African Union, 1990). This concept corresponds to the UNCRC and gives a consistent understanding of the child in the African environment.

Within the Zimbabwean legal system, the Children's Act of 2001 defines a child as "a person under the age of sixteen" (Government of Zimbabwe, 2001). However, it is crucial to remember that in Zimbabwe, the legal age of majority for marriage is 18 years, as stated in the Marriages Act (Government of Zimbabwe, 2021). These criteria of a "child" are critical in the context of this study since they set the age limit for establishing what constitutes an early or child marriage in Bindura District, Zimbabwe.

1.8 Chapter summary

This chapter focused on the introduction of the whole study, looking at the study background, problem statement, research aim, objectives, and research questions, justification of the study as well as definition of key terms. The next chapter will focus on literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is on literature review on the socio-economic factors contributing to the persistent prevalence of early child marriages in Zimbabwe. The chapter outlines the theoretical framework underpinning the study and reviews literature from various scholars around the globe. The focus is to explain the objectives using literature from past researches.

2.2 Theoretical framework

This study employed the Ecological Systems Theory (EST) and Gender and Development (GAD) Theory as major theories.

2.2.1 Ecological Systems Theory

The Ecological Systems Theory, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), offers a broad background for understanding the composite relationship of various environmental and social factors that shape human development and behaviour. This theory posits that an individual's development is influenced by multiple interconnected systems, including the microsystem (immediate environment), mesosystem (interactions between microsystems), exosystem (external environments), macrosystem (cultural and societal norms), and chronosystem (temporal changes) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Figure 2.1 illustrates a summary of the Ecological Systems Theory.

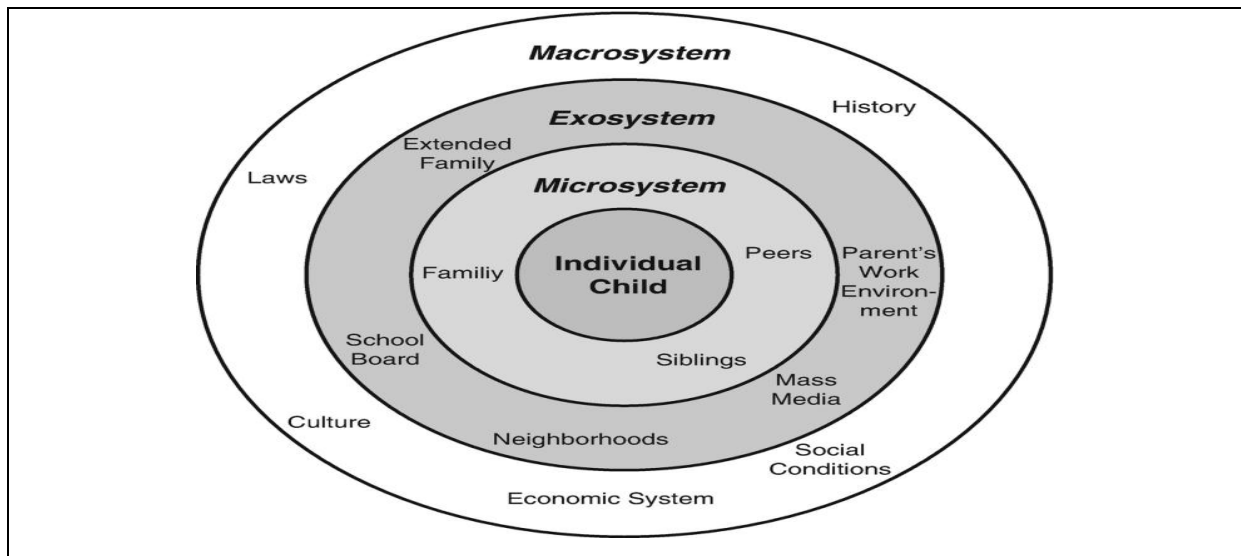


Figure 1: *Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)*

As highlighted in figure 2.1, the microsystem is the innermost layer of the ecological model, comprising the immediate environment and relationships that directly influence an individual's development. In the context of this study on early child marriages, the microsystem would include the individual girl or young woman, her family, and the close relationships and interactions within the household (Chae & Ngo, 2017). The mesosystem represents the interactions and connections between the different components of the microsystem. This includes the relationships and linkages between the individual, their family, and other immediate settings, such as the school, religious institutions, or peer groups (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These interconnections within the mesosystem can either reinforce or challenge the norms and practices surrounding early child marriages.

Furthermore, the exosystem refers to the external environments and social structures that indirectly influence the individual's development, even though they may not directly involve the person. In the case of early child marriages, the exosystem may include factors such as the availability and accessibility of educational opportunities, economic conditions, and the enforcement of relevant laws and policies (Gage, 2013). The macrosystem represents the broader cultural, societal, and ideological contexts that shape an individual's development. This includes the prevailing social norms, gender roles, and value systems that may contribute to the perpetuation of early child marriages within a particular community or society (Raj & Boehmer, 2013). The chronosystem encompasses the temporal dimension and the changes that occur over time, both in the individual's life and in the broader societal context. This component

acknowledges that the factors influencing early child marriages are not static but may evolve and shift in response to various historical, political, and socio-economic developments (Chae & Ngo, 2017).

In the context of this study, the Ecological Systems Theory can be employed to analyse how the different levels of the ecological system – from the individual and family to the community and societal levels – contribute to the perpetuation of early child marriages in Bindura District. This theory can help this study to examine the complex web of factors, such as poverty, cultural norms, and access to education, that shape the decision-making processes and lived experiences of girls and young women regarding marriage (Chae & Ngo, 2017).

2.2.2 Gender and Development (GAD) Theory

The Gender and Development (GAD) Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex relationship between gender and development processes. This theory emerged in the 1980s as a response to the limitations of the previous Women in Development (WID) approach, which primarily focused on addressing women's economic empowerment without considering the broader context of gender relations and power dynamics (Rathgeber, 1990). The core premise of the GAD Theory is that development cannot be truly achieved without addressing the underlying gender-based inequalities and power imbalances that shape the experiences and opportunities of both men and women (Momsen, 2019). This theory emphasizes the need to examine how societal norms, cultural practices, and institutional structures perpetuate gender-based discrimination and limit the agency and autonomy of women and girls.

In the context of this study on the socio-economic factors contributing to the prevalence of early child marriages in Bindura District, Zimbabwe, the GAD Theory can provide a valuable lens for analysis. The theory encourages researchers to explore how gender-based power structures and societal expectations around marriage and family formation shape the decision-making processes and lived experiences of girls and young women (Raj & Boehmer, 2013). By applying the GAD Theory, the study can delve into the ways in which patriarchal norms, gender-based discrimination, and unequal access to resources and opportunities contribute to the persistence of early child marriages in the local context. This analysis can shed light on the gendered dimensions of this harmful practice and inform the development of more targeted and effective interventions to address the root causes

2.3 The social, economic and cultural factors contributing to persistent early child marriages prevalence

The prevalence of early child marriages is a complicated issue driven by a wide range of interconnected social, economic, and cultural elements in different worldwide contexts. An analysis of empirical studies from places around the globe can give useful insights into the complex motivations of this behaviour. In India, Raj et al. (2019) discovered that poverty, low educational attainment, and societal norms that prioritise female virginity and early childbirth were major contributors to the high occurrence of child marriage. The researchers underlined how these socioeconomic and cultural pressures disproportionately affect females, resulting in early school dropout and the normalisation of marriage at a young age.

Similarly, a research done in Nepal by Sekine and Hodgkin (2017) found that deeply ingrained gender disparities, women's poor status, and the perceived financial hardship of raising unmarried daughters were key factors driving child marriage. The authors observed that these dynamics were worsened by restricted access to excellent education, particularly in rural regions. In Bangladesh, Amin et al. (2018) discovered that social standards around female purity, as well as the desire to shield children from sexual harassment or assault, were major determinants in the perpetuation of child marriage. The researchers also emphasised the importance of poverty, with families frequently perceiving child marriage as a way to ease economic hardship and protect their daughter's future.

Moving to Latin America, Savino et al. (2021) in Brazil identified the interconnections of race, class, and gender as major predictors of child marriage. The researchers discovered that this practice disproportionately affected girls from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as those of Indigenous or Afro-descendant origin, emphasising the importance of addressing the greater structural inequities that allow it to exist. Research from the Middle East has also supplied useful information. In Yemen, Al-Rawai et al. (2019) cited patriarchal norms, restricted educational and economic prospects for girls, and the concept of marriage as a method of safeguarding family honour as motivators for underage marriages. The authors emphasised the need of comprehensive, community-based interventions in challenging deeply held cultural ideas and behaviours.

