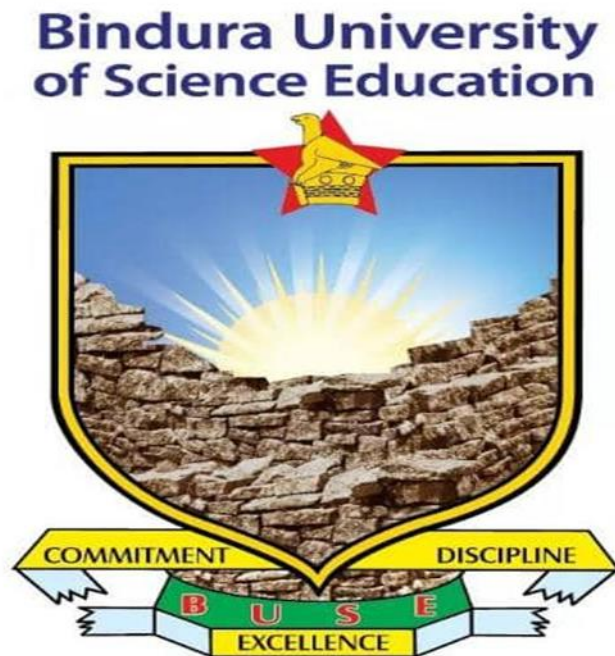


BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING



DEPATMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**The Role Of Ngos In Reducing Child Marriage And Poverty In Rural. A Case Study Of
Mutoko Rural**

BY

TATENDA S. SHERENI B201126B

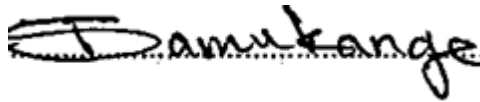
**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE
EDUCATION IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE
BACHELOR SCIENCE HONOURS DEGREE IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES.**

MAY 2024

APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read and recommended to Bindura University of Science Education for acceptance of a project entitled **“THE ROLE OF NGOS IN REDUCING CHILD MARRIAGES AND POVERTY IN RURAL. A CASE STUDY OF MUTOKO RURAL”** submitted by **B201126B** in partial fulfilment of requirements of the Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Development Studies.

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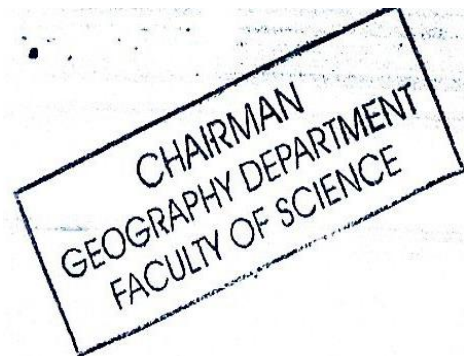
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DECLARATION

I, **Tatenda S Shereni B201126B** hereby declare that this project is my own original work and that it has not been copied or lifted from any other source without acknowledgement.

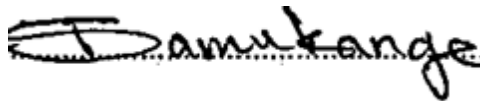
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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this study to my dear mother, Mrs. Shereni, your unwavering support, endless encouragement, and selfless sacrifices have been the foundation upon which I have been able to pursue my dreams. To my beloved sister, Tanaka Shereni, your unwavering sisterly bond and steadfast belief in my abilities have buoyed me throughout this journey. And to my dear cousin, Nathan Jimu, your inquisitive mind, intellectual curiosity, and thoughtful guidance have been a gift.