A further research conducted in Vietnam by Nguyen and Wodon (2018) found that poverty, a lack of access to school, and societal norms that prioritise early marriage and motherhood all

contributed significantly to the frequency of child brides. The researchers emphasised the need of tackling interlocking socioeconomic and cultural barriers in order to empower females and prevent early marriages. In the Pacific area, Masten et al. (2021) discovered that conventional gender roles, a low value put on girls' education, and the notion of marriage as a way of economic stability were major factors pushing underage marriage. The writers emphasised the need of engaging with local communities and addressing the power structures that allow this practice to continue.

The incidence of early child marriages on the African continent is another ongoing issue that is firmly founded in a complex interaction of social, economic, and cultural variables. A study of empirical studies from numerous African nations sheds light on the varied motivations behind this behaviour. In Ethiopia, a research by Erulkar (2013) discovered that poverty, a lack of educational and economic possibilities for girls, and traditional gender norms that prioritise early marriage and childbirth were all major contributors to high rates of child marriage. The researchers emphasised the need for treatments that address the underlying structural disadvantages that females face.

In Malawi, Maswikwa et al. (2015) found that social norms that view girls as commodities, the desire to maintain family honour, and the perception of marriage as a means of economic security were significant drivers of child marriage. The authors emphasised the importance of challenging these deeply entrenched cultural beliefs and practices. In Nigeria, Baños Smith et al. (2018) discovered that poverty, limited access to education, and the belief that early marriage protects girls from premarital sex and pregnancy were key factors perpetuating child marriage. The researchers underscored the need for coordinated efforts to empower girls and engage with local communities to transform social norms.

In Uganda, Petroni et al. (2019) identified gender inequality, societal norms that prioritise female virginity and obedience, and the economic burden of sustaining unmarried daughters as key determinants of child marriage. The authors emphasised the need of tackling the larger systemic constraints that limit females' access to education and economic prospects. In Mozambique, Yaya et al. (2019) found that poverty, restricted educational and economic opportunities for girls, and the notion of marriage as a method of family protection all contributed significantly to the continuation of child marriage. The researchers advocated for comprehensive treatments that address the intertwining socioeconomic and cultural issues.

In Kenya, a research by Kobia et al. (2020) found that conventional gender norms, the need to retain cultural identity, and the notion that marriage improves a girl's future security were important drivers of child marriage. The authors emphasised the need of community-based methods that work with local leaders and institutions to address these deeply ingrained behaviours. Raj et al. (2018) investigated the East African environment and discovered that poverty, restricted access to education, and the idea that early marriage protects a girl's virtue were key factors leading to the occurrence of child marriage. The researchers emphasised the necessity of tackling the structural and behavioural constraints that support this detrimental practice.

While the global and African literatures give significant insights into the various determinants of early child marriages, it is critical to investigate the unique dynamics at work in the Zimbabwe context. A review of empirical research from Zimbabwe reveals significant findings and suggests topics for future investigation. Taderera (2024) discovered that poverty, perceived economic benefits of child marriage, and traditional gender norms that prioritise female virginity and early childbirth all played a role in the practice's high prevalence in Zimbabwe. The researchers emphasised the need of comprehensive treatments that address both supply-side (educational and economic opportunities) and demand-side (sociocultural norms) aspects.

Similarly, Maswikwa et al. (2015) investigated the impact of minimum marriage age regulations in sub-Saharan Africa, namely Zimbabwe. Their findings indicated that the mere existence of these regulations was insufficient to curtail the practice of child marriage, emphasising the significance of addressing the larger social, economic, and cultural factors that permit its perpetuation. In the urban environment, a research conducted by Moyo and Ncube (2019) in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, identified poverty, restricted educational and career opportunities for girls, and the need to uphold family honour as important causes of child marriage. The authors advocated for focused initiatives that empower females and involve local communities in challenging deeply ingrained gender stereotypes.

Examining the intersections of gender and ethnicity, Dhemba and Dhemba (2017) conducted research in Tsholotsho District, Zimbabwe, and found that the Ndebele ethnic group had higher rates of child marriage compared to other groups. The researchers attributed this to the cultural practices and beliefs that prioritize the control of female sexuality and the economic benefits of bride price. Despite these important insights, a closer examination of the literature reveals significant research gaps that warrant further investigation. For instance, there is limited

empirical evidence on the specific role of social media, technology, and digital platforms in shaping the attitudes and behaviours surrounding early child marriages in Zimbabwe (Mashiri, 2020). Additionally, the existing studies have primarily focused on the rural and urban contexts, while the experiences and challenges faced by girls and young women in peri-urban and informal settlement areas remain underexplored (Chingozha & Matsika, 2017). Understanding the nuanced dynamics in these diverse settings could provide valuable insights for the development of tailored interventions.

2.4 The effect of child marriages

Child marriage has far-reaching and negative implications for the people, families, and communities touched by it. An assessment of empirical studies from global contexts other than Africa yields useful insights into the complex consequences of child marriage. In India, Santhya et al. (2019) discovered that girls who married as children were more likely to experience physical and sexual violence in their marriages, had limited decision-making power, and were at a higher risk of adverse reproductive health outcomes such as early pregnancy and maternal mortality. The researchers emphasised the importance of comprehensive interventions to protect the rights and well-being of child brides.

Similarly, a research done in Nepal by Sekine and Hodgkin (2017) found that child marriage had a substantial detrimental influence on girls' educational achievement, with many compelled to drop out owing to the responsibilities of marriage and early motherhood. The authors emphasised the long-term socioeconomic effects of denying females access to a decent education. In Latin America, a research by Savino et al. (2021) in Brazil discovered that child marriage was linked to greater rates of poverty, lower levels of employment, and increased susceptibility to intimate partner abuse among women. The researchers emphasised the necessity of addressing the systemic inequities that facilitate child marriage and its negative consequences.

In Yemen, Al-Rawai et al. (2019) found that child marriage has catastrophic psychological and mental health implications, including increased rates of despair, anxiety, and suicide ideation among girl brides. The authors emphasised the critical need for comprehensive interventions that prioritise the well-being and rights of child brides. In the South-East Asian setting, a research by Nguyen and Wodon (2018) in Vietnam found that child marriage considerably hampered girls' educational and economic chances, with long-term consequences for their

financial independence and empowerment. The researchers emphasised equal access to education as a critical approach for preventing and mitigating the detrimental effects of child marriage.

Research from the Pacific area, such as Masten et al.'s (2021) research in Papua New Guinea, has emphasised the increased risk of domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and poor reproductive health outcomes for child brides. The authors emphasised the need of multi-sectoral interventions that address the interconnected risks that girls and young women face when they marry as children. Across these varied worldwide contexts, empirical research consistently shows that child marriage has a negative impact on girls and young women's physical, emotional, educational, and socioeconomic well-being. The research emphasises the significant and long-lasting implications of this cruel practice, underlining the importance of treatments that prioritise the rights, empowerment, and holistic development of child brides.

A review of empirical studies from many African nations demonstrates the negative consequences of this hazardous behaviour. In Ethiopia, Erulkar (2018) discovered that girls who married as children were more likely to experience intimate partner violence, have limited decision-making power within their households, and are at a higher risk of adverse reproductive health outcomes such as early pregnancy and maternal mortality. The researchers emphasised the importance of comprehensive interventions to protect the rights and well-being of child brides.

Similarly, Maswikwa et al. (2015) found that child marriage had a substantial detrimental influence on girls' educational achievement, with many being compelled to drop out owing to the obligations of marriage and early motherhood. The authors emphasised the long-term socioeconomic effects of denying females access to a decent education. In West Africa, a research by Baños Smith et al. (2018) in Nigeria found that child brides are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, trafficking, and getting sexually transmitted illnesses, such as HIV. The researchers emphasised the need of addressing the systemic inequities that permit child marriage and its related negative consequences.

In Uganda, Petroni et al. (2019) found that child marriage was linked to increased rates of intimate partner violence, poor mental health outcomes, and limited access to sexual and reproductive health services among young women. The authors emphasised the need for holistic interventions that prioritise the well-being and rights of child brides. A research by

Yaya et al. (2019) in Mozambique found that child marriage was connected with greater levels of poverty, lower levels of employment, and increased susceptibility to domestic abuse for women. The researchers emphasised the necessity of addressing the systemic inequities that allow child marriage and its negative consequences.

In Tanzania, Raj et al. (2018) discovered that child brides were more likely to have an early and unwanted pregnancy, increasing their risk of obstetric difficulties, mother mortality, and infant mortality. The authors emphasised the urgent need for actions to guarantee young women's access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care. Erulkar and Muthengi's (2017) study in rural Ethiopia found that child marriage had severe mental health implications, including greater rates of sadness, anxiety, and suicide thoughts among child brides. The researchers emphasised the need to address the psychological and emotional well-being of girls and young women harmed by this practice.

In Kenya, a research by Kobia et al. (2020) found that child marriage had a significant influence on girls' educational achievement, with many compelled to leave out owing to the obligations of marriage and early childbirth. The authors advocated for interventions that prioritise girls' access to excellent education as a critical strategy for preventing and mitigating the effects of child marriage. Across these varied African contexts, empirical data consistently shows that child marriage has a negative impact on the physical, emotional, educational, and socioeconomic well-being of girls and young women. The research emphasises the significant and long-term implications of this damaging practice, highlighting the importance of treatments that prioritise child brides' rights, empowerment, and holistic development.

Coming closer to home, a comprehensive review of the empirical data in Zimbabwe also demonstrates that child marriage has a disastrous effect on the physical, emotional, and socioeconomic well-being of girls and young women. Muthengi and Erulkar (2017) discovered that child brides in rural Zimbabwe are more likely to experience intimate partner violence, have limited decision-making power within their households, and are at a higher risk of adverse reproductive health outcomes such as early pregnancy and maternal mortality. The researchers emphasised the urgent need for comprehensive interventions to protect the rights and well-being of the country's underage brides. Similarly, Moyo and Ncube's (2019) study in the urban context of Bulawayo demonstrated the increased susceptibility of child brides to domestic abuse, poor mental health, and restricted access.

Bengesai, Amusa, and Makonye (2021) conducted a recent study in Zimbabwe that gives solid evidence of the negative impact of child marriages on girls' scholastic achievement. Using propensity score analysis, the researchers discovered that females who married before the age of 18 were considerably less likely to finish the first cycle of secondary school than their classmates who did not marry as minors. The report highlights the significant hurdles that child brides confront in reaching their educational ambitions. According to Bengesai et al. (2021), the obligations of early marriage, motherhood, and home responsibilities frequently cause females to drop out of school early, preventing them from reaching their full academic and intellectual potential. This has far-reaching ramifications for the females' future development prospects.

Mbaradza (2019) provides a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic causes and effects of child marriages in Mutasa District, Zimbabwe. The research offers valuable insights into the profound and multifaceted impact of this harmful practice on the lives of women in the region. The study found that child brides in Mutasa District faced a heightened risk of intimate partner violence, sexual and reproductive health challenges, and limited decision-making power within their households. Mbaradza (2019) emphasizes that the child marriage phenomenon often traps young women in cycles of poverty, as they are denied access to education and economic opportunities, further entrenching their vulnerability and dependence. The researcher also highlights the significant mental health consequences of child marriage, with child brides experiencing higher rates of depression, anxiety, and feelings of powerlessness.

2.5 Effectiveness of existing interventions and policies towards ending early child marriages prevalence

The frequency of child marriage in Zimbabwe is a chronic concern, despite the availability of many interventions and regulatory frameworks targeted at combating this detrimental practice. An assessment of empirical research yields conflicting findings, emphasising the need for a more complete and context-sensitive approach. Chigona and Mafa (2018) investigated the efficacy of community-based initiatives in Mashonaland West Province, Zimbabwe. The researchers discovered that, while these programs were effective in raising awareness and mobilising local support, they frequently lacked the resources and long-term commitment required to create long-term change. The authors emphasised the necessity of increasing the ability and coordination of community-based organisations in order to improve the effectiveness of their initiatives.

In contrast, a randomized controlled trial by Muthengi and Erulkar (2017) in rural Zimbabwe demonstrated the potential of skills-development programs for girls in delaying child marriage. The researchers found that participants in the intervention group were less likely to marry as children compared to the control group, highlighting the value of holistic approaches that empower girls and address the underlying drivers of the practice. Turning to the policy landscape, a study by Chirawu and Dube (2021) explored the implementation of Zimbabwe's Child Marriage Prohibition Act. The researchers found that while the legislation provided a legal framework to address child marriage, its enforcement was hampered by persistent cultural norms, limited awareness among community members, and inadequate resource allocation for implementation. The authors stressed the need for a multi-stakeholder approach that aligns legal reforms with comprehensive social and economic interventions.

Bengesai et al. (2021) investigated the influence of education by conducting a propensity score analysis in Zimbabwe and discovered that females who married as children were much less likely to finish the first cycle of secondary education. This highlights the vital need of maintaining continuous access to quality education as a strategy for preventing and mitigating the effects of child marriage. In a similar study, Moyo and Ncube (2019) investigated the socio-cultural variables that influence child marriage in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. The researchers emphasised the need of treatments that address the deeply ingrained gender norms and power dynamics that allow this practice to persist, particularly in urban contexts.

Hodzi (2019) investigated the contextual elements that influence child marriage practices in Zimbabwe, highlighting the importance of patriarchal systems, poverty, and a lack of economic prospects for girls and young women. The author advocated for a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder strategy that addresses the underlying socioeconomic and cultural causes of child marriage. Turning to the interaction of gender and ethnicity, Dhemba and Dhemba (2017) discovered that child marriage disproportionately affected the Ndebele ethnic group in Zimbabwe's Tsholotsho District. The researchers emphasised the need of creating culturally responsive strategies that involve a varied range of community stakeholders in order to address the particular issues that marginalised groups confront.

Exploring the impact of digital technologies, Mashiri (2020) investigated the influence of social media on adolescent sexual and reproductive health in Zimbabwe. The findings suggest that while digital platforms can serve as valuable information-sharing channels, they may also reinforce harmful gender norms and attitudes that perpetuate child marriage. The author

emphasized the need for tailored, technology-based interventions that promote positive youth development and challenge existing social and cultural barriers. Despite these varied interventions and policy frameworks, the literature reveals persistent gaps in their effectiveness. A study by Muchenje et al. (2021) in Bubi District, Zimbabwe, found that child marriage remained a prevalent issue, fuelled by poverty, gender inequality, and the lack of economic opportunities for girls and young women. The researchers highlighted the need for a more holistic, multi-sectoral approach that addresses the structural drivers of the practice.

Chigona and Mafa (2018) also stated that the success of interventions was frequently impeded by a lack of consistent finance and political will, as well as restricted participation of marginalised groups, such as child brides, in program design and execution. The researchers emphasised the importance of taking a more open and participatory approach to ensuring the relevance and success of anti-child marriage campaigns. To fill these deficiencies, Mashanda and Mbaradza (2021) advocated a multifaceted plan that includes legal reforms, community-based awareness campaigns, economic empowerment initiatives, and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care. The authors emphasised the need for a concerted, cross-sectoral effort to address the varied nature of child marriage and its repercussions in Zimbabwe.

2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter mainly focused on reviewing literature from previous studies on the causes of child marriages, effect of child marriages as well as effectiveness of current interventions against child marriages in Zimbabwe. It unpacked a number of factors contributing to the persistent occurrence of child marriages in the countries despite the efforts being made to curb the menace. The following chapter will be on research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section of the study mainly focuses on the methodology used to carry out the study in Bindura, District. The chapter presents the research design, research approach, and target population, sample size, sampling methods, data collection procedures as well as data analysis and ethical standards.

3.2 Description of the study area

This study was carried out in Bindura District, mainly targeting urban dwellers in Chipadze, one of the oldest locations. Bindura District is characterized by a diverse socio-economic landscape, serving as a hub of various commercial and industrial activities. Chipadze, in particular, is a densely populated urban setting with a prevue of social challenges, including the persistent prevalence of child marriage. The area's socio-economic dynamics, such as poverty, limited educational and employment opportunities, and the presence of entrenched cultural norms, create an environment that is conducive to the continuation of this harmful practice. Geographically, Bindura District and the Chipadze location are situated in a strategic position, with access to major transportation networks and proximity to the capital city of Harare. This positioning contributes to the area's vibrant economic activities, but it also exposes the community to various social ills, including the challenge of child marriage, which the current study seeks to investigate in-depth.