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ABSTRACT

The central focus of this study is to examine and analyze the involvement and impact of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in addressing these intertwined issues, child marriage

and poverty in Mutoko the rural. Child marriage and poverty are significant challenges that perpetuate a cycle of disadvantage and hinder social and economic development. The primary aim of this study is to review the underlying causes of child marriage and poverty and evaluate the effectiveness of various NGO-led programs in mitigating these issues within Mutoko Rural. Additionally, the study seeks to identify and analyze the challenges faced by NGOs in their efforts to reduce child marriage and poverty in the area. The research employed the ecological system theory considering the social-cultural, economic, and geographic factors influencing child marriage and poverty. The study was qualitative hence, the data from semi-structured interviews, key informative interviews, focus group discussions, and written text were analysed using qualitative data analysis approaches like thematic analysis. Convenience and purposive sampling were used as sampling techniques in the study, as the researcher was able to select participants who were easily accessible and had direct experience or knowledge in these areas, making the data collection process more feasible and efficient. The findings review that child marriage and poverty are interconnected problems, with child marriage often being driven by poverty-related factors such as limited access to education, economic opportunities, gender inequality, religion, harmful culture and traditions, and lack of social support systems. Consequently, NGOs have adopted a holistic approach to address these challenges comprehensively. They play a crucial role in tackling these issues by implementing multifaceted strategies that encompass advocacy, education, awareness campaigns, empowering girls with skills, and community engagement. However, challenges like limited resources, cultural norms, government policies, and resistance to change hinder the effectiveness of these programs. Therefore, the study suggests that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) develop and extend initiatives focused on reducing child marriage and poverty. To effectively tackle the issue of child marriage, these programs should adopt a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of the problem. Additionally, it is essential for the government to ensure that necessary resources are available and accessible to these programs, enabling them to reach a wider audience and have a greater impact

LIST OF ACRONYMS

SDG	Sustainable Development Goals.
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations.
HIV	Human Immune Virus

PI	Plan International Organisation
GWEN	Girls and Women Empowerment Network
IRC	the International Rescue Committee
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Global trends of early marriages have been increasing worldwide, with the majority of effects and impacts being felt in developing nations like Africa. In Zimbabwe, child marriages and poverty are persistent social issues that have a harmful impact on the well-being and development of individuals and communities. Mutoko rural, a region characterized by socio-economic challenges, grapples with high rates of child marriages and poverty. This study intends to analyse the role played by Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in addressing child marriage and poverty in Mutoko rural. This chapter provides an overview of the research topic, the background of the study, the problem statement, the objectives of the study and presents the dissertation structure that will guide the research.

1.2 Background of the study

Child marriage and poverty are persistent challenges that affect millions of individuals worldwide, particularly in rural areas. Child marriage is a cultural norm that has affected worldwide nations for decades, especially poverty-stricken countries. Child marriage is defined as the forced or compelled marriage of a child before reaching the sexual maturity age of 18 years (UNICEF, 2023). Often, children who undergo coercion or are forced into such marriages are not both mentally and physically mature enough to enter such marriages (Steinhaus et al., 2019). Child marriage puts at risk the futures and lives of girls and women all over the world, depriving them of the power to choose their own life. It interrupts their educational process, making them more exposed to discrimination and abuse, and prohibiting full engagement in the economic, political, and social spheres of their lives (Lonchar, 2022).

Child marriages perpetuate a cycle of poverty by depriving young girls' social opportunities and economic independence, therefore resulting in limited prospects for personal growth and sustainable livelihoods. It subjects girls to sexual violence, risky pregnancies, and HIV as they have limited power in sexual decision-making (Chingwara, et al 2018). Young girls are unable to demand safe sex or participate in decision-making on matters such as the total number of children, prevention measures of pregnancies and diseases, and even child welfare due to age or fear of violence from their spouses, who are frequently older than them (Sibanda, 2011). Culturally, child marriage is presented as a social necessity, but in many instances, this amounts to socially sanctioning of sexual abuse and exploitation of the

children. The fact that the arrangement is accepted in society does not lessen the fact that a girl is intentionally subjected to sexual abuse and exploitation, typically at the hands of her parents and relatives (Lonchar, 2022).

Child marriages continue unabated in several societies despite global and regional agreements to safeguard girls against this harmful cultural practice. According to available literature, adolescent girls continue to be vulnerable to this type of human rights violation in several countries, including Zimbabwe (UNICEF, 2023). In many circumstances, teenage girls in rural communities with high concentrations of poverty are more vulnerable to coercion into early non-consensual marriages than in more affluent urban communities. This is supported by Abera, et al. (2020), who argued that rural areas have a high concentration of poverty which is a major drive of child marriage, and that they often have more traditional social norms that encourage child marriage. In most developing countries, child marriage is attributed to poverty, religion, cultural beliefs, gender discrimination, and lack of education.

Child marriage is still a pervasive issue that affects millions of girls worldwide, despite progress in the areas of economy, health, education, and the adoption of human rights instruments by most states across the world (UNICEF, 2023). Population growth raises the possibility of an unprecedented global number of child brides. Child marriage is deeply rooted in culture and religious practices, making it difficult to address through legal or policy interventions. Around 650 million women today were married before the age of 18, and UNICEF (2018) estimates that this number could increase to approximately 700 million girls by 2030. These statistics are concerning because they show how vulnerable adolescent girls are to child marriage, particularly those who live in rural communities. Child marriage is often gendered, with girls more likely than boys to be forced into an early marriage (Kurebwa and Kurebwa, 2018). Fatima (2023) notes that this practice is one of the most persistent signs of gender inequality in several African and Asian societies, and it mirrors social, religious, and cultural norms that promote gender inequality and discrimination.

The African continent has not been spared in terms of child marriages, six of the world's ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage are in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNICEF, 2018). This is supported by an early Human Rights Watch research (2015), which notes that 40 percent of girls in this region marry before the age of 18 than other nations. Without progress in preventing child marriage, the amount of girls will increase by fourfold by 2050, having Africa surpassing South Asia as the region with the most child brides in the world. Child

marriage continuation on the continent has hampered Africa's efforts to accomplish some of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Marriage before the age of 18 is common in many young women within Sub-Saharan Africa. In many regions of Africa, parents encourage their daughters to marry when they are still children, hoping that the marriage will benefit them both financially and socially, while also reducing financial constraints on the family.

In Zimbabwe, child marriage can be traced back to an earlier period when traditions such as "kuzvarirwa, kuripa ngozi, and chimutsamapfihwa" encouraged early child marriages (Gumbonzvanda 2015). A Girls Not Brides (2020) report claims that, 34 percent of girls mainly in rural areas in Zimbabwe are married before turning eighteen, and 5% get married before the age of fifteen, placing it among the four nations in southern Africa with the highest percentages of early marriages. This shows that child marriage is a significant problem in Zimbabwe. The country's current economic, social cultural practices and religious belief system have exacerbated the vulnerability of individuals and communities to child marriages. The child marriage rate in Mashonaland East province, where the study was conducted, is 42 percent which makes it one of the provinces with high rates of child marriage. Therefore, this study is going to assess the role played by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) like Plan International organization in reducing child marriages and poverty in Mutoko rural which is in Mashonaland East province.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in reducing child marriages and poverty in Mutoko rural.

1.4 Statement of the problem

Child marriage is an ancient phenomenon that raises global public health, education, development, and human rights concerns. It affects adolescent girls as much as any other demographic. Early child marriage has numerous negative consequences for girls, including gender-based violence, a lack of education, and sexually transmitted diseases (Fatima, 2023). Adolescent girls in rural communities are especially prone to child marriage (Mukambachoto, 2016). Marriage for adolescent girls is rarely negotiable in these usually underprivileged backgrounds. Parents or other community elders have the final say in decision-making; it is a cultural norm and expectation that girls cannot challenge (Wayomi et al., 2019). According to the Girls Not Brides (2020) report, girls are compelled to leave school to care for their 'new'

families. When their education is shortened, girls lose the opportunity to obtain the skills and knowledge required for a good career so that they can provide for themselves and their families, and they become socially isolated (Ellsberg et al., 2015). Despite efforts to combat child marriage and poverty, these issues persist in rural areas, necessitating further research and intervention.