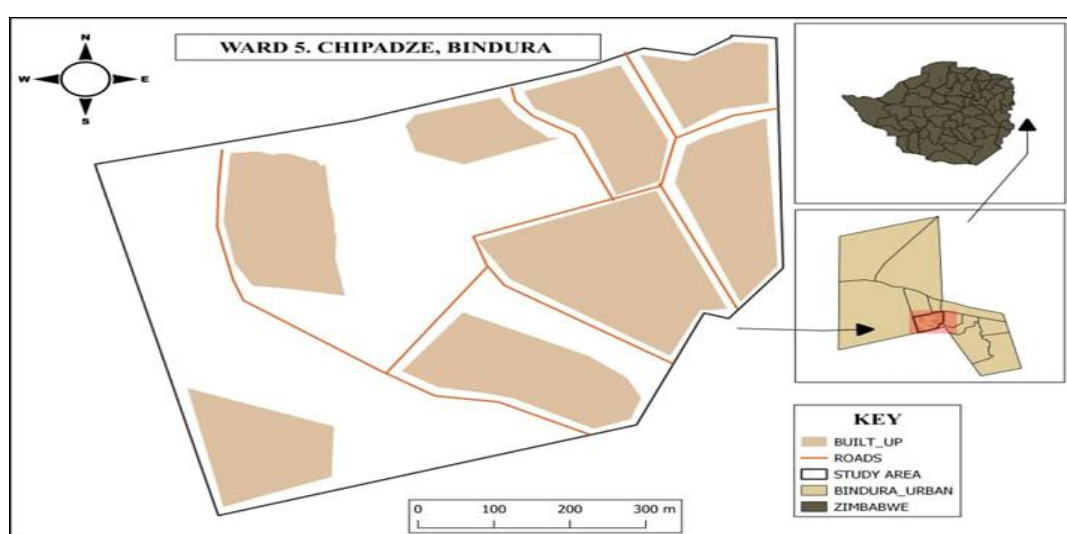


Figure 2: Map showing Chipadze, Bindura District in Zimbabwe [Source: Author]

3.3 Research Design

A qualitative case study research design was used. A case study methodology allows for a thorough examination of the phenomena in its real-world setting, offering a nuanced knowledge of the distinct socio-cultural and economic aspects that define the experiences of child brides in Chipadze (Yin, 2018). The case study technique is ideal for this study because it allows the researcher to collect rich, contextual data from a variety of sources, including interviews with child brides, their families, community leaders, and key stakeholders (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This comprehensive approach is critical for unravelling the complex web of issues surrounding child marriage, including underlying gender norms, economic vulnerabilities, and access to education and social services, all of which contribute to the detrimental practice's continuance.

Furthermore, a case study methodology enables the investigation of both individual experiences and wider systemic variables influencing child marriage in the Bindura District environment (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This method is consistent with the study's goal of studying not just the impacts of child marriage on the girls and young women themselves, but also how community-level interventions and policy frameworks might be used to address this pressing issue. Using a qualitative case study technique, the research can conduct in-depth, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and analysis of pertinent documents and archival materials to acquire a thorough knowledge of the child marriage issue in Bindura District.

3.4 Target population

The citizens of Chipadze, in Bindura District, Zimbabwe, will be the target group for this study on the impacts of child marriage, with a particular emphasis on girls and young women who have been married as children. According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), the target population for a research study is the precise group of persons, objects, or events that the researcher intends to analyse and from which the sample will be selected. This cohort is the major group affected by the phenomena being investigated, and it will give essential insights into the lived experiences and obstacles that child brides encounter in the research region. In addition to child wives, the research will speak with parents, traditional and religious leaders, community-based organisations, and local government officials. The research will be able to gain a thorough grasp of the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional elements that influence

the prevalence and impact of child marriage in the Bindura District context. Given the sensitive nature of the study, it is difficult to establish the total number of children who are married to quantify the total target population. Hence, the total population for this study will be treated as unknown.

3.5 Sample size

The sample size for this qualitative study will be 50 participants drawn from married young women/children, parents, government officials and religious leaders. In qualitative research, the sample size is the number of individuals or data sources included in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Unlike quantitative studies, which frequently depend on larger, statistically representative samples, qualitative research generally uses smaller sample sizes to allow for a more in-depth assessment of the topic under study. A sample size of 50 participants is deemed suitable and justified for the study on child marriage in Zimbabwe's Bindura District. This sample will consist of 20 married young women/children, 15 parents, ten government officials, and five religious leaders.

This diverse group of participants will provide a comprehensive understanding of child marriage from multiple perspectives, allowing the researchers to collect rich, contextual data and gain valuable insights into the lived experiences, socio-cultural dynamics, and institutional factors that shape this harmful practice in the Bindura District context (Palinkas et al., 2015). A sample size of 50 participants is adequate to reach data saturation, which means that no new topics or information emerge, assuring the validity and depth of the qualitative investigation (Saunders et al., 2018).

3.6 Sampling methods

The study will use snowball sampling to recruit married children into the study while purposive sampling will be used to select parents, government officials and religious leaders.

3.6.1 Snowball sampling

Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling approach that is especially beneficial for reaching out to underserved or marginalised people (Etikan et al., 2016). This sampling strategy entails the researcher first finding a few participants who match the study's requirements and then requesting them to suggest or introduce the researcher to additional possible participants who have comparable qualities or experiences. The snowball sampling strategy will be used to

recruit married young women/children for this study. Given the sensitivity of the topic and the potential vulnerabilities of child brides, this sampling method will assist research in gaining access to this difficult-to-reach population and developing the trust and rapport required to elicit their lived experiences and perspectives (Naderifar et al., 2017).

The study will begin by finding a few child brides in the Chipadze community, maybe through partnership with local community-based organisations focused on child marriage concerns. These first participants will be invited to refer the researchers to additional child brides in their social networks who may be willing to share their experiences and ideas. This iterative approach will continue until the necessary sample size and data saturation are met, resulting in a deep and thorough knowledge of the child marriage phenomena from the perspectives of people directly impacted by it.

3.6.2 Purposive sampling

In addition to the snowball sampling method used to enrol married young women/children, the study will use purposive sample to choose the remaining essential participants, such as parents, government officials, and religious leaders. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling strategy in which the researcher selects participants based on their distinct qualities or experiences relevant to the study issue (Patton, 2015). In the course of this study, the researchers will purposely locate and choose parents, government officials, and religious leaders who have direct knowledge, engagement, or influence over the issue of child marriage in the Bindura District and Chipadze community. This could include, for example, parents who have participated in or witnessed child marriage arrangements, local government officials working on child protection and gender-based violence issues, and religious leaders with the ability to influence sociocultural norms and practices related to child marriage.

3.7 Data collection methods

The study will use in-depth interviews with the married children, key informant interviews with parents, government officials and religious leaders as well as focus group discussions with both married children and key informants.

3.7.1 In-depth interviews for married children

In-depth interviews are a popular data collection method in qualitative research because they allow the researcher to engage in a rich, open-ended dialogue with participants, gaining a

thorough understanding of their lived experiences, perspectives, and the contextual factors that shape their realities (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). For the planned study on the impacts of child marriage in Bindura District, Zimbabwe, in-depth interviews with married young women/children would be the major technique of data collection. Through these one-on-one, semi-structured interviews, the researcher will provide a secure and trusting environment for child brides to disclose their personal narratives, problems, and coping methods related to their child marriage experiences. The open-ended nature of the interviews will allow participants to expound on the varied effects of child marriage, including the emotional, physical, and economical ramifications, as well as the hurdles they experience in obtaining help and services. By actively listening and probing for deeper insights, research can uncover the often overlooked aspects of child marriage, which can then be used to inform the development of targeted, evidence-based interventions and policy recommendations to address this critical issue in the Bindura District.

3.7.2 Key informant interviews

In addition to in-depth interviews with married young women/children, the project will collect data through key informant interviews. Key informant interviews are in-depth talks with people who have specialised knowledge, experience, or decision-making authority on the issue being investigated (Palinkas et al., 2015). The current study's major informants will include parents, government officials, and religious leaders. These players play critical roles in defining the sociocultural norms, legislation, and institutional responses that affect the occurrence and effect of child marriage in the Chipadze community. Through key informant interviews, the researchers will acquire useful insights on the drivers and perpetuation of child marriage, the gaps in existing support systems and services, and the possibilities for intervention and policy change.

3.7.3 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions are a qualitative data collection method that involves bringing together a small group of participants to engage in a guided discussion around a particular topic or issue (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The study will conduct two separate focus group discussions - one with the married young women/children and another with the parents. The focus group talks with married children will allow participants to express their experiences, viewpoints, and coping methods connected to child marriage. The group dynamic can develop a sense of

camaraderie and solidarity among participants, helping them to open up and explore the complexities of this delicate issue in a safe setting. Similarly, the focus group with the parents will provide important insights into the sociocultural norms, family dynamics, and decision-making processes that contribute to the continuation of child marriage in the Chipadze community. By conducting these group talks, the research may get a deeper, more contextual knowledge of the child marriage problem via the viewpoint of people directly impacted by it. This can supplement the individual perspectives gathered through the in-depth and key informant interviews.

3.8 Data analysis and presentation

This study used thematic content analysis to analyse the qualitative data from the primary data collection process. The research triangulated findings from the three research instruments. The research began by meticulously transcribing the audio recordings from the in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. These transcripts, together with any relevant field notes and observations, were categorised systematically to uncover emergent themes, patterns, and linkages in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To be more precise, the themes were further analysed through simple statistical methods like frequencies and percentages which were presented in charts and tables. The coding approach included both deductive and inductive strategies, allowing the researchers to investigate both pre-determined and spontaneously emerging topics about the child marriage phenomena and its varied consequences.