1.5 Significance of the study

The study recognizes programs implemented by NGOs suitable not only in Mutoko, but also in other districts where child marriages and poverty are prevalent. The region of Mutoko Rural still faces significant challenges in terms of child marriages and poverty. What is particularly alarming is that the parents or guardians of these girls appear to be conniving with perpetrators throughout the process of child marriage. Child marriages perpetuate a cycle of poverty by depriving young girls of education and economic opportunities, while poverty itself drives families to choose early marriages as a means of economic survival (Lonchar, 2022). Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) programs have been implemented in Mutoko Rural to address these interconnected issues. However, there is a need to assess the effectiveness of these programs and understand their impact on reducing child marriage and poverty. Thus, there need to evaluate the role of NGO programs in reducing child marriages and poverty in Mutoko Rural and assess their effectiveness in achieving sustainable outcomes. By assessing the role of NGO programs in reducing child marriages and poverty in Mutoko Rural, this dissertation seeks to contribute to the existing knowledge on effective strategies to address these intertwined issues. The findings of the study can inform policymakers, NGOs, and other stakeholders in designing evidence-based interventions that empower individuals, promote gender equality, and foster sustainable development. Ultimately, the aim is to create a future where children are protected from early marriages and have the opportunity to break free from the cycle of poverty.

1.6 Objectives

- Examine causes of child marriage and poverty in Mutoko rural.
- Evaluate different NGO programmes implemented to reduce child marriage and poverty in Mutoko rural.
- To examine challenges faced by NGOs in the fight against child marriages and poverty in Mutoko rural.

1.7 Assumptions

1. NGOS plays a significant role in fighting against child marriage and poverty in Mutoko rural.
2. Poverty is the major cause of child marriages, although there are other causes like social culture and legal issues.

1.8 Delimitations

The research was carried out in Mutoko district, in Mashonaland East Province. The study focused on the role of NGOs, specifically looking at Plan International in reducing child marriage and poverty within this specific geographic area. The researcher used a qualitative research methodology to understand the experiences, perspectives, and perceptions of key stakeholders involved in the efforts to address child marriage and poverty in rural. This research study was guided by the ecological system theory. This allowed a more targeted investigation, taking into account the unique socio-cultural, economic, and geographic factors that influence the dynamics of child marriage and poverty in this particular setting.

1.9 Limitations

The researcher faced some hurdles in accessing some of the important information, as some key informants were wary of disclosing sensitive information fearing it would not be used for education purposes. In addition, some participants were hesitant to divulge all their experiences due to the sensitive nature of the topic. For the researcher to overcome all these obstacles, the researcher informed the participants that confidentiality would be strictly maintained so that they could be at ease. The researcher faced difficulties in making interview appointments with key informants because they usually have busy schedules. Nonetheless, the researcher conducted telephone in-depth interviews given the fact that they are a fast way to approach primary research.

1.10 Conclusion

Based on the above, it is clear that child marriages have long existed and continue to be harmful to the development of girls. This chapter consisted of the introduction, background of the study, justification of the study, research objectives, limitations, delimitation, assumptions, and definitions.

1.11 Definition of keywords

Child: A child is an individual who is under the age of eighteen years, as per the definition by Clark et al. (2022).

Child marriage: Child marriage is any marriage or informal union between a child under 18 years of age and an adult or another child, as defined by UNICEF (2023). Child marriage is when any child under the age of 18 is forced or coerced to marry early.

Poverty: Poverty is a condition of inadequate basic needs or minimum living standards, based on the definition by Adebajoko and Walter (2014).

Perpetrator: A perpetrator is an individual, group, or institution that supports or engages in sexual abuse, according to Susanto and Utari (2020).

Unwanted pregnancy: an unintended pregnancy refers to a pregnancy that was mistimed, unplanned, or unwanted at the time of conception, as per Mubangizi's (2020) definition.