This in-depth thematic analysis enabled the study to generate a rich, contextual understanding of the child marriage issue in Bindura District, Zimbabwe, which can then be triangulated across the three data collection methods (in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions) to enhance the trustworthiness and validity of the findings (Patton, 2015). The research then presented the key themes, insights, and recommendations in a clear and compelling manner, using narrative descriptions, illustrative quotes, and visual aids to effectively communicate the study's important contributions to addressing the critical issue of child marriage in the Bindura District context.

3.9 Ethical considerations

This study will maintain confidentiality and informed consent to protect the participants in this research which is sensitive in nature.

3.9.1 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a fundamental ethical principle that requires the research team to protect the private information and identities of the study participants (Punch, 2014). In the context of this qualitative study on child marriage, confidentiality is paramount, because the topic is highly sensitive, and the participants, particularly married young women/children, are considered a vulnerable population. To protect participants' anonymity, the research will assign those pseudonyms or identification numbers, and all data collected, including personal information, interview recordings, and transcripts, will be securely stored and only accessible to the research team.

3.9.2 Informed consent

The research will obtain informed consent from all participants prior to their involvement in the study. The consent process will clearly outline the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and the measures in place to safeguard the participants' privacy and confidentiality. Particular attention will be paid to ensuring that the child participants fully understand their rights and provide assent to participate, with additional consent obtained from their parents or legal guardians (Miller & Boulton, 2007).

3.10 Chapter summary

This chapter focused on the research methodology which outlines the procedures taken in carrying out the study. The study will use a comprehensive qualitative research approach to acquire a thorough, contextual knowledge of this essential subject. The researchers will collect rich, complex data from the viewpoints of married young women/children, parents, government officials, and religious leaders via in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. The following chapter will be on data analysis and presentation.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presented data on the socio-economic factors which are contribution to the persistence of early child marriages in Chipadze, Bindura. The study collected data through qualitative methods on the social, economic and cultural factors which are contributing to persistence in early child marriages, the effect of such child marriages on victims and the effectiveness of existing interventions towards eradicating early child marriages in the study area. Due to the strengths of snowball sampling methods and purposive sampling, the study managed to reach out to all 50 targeted participants.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of interviewees

The study analysed data on the age of participants and academic qualifications as well as their period of residency in Chipadze area of Bindura District. Table 4.1 summarises the demographic characteristics of study participants including both child mothers and older parent mothers and religious leaders excluding the 10 government officials.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of participants (Frequency)

Age categories	10-15 years	4
	16-20 years	16
	>20 years	15
Highest Educational Level (Completed)	Primary education	6
	Ordinary level	19
	Advanced level	7
	Tertiary level	3
Period of stay in Chipadze	0-10 years	3
	10-20 years	17

The demographic data illustrated in Table 4.1 offers valuable insights into the characteristics of the participants who were involved in the qualitative research on child marriage in Bindura District, Zimbabwe. The age distribution of the participants shows that 16 out of 35 participants were between the 16-20 years age range, which aligns with the emphasis on the experiences of child mothers. The existence of four participants in the 10-15 years age group further strengthens the young age in which some girls are married off in the Chipadze community. On a contrary, the 15 participants above the age of 20 years represented the parents or guardians of the child mother, who were part of the sample to offer complementary views on the issue.

The study also assessed educational levels attained by the study participants and noted that majority (19 out of 35) of the participants have attained ordinary level during the time of study while only 7 participants had achieved at least advanced level and 3 having proceeded to tertiary level. Again, 6 participants had only primary level education signifying that early child marriages have an impact on educational opportunities for young girls. Moreover, the study also noted that the majority (17 out of 35) of participant have lived in Chipadze community for 10-20 years, with a further 15 participants having stayed in the community for over 20 years. This long-term connection to the local environment further increases the credibility and transferability of the study's results.

4.3 Socio-cultural and economic factors contributing to persistent early child marriage prevalence in Chipadze, Bindura

Socio-cultural and economic factors which are perpetuating early child marriages among girls in Chipadze have been assessed from both the child mothers, parent mothers and other key informants using in-depth analyses from interview responses.

4.3.1 Socio-cultural factors contributing to persistent early child marriage prevalence in Chipadze, Bindura

Numerous social and cultural factors were found to be still prevalent in the area of study, leading to continuous occurrence of child marriages. Table 4.1 offers a summary of themes established from interviewees who mentioned different socio-cultural and economic factors leading to a continued scourge of early child marriages.

Table 2: Socio-cultural factors contributing to persistent early child marriage prevalence in Chipadze, Bindura

Category	Factor/theme	N
Socio-Cultural Factors	Traditional gender norms that prioritize early marriage	18
	Lack of education and employment opportunities	21
	Intergenerational cycles of child marriage	25
	Drug and substance abuse in Chipadze	16
	Misconceptions on use of contraceptives at young age	23

The results shown in Table 4.1 offers a comprehensive synopsis of the major socio-cultural factors that contribute to the persistent occurrence of early child marriages in the Chipadze community of Bindura District, Zimbabwe. The research outcomes demonstrate that traditional gender norms prioritizing early marriage for girls, the lack of educational and employment opportunities, and the entrenchment of intergenerational cycles of child marriage are the most prominent socio-cultural drivers of this issue, with 18, 21, and 25 participants, respectively, citing these as significant factors. Moreover, the research findings also highlight the influence of drug and substance abuse and misconceptions surrounding contraceptive use, in perpetuating the practice of child marriage in this community. These complex socio-cultural factors interrelate to create an environment that continues to place young girls at risk of being married off at an early age as suggested by Bronfenbrenner (1979)'s ecological systems model (see section 2.2.1)

4.3.1.1 Traditional gender norms that prioritize early marriage

The findings from the study clearly show that traditional gender norms and expectations are a key driver of the persistent prevalence of child marriage in the area. As shown in the data, 18 participants cited the prioritization of early marriage and domestic roles for girls as a significant socio-cultural factor contributing to this harmful practice. One of the interviewees said;

“Chipadze is still highly traditional besides it being an urban suburb and girls are still being seen as caregivers in the society, this can make them feel mature enough to take care of families at a very tender age leading to early marriages...”

This implies that early child marriages are incentivized by how the community see these girls according to its traditional expectations. One of the young mothers highlighted that;

“I got married early because I wanted to make children while I am still young and as you know these days, men prefer marrying young women than those in their 20s as they think they would have gone through a lot in terms of sexual activities...”

Reading from what the child mother highlighted, it demonstrates that the society prioritizes marriage at a younger age than mature age. In such, men in the community would be pursuing younger girls for marriage. This aligns with existing research on the influence of patriarchal social structures and gendered socialization processes in perpetuating child marriage across many African societies. For instance, a study conducted in Uganda by Mutyaba (2011) found that deeply rooted cultural norms and beliefs that view girls as primarily suited for marriage and motherhood, rather than educational and economic pursuits, were a primary driver of the high rates of child marriage observed in the country. Equally, Parsons et al. (2015), in their review of the literature on the economic impacts of child marriage in sub-Saharan Africa, indicated that the perception of girls as better suited for domestic and reproductive roles than public life was a common thread across multiple country contexts, contributing to the continued prevalence of the practice.

4.3.1.2 Lack of education and employment opportunities

Limited access to education and economic opportunities for girls was also considered a significant contributing factor to the persistent prevalence of child marriage in Chipadze. As the research results revealed, 21 participants mentioned the lack of educational and employment prospects for young women as a key socio-cultural driver of this harmful practice. One of the interviewees indicated that;

“It is still notable that quite a number of girls in Chipadze community are dropping out of school, a situation which make them go into early marriages as they will be idle without any meaningful activities to be done...”

Young girls who are not going to school end up not seeing any prospects of getting employment on top of a general perception that there are fewer employment opportunities for them. One of the key informants also emphasized that;

“Many young girls still perceives that employment opportunities are still more for men than women, citing the dominance of men in the mining industry which is perceived to be better paying. This therefore, makes them see fewer reasons of self-actualizing themselves through education, Hence, choosing early marriage as an alternative to secure a future...”

This aligns with previous studies conducted in various African countries that have consistently identified the lack of educational and employment opportunities for girls as a key driver of child marriage. For example, a research by Muthengi and Erulkar (2011) in Ethiopia found that the limited access to schooling and economic opportunities for young women increased their vulnerability to being married off at an early age, as families often viewed early marriage as the most viable option for their daughters. Again, Gage (2013) in Ethiopia demonstrated how the lack of educational and economic opportunities for girls contributed to the high rates of child marriage observed across the country. This same could be the situation for Chipadze community where lack of schooling and employment opportunities are probably leading to persistence of early child marriages.

4.3.1.3 Intergenerational cycles of child marriage

The practice of child marriage has become deeply entrenched within the local context, with 25 participants emphasizing the perpetuation of these cycles across generations as a significant contributing factor. One of the parents highlighted that;

“Child marriage in this area has been there even in the past during our young ages, it is now something which is more or less normal. Our young girls grew up with it now they are also getting into it...”

This implies that young girls could be initiated into this practice through ecological systems factors where the nature of the environment shapes how girls behave. This also mirrors the experiences documented in other parts of Africa, where child marriage is firmly rooted in long-standing cultural norms and traditions, making it exceptionally challenging to disrupt. For instance, a study conducted by Sabbe et al. (2013) in Morocco found that the practice of child

marriage was so deeply embedded in the country's sociocultural fabric that it had become an intergenerational phenomenon, with families continuing to marry off their daughters at young ages despite the existence of legal frameworks aimed at preventing it. Similarly, Steinhaus et al. (2019) observed in their research in Uganda that the normalization of child marriage across multiple generations was a key barrier to addressing the issue, underscoring the need for comprehensive, multi-faceted interventions.

In addition, a research in Manicaland, Zimbabwe by Dube (2022) also emphasised the intergenerational nature of child marriage, with the practice often perpetuated within families and communities due to the entrenchment of cultural beliefs and traditions. This aligns with the findings from Chipadze, where the outcomes of the current study suggest that the cyclical nature of child marriage, passed down through the generations, has become a significant driver of the continued prevalence of this harmful practice. Undoing these deeply entrenched norms and traditions need a concerted, multifaceted approach that engages with the community at all levels, from individual households to broader societal structures, in order to effectively break these intergenerational cycles.

4.3.1.4 Drug and substance abuse in Chipadze

The research reveals that the prevalence of drug and substance abuse within Chipadze community is a contributing factor to the persistent child marriage practices observed in the area. As the findings indicate, 16 participants mentioned this as a significant socio-cultural driver, likely exacerbating the vulnerabilities of young girls and further undermining their agency. One of the child mothers narrated how she got into marriage at a young age;

“Honestly it was not planned! We went to a party and got intoxicated and that is how I lost control of everything. After realizing that I was pregnant, I had no option except moving in with him. The fortunate part is that he did not deny responsibility...”

This demonstrates that while under the influence of intoxicants, young girls usually lose alertness and men take advantage of that. In that context they end up falling pregnant and marriage comes into the picture. Chigiji et al. (2021) also found that the high rates of drug and alcohol use within certain communities in Zimbabwe were closely related to high incidences of child marriage, as the impaired decision-making and heightened exposure to exploitation associated with substance abuse made young girls more susceptible to being married off at an early age. Again, a 2022 report by the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency also emphasised

how the growing problem of drug and substance abuse (ZIMSTAT, 2022), particularly among youth in marginalized communities like Chipadze, was exacerbating the vulnerability of girls to child marriage, and underscoring the need for holistic, community-based interventions to address these interrelated challenges.

4.3.1.5 Misconceptions on use of contraceptives at young age

Findings from the research also highlighted that there are misconceptions on the use of contraceptives by young girls which is leading into marriages at a very young age. Despite the fact that young girls are engaging in sexual activities in their young age, there are still underlying misconceptions on the use of contraceptives to avoid early pregnancies which are leading to marriages. After asking her why she could not use contraception, one of the child mothers indicated that;

“We were told that using contraceptives like pills can affect your ability to make babies in future and it is difficult sometimes to control men over the use of condoms, asking him to use a condom makes you labelled as someone who is loose...”

It implies that, to some extent, the voice of young girls on their right to use contraception is still suppressed in cultural and societal norms. Mugweni et al. (2020) in Zimbabwe also found that deeply embedded cultural beliefs and taboos around youth sexuality, including the use of contraceptives, contributed to the unrelenting prevalence of child marriage in certain communities, as parents were often reluctant to provide their daughters with information and resources related to sexual and reproductive health. Similarly, Dunkle et al. (2019) in South Africa established how the stigma and misconceptions surrounding contraceptive use among adolescents contributed to restrict their agency and increased their vulnerability to early marriage and pregnancy.

4.3.2 Economic Factors contributing to persistent early child marriage prevalence in Chipadze, Bindura

The study further looked into economic factors which are contributing to the persistence of child marriages in Chipadze, Bindura. Table 4.3 illustrates the summary of findings in this regard.

Table 3: Economic Factors contributing to persistent early child marriage prevalence in Chipadze, Bindura

Category	Factor/theme	N
Economic factors	Poverty and financial insecurity within households	28
	Perceived financial and economic benefits of marriage	22
	Limited access to social safety nets	3

The findings in table 4.3 indicate that poverty and financial insecurity within households (28), the perceived financial and economic benefits of early marriage (22), and the limited access to social safety nets (3) are key economic drivers leading to continued occurrence of child marriages in Chipadze community.

4.3.2.1 Poverty and financial insecurity within households

The study found that poverty and financial instability within Chipadze households was the most prominent economic factor, with 28 participants citing this as a significant contributor to the continued prevalence of child marriage. One of the interviewees highlighted;

“Some of the girls are pursued by poverty out of their parents’ homes and they are left with lesser options than getting married, mostly to older men...”

This means that financial insecurity and poverty within households can make the home unwelcoming for adolescent girls who would be developing their choices over different things like fashion and other things. This aligns with existing research in Zimbabwe, which has consistently shown how economic hardship and the lack of financial resources at the household level can lead families to view child marriage as a viable coping mechanism (Mwansakombe & Chigunwe, 2020). In such circumstances, families may also perceive the dowry or bride price associated with child marriage as a means of alleviating their financial burdens, further perpetuating the practice.

4.3.2.2 Perceived financial and economic benefits of marriage

Findings in this study also demonstrated that girls are being attracted into marriage because of perceived financial and economic benefits of marriage. One of the child mothers confirmed saying;

“I thought my life would change through getting married into a better family, I grew up in a very poor family and things were not really well. When he proposed to marry me, I accepted without considering any alternatives...”

This shows that to her, marriage was perceived as a source for upgrading her life. Previous studies in sub-Saharan Africa have also found that the conviction that child marriage can provide economic security and social status for young girls and their families is a common driver of the practice (Wodon et al., 2017; Parsons et al., 2015). In the Chipadze context, these perceptions may lead young girls to prioritize the short-term financial gains of child marriage over the long-term educational and economic opportunities that could empower them and break the vicious cycle of poverty.

4.3.2.3 Limited access to social safety nets

The study also considered limited access to social safety nets an important driver to child marriages although it was mentioned by only 3 participants. The lack of comprehensive social protection measures can exacerbate the economic vulnerabilities that drive families to consider child marriage as a coping strategy. Research in Zimbabwe has shown how the absence of robust social safety nets, such as social assistance programs, child grants, and access to essential services, can leave impoverished households with few alternatives to mitigate the impacts of poverty (Mupedziswa, 2018). In such contexts, the perceived financial benefits of child marriage may become a more appealing option for families struggling to meet their basic needs.

Mwansakombe and Chigunwe (2020) also illustrated how limited availability of social protection initiatives, particularly in marginalized communities like Chipadze, contributed to the perpetuation of child marriage. They found that the lack of access to social safety nets, such as cash transfers and livelihood support programs, compounded the economic pressures faced by households, making them more likely to consider child marriage as a means of securing the financial well-being of their daughters. Addressing the gap in social safety nets and strengthening the social protection system in Chipadze and similar communities will be crucial in providing families with viable alternatives to child marriage, empowering them to make informed decisions about their young girls' futures.

4.4 Effect of child marriages in Chipadze Community

The study also investigated into the effect of child marriages in Chipadze community and established various themes from the responses which were given by participants. The themes which existed included perpetuation of poverty, health consequences, psychological trauma, disruption of education, physical and sexual abuse, and maternal mortality. Table 4.4 offers a summary of the findings of child marriages effects in Chipadze community using frequencies on data drawn from all participants.

Table 4: Effects of child marriages in Chipadze Community

Theme/Effect	Frequency (N)
1. Disruption of education	36
2. Physical and Sexual abuse	27
3. Health consequences	24
4. Perpetuation of poverty	17
5. Psychological trauma	16
6. Maternal mortality	9

Findings presented in table 4.4 offered an overview of perceived effects of child marriages in the study area.

4.4.1 Disruption of Education

Results from the study illustrate that the disruption of education is the most prevalent effect of child marriage in the Chipadze community, with 36 participants emphasizing this theme. This aligns with extensive research conducted in Zimbabwe and other parts of the world, which has consistently demonstrated how child marriage undermines girls' access to and completion of formal education (Raj et al., 2018; Koski et al., 2017). Some of the child mothers highlighted that;

1. *“Being married at a young age disrupted my education, I dropped out from school at form two...”*
2. *“I am a school drop out because of child marriage...”*
3. *“I could not finish my studies because of got married at form three...”*
4. *“My education was seriously affected, I could not finish school, I am only considering going back to school now, and I missed my opportunities...”*

Through looking at these victims of child marriage in the study area, it is quite agreeable that early child marriages disrupt education beyond reasonable doubt. A study by Dube et al. (2019) in Zimbabwe also found that child spouses were considerably less likely to complete secondary education when compared to their unmarried peers, as the burdens of early marriage and childbearing often forced them to drop out of school. In the same way, a global review by Wodon et al. (2018) exposed that child marriage was a leading cause of school dropout among adolescent girls, depriving them of the prospects for personal growth, skill development, and economic empowerment that education offers.