1.12 Dissertation structures

Chapter one provides an overview of the dissertation, including the background, problem statement, research objectives, questions, assumptions, and structure.

Chapter two presents a literature review, synthesizing key themes and evidence on child marriage and poverty and the role of NGOs in addressing such issues.

Chapter three describes the research methodology, outlining the data collection, sampling, analysis, and ethical considerations.

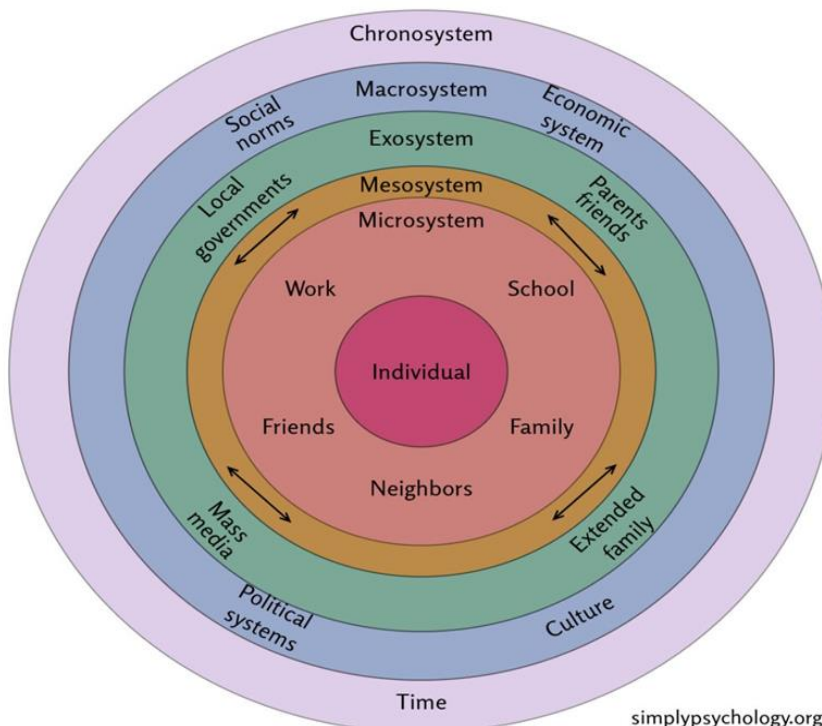
Chapter four presents the findings and analyses the role of NGOs in mitigating child marriage and poverty in rural areas, highlighting their impact and challenges.

Chapter five synthesizes the key findings, discusses their implications, and provides recommendations for future research and policymakers, emphasizing the importance of context-specific interventions and collaboration.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter assesses the impact of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in mitigating child marriage and poverty in rural areas. It will analyze the major factors that contribute to



early marriages and the challenges that NGOs face when trying to combat them. It highlights the Ecological System theory which helps in understanding child marriages and poverty and the sustainable way of solving these issues.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The researcher uses the Ecological System Theory created by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1974. The theory has a social perspective and looks at how a child's environment affects their development. This approach recognizes that multiple factors at the individual, family, community, and societal levels can influence child marriage. Bronfenbrenner's theory proposes that children live and develop within five different systems that interact with each other. These systems include the microsystem, which involves the child's immediate surroundings, the mesosystem, which includes the relationships between different environments in which the child operates, the exosystem, which consists of external

environments that indirectly influence the child, the macrosystem, which comprises broader cultural and ideological values, and the chronosystem, which involves the impact of time and historical context on child development. As shown in Fig 2.2.

Fig 2.2 Bronfenbrenner Ecological System Theory

Source:SimplyPsychology(2023)

Microsystems consist of the family, school, or community in which a child's parents can influence their behavior or views. The microsystem is the closest system to the child, encompassing the structures in which the child interacts directly. It includes a child's relationships with her immediate surroundings (Tafera et al., 2020). These interactions can be good or toxic, promoting or inhibiting transformation and progress (Langer and Lietz, 2014). Child marriage is affected by the family economy and the welfare status of the home. Economic instability and poverty foster a climate that is favorable to underage marriages. For example, when a family is poor, some parents may begin to regard child marriage as a method to preserve and alleviate the financial strain. Henceforth, some may arrange a marriage for their children so that they can get a dowry which can help to support the family (Abera, et al, 2020).