4.4.2 Physical and Sexual abuse

Twenty seven (27) participants cited the contribution of child marriages to physical and sexual abuse by their male counterparts. One of the key informants emphasized that;

“Children who enter into marriage expose themselves to abuse by abusive men as they will not have been fully developed to stand the pressure and resist abuse from men...”

This means that child marriage is viewed as an admittance into abusive situations in the event that the girl is married to someone who is an abuser. This has been supported by numerous studies in African countries which recorded high vulnerability on child mothers to various forms of gender-based violence (GBV). For instance Dunkle et al (2019) and Kidman (2017). A study by Manda et al. (2018) in Zimbabwe noted that child mothers were more likely to experience intimate partner violence, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, compared to their peers who married as adults. This amplified risk can be attributed to the power imbalances inherent in child marriages, as well as the lack of agency and negotiating power that young girls often possess within these relationships.

4.4.3 Health Consequences and maternal mortality

Participants also mentioned health consequences (24) and maternal mortality (9) as critical among the major impacts of child marriages in Chipadze community. One of the participants indicated that;

“Child marriages often result in health issues among the child mothers as they sometime give birth before their bodies become physically well-prepared for child-bearing hence, leading to health issues. In some worst cases, many child mothers die during deliveries or due to delivery complications...”

This shows that child marriage comes with serious health effects which can sometimes lead to death of child mothers during maternal processes. Scholars like Yaya et al (2019) and Ganchimeg et al (2014) documented some adverse effects of child marriage in Africa which include increased risks of sexually transmitted infections, obstetric fistula, and maternal mortality

Munjanja et al. (2016) in Zimbabwe noted that child mothers were more likely to suffer from pregnancy-related complications, such as preeclampsia, eclampsia, and obstructed labour, because of their young age and physical immaturity. These problems can have severe, long-lasting consequences on the health and well-being of both the child bride and her offspring. Moreover, a systematic review by Raj and Boehmer (2013) across multiple African nations also exposed that children who married early were at a higher risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, often because of the power imbalances and lack of negotiating ability within their marital relationships. This increased exposure to infectious diseases can further exacerbate the health challenges faced by child brides and their families.

4.4.4 Perpetuation of poverty

Findings also underscored that with disrupted access to education, early child marriages can further perpetuate poverty in areas like Chipadze. One of the participants emphasized that;

“...dropping out from school can cause the girls to be again in poverty in future as they will be less empowered to self-sustain their welfare...”

This finding is in line with the extensive body of research on the linkages between child marriage and the entrenchment of poverty, both at the individual and community levels (for example, Wodon et al., 2017; Parsons et al., 2015). Researches carried out in Zimbabwe have

demonstrated how child marriage can deprive young girls of educational and economic opportunities, limiting their ability to acquire the skills and resources necessary to break the cycle of poverty (Dube et al., 2019; Mwansakombe & Chigunwe, 2020). The early transition into marriage and childbearing often forces child brides to drop out of school, denying them the chance to pursue viable livelihoods and become financially independent. This, in turn, can perpetuate the poverty of the family and have intergenerational consequences, as the children of young mother are also more likely to experience economic deprivation.

4.4.5 Psychological Trauma

Findings also highlighted that young women in Chipadze experience psychological trauma due after getting into marriage at a young age. Dube et al (2018) noted that child mothers were at a considerably higher risk of developing mental health disorders, such as depression and anxiety, compared to their peers who married as adults. The forced transition into adulthood, the loss of childhood, and the power imbalances inherent in child marriage often comes with profound psychological effects on young girls, resulting feelings of isolation, helplessness, and trauma (Kidman, 2017).

Steinhaus et al. (2019) across multiple African countries also highlighted that children who got into marriage at young age were more likely to experience post-traumatic stress disorder, with the severity of symptoms often connecting with the age at which they were married. This psychological distress can have far-reaching consequences, negatively affecting the young women's ability to form healthy relationships, make autonomous decisions, and engage in personal and professional development. Hence, addressing this challenges requires a deeper look into these factors.

4.5 Effectiveness of existing interventions and policies towards ending early child marriages prevalence in Chipadze

The study also analysed the effectiveness of existing interventions and policies aimed at eradicating early child marriages in Chipadze which include awareness campaigns and community engagement programs and enforcement of legislative frameworks

4.5.1 Awareness campaigns and community engagement programs

The study significantly noted that at the time of study awareness campaigns and community engagement programs were less effective in the community. One of the participants indicated that;

“These days we are not seeing any organizations coming to educate young girls and adolescents on the dangers of child marriages like they used to do...”

Another key informant also highlighted that;

“We are not seeing any effective campaigns these days, the NGOs which used to come and do campaigns are not very much visible these days...”

This means that there is less activity in terms of awareness campaigns in the study area, a situation which might be causing early child marriage to continue increasing. Another key informant also highlighted that even when the awareness campaigns are active, they have not been very effective in eradicating early child marriages.

This aligns with existing research, which has highlighted the critical importance of sustained, community-based awareness efforts in addressing the root causes of child marriage. A study by Muthengi and Erulkar (2011) in Ethiopia found that interventions that combined community sensitization, girls' empowerment programs, and access to social support services were more effective in delaying marriage among disadvantaged rural girls, compared to standalone awareness campaigns. Similarly, a review by Chandra-Mouli et al. (2018) across multiple countries highlighted the need for multilevel, multi-sectoral approaches that engage a wide range of stakeholders, including community leaders, religious authorities, and young people themselves, in order to challenge the deeply entrenched social norms and power dynamics that perpetuate child marriage. However, this community seem to be lacking these campaigns hence, increased prevalence of child marriages.

As noted from one of the key informants in the Chipadze community, *even when awareness campaigns are active, they have not been very effective in eradicating early child marriages.* This emphasises the complex, multifaceted nature of the issue and the need for a more comprehensive, tailored approach that addresses the broader socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional factors contributing to the persistence of this harmful practice. Strengthening the effectiveness of awareness campaigns and community engagement efforts in Chipadze will require a transformed focus on developing context-specific, evidence-based interventions that

engage a diverse range of stakeholders, empower young people to make informed choices, and address the underlying drivers of child marriage within the community.

4.5.2 Enforcement of legislative frameworks

The research also assessed the effectiveness of legislation enforcement processes in the study area, especially looking at the prosecution of perpetrators of human rights violation through marrying or marrying off children. Participants highlighted that law enforcement is somehow not really effective in restricting men and parents from engaging in child marriages. One of the parents indicated that;

“Parents do not report cases of child marriages because they fear being left with the burden of taking care of the grandchild, hence, child marriage cases end up being resolved at family level...”

Another key informant also said;

“We have seen many cases of child marriages but very few cases have been prosecuted by the police, this means that law enforcement is not very strict towards ending this challenge...”

This illustrates some existing gaps within the legislative enforcement processes hence, further pushing child marriage cases upwards. This resonates well with a research by Malhotra and Elnakib (2021), who found that weak implementation and enforcement of laws, coupled with pervasive social norms, often hamper the effectiveness of legal interventions against child marriage.

A study by Vogelstein (2013) in Sub-Saharan Africa also emphasized the need for robust monitoring and accountability systems to ensure that anti-child marriage laws are consistently applied and that perpetrators face meaningful consequences. Addressing the gaps in legislative enforcement in Chipadze needs a multi-pronged approach that involves strengthening the capacity of law enforcement agencies, raising awareness among community members about their rights and reporting mechanisms, and fostering greater collaboration between the formal justice system and traditional dispute resolution mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of existing laws and policies.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a comprehensive analysis of the data collected through qualitative methods on the factors contributing to the persistent prevalence of child marriage in the Chipadze community of Bindura District, Zimbabwe. The research outcomes demonstrated a complex interplay of socio-cultural and economic drivers that continue to perpetuate this harmful practice, containing deeply entrenched traditional gender norms, lack of educational and employment opportunities for girls, intergenerational cycles of child marriage, substance abuse, and misconceptions surrounding contraceptive use. The next chapter will be on summary and conclusions.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of key findings on the factors contributing to the persistent prevalence of child marriages among adolescent girls in Chipadze Bindura as well as the effects of this problem and effectiveness of current interventions for ending child marriages. The chapter also provides conclusions and recommendations from the research findings.

5.2 Summary of key findings

The research findings presented a comprehensive overview of the complex socio-cultural and economic factors that contribute to the persistent prevalence of child marriage in the Chipadze community of Bindura District, Zimbabwe. The key socio-cultural drivers include deeply entrenched traditional gender norms that prioritize early marriage for girls, the lack of educational and employment opportunities, the intergenerational cycles of child marriage, the influence of drug and substance abuse, and the prevailing misconceptions surrounding contraceptive use by young girls. On the economic front, the study identified poverty and financial insecurity within households, the perceived financial and economic benefits of early marriage, and the limited access to social safety nets as prominent factors perpetuating this harmful practice. These multifaceted, interrelated drivers create an environment that continues to place young girls in Chipadze at heightened risk of being married off at an early age, underscoring the need for a comprehensive, community-based approach to address the root causes of child marriage and empower adolescent girls to make informed choices about their futures.

Furthermore, the study findings also shed light on the wide-ranging and devastating effects of child marriage on girls in the Chipadze community. The most noticeable effect was the disruption of education, with numerous participants emphasizing how child marriage forced young girls to drop out of school, taking away their opportunities for personal growth, skill development, and economic empowerment that education provides. In addition, participants also mentioned the heightened vulnerability of child mothers to physical and sexual abuse within their marriages, a consequence of the inherent power imbalances and lack of agency that young girls often face.

The research also highlighted the serious health consequences of child marriage, including increased risks of sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy-related complications, and even maternal mortality. Furthermore, the findings underscored how child marriage can perpetuate cycles of poverty, both for the individual girl and her family, as the disruption of education and the inability to pursue viable livelihoods traps them in economic deprivation. The study as well revealed the several psychological trauma experienced by children who get into marriage at an early stage, who often grapple with feelings of isolation and many others. These distressing effects emphasise the urgent need for comprehensive, multi-sectoral interventions to protect the rights and well-being of adolescent girls in Chipadze and similar communities.

Awareness campaigns and community engagement programs together with enforcement of legislations have been less effective, with participants reporting a decrease in the visibility and impact of such initiatives in recent times. Even when present, the campaigns have not been very successful in eradicating the practice of child marriage. This emphasized that there is a critical need for strengthened coordination and collaboration among various stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, religious and traditional leaders, and the community at large, to develop and implement a coherent, multifaceted strategy to address the root causes of child marriage in Chipadze.

5.3 Conclusions

This study offers valuable insights for both policy and practice on the factors leading to persistent prevalence of child marriages in Chipadze community of Bindura District. The study has clearly demonstrated the complex, multifaceted nature of the factors behind child marriage in the context of communities like Chipadze, Bindura. The rooted traditional gender norms, lack of educational and economic opportunities for girls, intergenerational cycles of the child marriage, and other socio-cultural and economic factors give birth to an environment that carry on to place young girls at heightened risk of being married off at an early age. The study thus concludes that there is an urgent need for a holistic, community-based approach that tackles the root causes of child marriage, rather than relying on piecemeal interventions. Furthermore, the research has led to the conclusion that is still existence of devastating effects of child marriage, including the disruption of education, heightened vulnerability to physical and sexual abuse, serious health consequences, perpetuation of poverty, and profound psychological trauma experienced by child mothers in communities like Chipadze Bindura. Again, the

situation is being persuaded by shortcomings within the existing mechanisms for reducing child marriages in such Zimbabwean communities.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the results, the study suggested numerous recommendations to policy makers, and recommendation for future studies.

5.4.1 Policy recommendations

The study highlighted significant gaps in the enforcement of existing laws and policies, such as the Child Marriage Act of 2016, which prohibit child marriage. Policymakers should work to enhance the capacity of law enforcement agencies, simplify reporting procedures, and establish robust monitoring and accountability systems to ensure the consistent application of these legal frameworks. This should be complemented by efforts to sensitize traditional and religious leaders, as well as community members, about their rights and responsibilities under the law.

Given the study's findings on the lack of educational and employment prospects as a key driver of child marriage, policymakers should prioritize investments in improving the accessibility, affordability, and quality of educational institutions, vocational training programs, and livelihood support initiatives targeting adolescent girls. This should be coupled with efforts to address gender norms and biases that limit girls' access to these critical opportunities.

When looking at the complex, interconnected nature of the factors driving child marriage, policymakers should facilitate the development of comprehensive, multi-stakeholder strategies that bring together diverse government agencies, civil society organizations, community leaders, and young people themselves. This coordinated, cross-sectoral approach is crucial to addressing the root causes of child marriage and ensuring the sustainability of interventions.

5.4.2 Recommendation for future studies

While this study has provided valuable insights into the socio-cultural and economic drivers as well as the devastating impacts of child marriage on girls, it is equally important to understand the roles, attitudes, and decision-making processes of the male counterparts who perpetuate this harmful practice. Future research should seek to unpack the complex gender dynamics, power structures, and social norms that shape the behaviour and choices of boys and men in

relation to child marriage. This could involve in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and community-based participatory research approaches that engage directly with young men, husbands of child mother, traditional and religious leaders, and other influential male stakeholders.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter provided a summary of key findings as well recommendations informed by the study results. The study in general established that child marriages in Chipadze community remain a persistent issue despite efforts to address such challenges by different authorities. There is a need to address the pervasive and persistent driver of child marriage in communities like Chipadze in order to put this problem to a halt.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Objective 1: To assess the social, economic and cultural factors contributing to persistent early child marriages prevalence in Chipadze, Bindura District.

1. What are the key socio-cultural norms, beliefs, and practices that contribute to the high prevalence of child marriage in the Chipadze community?
2. How do economic factors such as poverty, household financial insecurity, and limited livelihood opportunities shape the decision-making around child marriage in this context?
3. What are the intergenerational and community-level dynamics that perpetuate the cycle of child marriage in Chipadze?

Objective 2: To examine the effect of child marriages in Chipadze, Bindura District.

4. How does child marriage disrupt the educational trajectories and personal development of young girls in Chipadze?
5. What are the physical, mental, and reproductive health consequences experienced by child brides in the community?
6. In what ways does child marriage trap girls and their families in cycles of poverty and deprivation?

Objective 3: To evaluate the effectiveness of existing interventions and policies towards ending early child marriages prevalence in Chipadze, Bindura District.

7. What legislative and policy frameworks are in place to address child marriage in Zimbabwe, and how effectively are they being implemented in Chipadze?
8. To what extent have community-based awareness campaigns, engagement programs, and support services been successful in reducing the prevalence of child marriage in the Chipadze community?
9. What are the key gaps and challenges in the current approaches to tackling child marriage, as perceived by various stakeholders in Chipadze?
10. Overall, how effective are these interventions and policies towards eradicating child marriages

APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Introduction (10 minutes)

- Welcome participants and provide an overview of the purpose of the focus group discussion.
- Emphasize the importance of open and respectful dialogue, and establish ground rules for the session.
- Obtain informed consent from participants and ensure confidentiality.
- Encourage participants to introduce themselves (name, age, role in the community).

Perceptions and Understanding of Child Marriage (20 minutes)

- Initiate a discussion on the participants' general understanding and perceptions of child marriage in the Chipadze community.
- Explore the common beliefs, norms, and cultural practices that contribute to the acceptance of child marriage.
- Encourage participants to share personal experiences or observations related to child marriage.

Drivers of Child Marriage (30 minutes)

- Facilitate a discussion on the key social, economic, and cultural factors that drive the persistent prevalence of child marriage in Chipadze.
- Probe into the role of traditional gender norms, lack of educational and economic opportunities for girls, poverty, and other contextual influences.
- Encourage participants to provide concrete examples and anecdotes to illustrate these factors.

Impact of Child Marriage (20 minutes)

- Discuss the various effects of child marriage on the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of young girls in the community.

- Explore the consequences on their education, health, and economic prospects, as well as the broader impact on families and the community.
- Invite participants to share their observations and personal experiences or stories related to the impacts of child marriage.

Interventions and Policies (10 minutes)

- Assess the participants' awareness and understanding of existing laws, policies, and community-based initiatives aimed at addressing child marriage.
- Gather feedback on the effectiveness and accessibility of these efforts from the community's perspective.
- Elicit suggestions for more impactful and sustainable interventions to end child marriage in Chipadze.

Community Engagement and the Way Forward (20 minutes)

- Discuss the role of parents, traditional and religious leaders, and the broader community in preventing child marriage.
- Identify strategies for mobilizing and empowering the community to address this issue.
- Encourage participants to share their vision and hopes for the future of young girls in the Chipadze community.

Closing (5 minutes)

- Summarize the key points discussed and thank the participants for their valuable contributions.
- Provide information on available support services and resources related to child marriage.
- Allow for any final questions or additional thoughts from the participants.

TOTAL TIME: 1 HOUR 55 MINUTES