The mesosystem refers to the connections and interactions between different microsystems (Tafera, et al, 2020). In the context of child marriages, the mesosystem may involve the relationships between families, schools, religious institutions, and community leaders. The lack of collaboration and coordination among the systems can lead to the persistence of child marriage (Abera, et al, 2020). For example, the relationship between a child's family and community religious leaders. In some cultures, religious leaders may play a role in pressuring families to marry their children at a young age.

The exosystem encompasses external settings that indirectly influence individuals' lives. According to Ettekal, (2017), the exosystem may include government policies, legal frameworks, access to healthcare and social services, and economic opportunities. Limited

infrastructure and resources, weak enforcement of laws, and inadequate support systems can create an environment conducive to child marriages. The macrosystem examines the influence of societal norms, culture, religion, and patriarchal structures on the prevalence of child marriage, particularly among girls in rural areas. A misconception exists regarding the definition of adulthood, with some communities considering the onset of menstruation as the criteria for adulthood, leading to child marriage. Additionally, social and cultural beliefs dictate that when a girl is not married before turning 18, it will bring shame to her family (UNICEF, 2020). This reviews that social, cultural, and religious factors contribute to the practice of child marriage, particularly for girls living in rural areas. The chronosystem takes into account the extent of time and how development is impacted by changes across time (Zhu, 2023). The prevalence of the practice might vary depending on historical circumstances, societal advancements, and changes in public opinion toward child weddings.

Applying the Ecological Systems Theory to the issue of child marriages and poverty in Mutoko rural helps to understand the intricate interactions between individual, family, community, and societal factors that contribute to this issue. It underscores the importance of addressing the problem from a multi-dimensional perspective and implementing interventions at various levels to advance gender equality, education, economic development, and the empowerment of girls and women (Bank, 2017). Child marriage and poverty are deeply embedded in specific cultural, social, and economic contexts. Ecological system theory recognizes the importance of understanding these contextual factors and their influence on individuals and communities. By considering the macrosystem and chronosystem, the researcher can analyze how cultural norms, religious beliefs, legal frameworks, and historical factors shape the occurrence of child marriage and poverty in rural areas (Stark, 2018). This understanding is crucial for designing effective interventions that are sensitive to local contexts and promote sustainable change. Ecological system theory also helps identify potential points of intervention for NGOs. By examining the different systems and levels of influence, the researcher can identify the gaps, challenges, and opportunities for NGOs to address child marriage and poverty. This theory encourages a multidimensional and collaborative approach, involving multiple stakeholders, to create supportive environments and implement interventions that target individual, family, community, and societal levels. It goes beyond providing an understanding of the causes of child marriage, to explaining the consequences and proffering solutions to the problem at different levels of society.

2.3 Factors that contribute to the cause of child marriages and poverty.

2.3.1 Poverty

Poverty is a significant major cause of child marriage, particularly in rural areas, and it also intensifies the negative consequences and impacts of early marriage. The lack of economic resources restricts access to education, employment, and economic opportunities, pushing families facing poverty to view child marriage as a means to alleviate their financial burdens by transferring the responsibility of care and support to the husband's family. Fattah and Camellia (2022) emphasize the connection between poverty and child marriage, stating that where poverty exists, child marriage is likely to be prevalent. Poverty exacerbates the vulnerabilities of children and the economic burden on parents, making child marriage an appealing option for both parents and children themselves. The burden of poverty disproportionately affects girls and women, with parents often marrying off their daughters as young as twelve years old (Malhotra and Elnakib, 2021). Poverty plays a significant role in perpetuating child marriage globally. Girls are often raised with the expectation that they will eventually get married and transition to their husband's family, leading to limited investment in their education and development. This perception devalues girls compared to their male counterparts (Abera et al., 2020). Many African countries, particularly in rural areas, face high poverty rates, often accompanied by issues such as food insecurity, lack of essential services, and limited employment opportunities. These challenges push families to resort to child marriage as a coping mechanism (McMullen et al., 2023). In Zimbabwe, some girls choose child marriage as a way to escape poverty, while others are forced into it under the tradition known as "kuzvarira." Kuzvarira involves giving a young girl, sometimes from birth, to another family in exchange for food or livestock (Nguyen and Wodon, 2015). In rural areas, girls are seen as a source of wealth, leading families to readily give them away in marriage to raise funds for the male child and the family.

Poverty exposes children to transactional relationships, which may result in child marriage. In Zimbabwe, the concept of "sugar daddies" is described, in which older men seek sexual relationships with children and adolescents in exchange for money or commodities (Dzimbahwe, 2017). Parents may support transactional sex and relationships to secure family resources, even though such relationships frequently lead to child marriage, sexual assault, and teenage pregnancies.

2.3.2 Culture and Tradition

The other factor that contribute to child marriage include culture and tradition. Africa is an enormous diverse continent, with significant differences in cultural ideas and behaviors visible even in very small places. It is so difficult to speak of a singular 'African' culture. Nonetheless, Birech's (2013) study on child marriage and cultural health suggests that the majority of studies have found that culture is the primary factor for child marriage. According to *The Girls Not Brides* (2015), child marriage is still a common practice in many areas due to the long-standing custom of marrying girls when they reach adolescence. According to Parsons (2015:12), the practice has its roots in socio-cultural customs and religious beliefs in a variety of groups. Some communities view girls as property and use child marriage to settle disputes between families or as compensation for offenses. The belief in avenging spirits and the desire to avoid misfortune or death may also influence the continuation of practices like "kuripa ngozi," despite their illegality. Cultural misconceptions and the desire to protect a girl's sexuality are additional factors contributing to child marriage. In rural communities, girls are forced to drop out of school as soon as they start menstruating to limit their mobility and preserve their sexuality, as stated by Okonofua (2013). Engaging in sexual activities before marriage is often considered shameful for a girl and her family. The preservation of a girl's virginity is highly valued, leading parents to opt for early marriage preserve her innocence, and keep the family away from being disgraced. For instance, in countries like Kenya, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and the Gambia, child marriage is sometimes perceived as a means of protecting girls from being propelled into sex work (UNICEF, 2021). In these communities, when a girl turns 15 and is not married she may be considered flawed and an outcast, as it is believed that she will afflict her family with misfortune. The practice of child marriage is also driven by the belief that young brides are more easily controlled and have more years of fertility ahead of them, making them preferable to older men in some communities.

2.4.3 Gender inequality

Gender inequality is a significant cause, outcome, and contributing factor to child marriage. The undervaluing of girls and women and the disregard for their independence in making decisions is driven by social norms, expectations, and gender-based discrimination, as highlighted by McCleary-Sills and Parsons (2014). Many communities adhere to strongly

differentiated gender roles and family dynamics that disadvantage women, which may have historical roots in conventions and laws from the colonial past, as well as the impact of widely practiced religions like Christianity and Islam. Women's social and economic positions are influenced both directly and indirectly by discriminatory statutory and informal laws, social conventions, cultural practices, and religious beliefs, increasing their vulnerability to child marriage compared to boys. Okonofua (2013) emphasizes that gender and social discrimination against girls largely drive child marriage. In numerous societies, women are marginalized and excluded from decision-making processes concerning the community, their family, and themselves. Traditionally, males dominate the family and hold power and authority over property, assets, and leadership roles. As a result, boys are given more social worth, which results in inadequate support for the general development, health, and education of girls. Girls are routinely subjugated by these societal injustices, which also make them vulnerable to underage marriage and other forms of social harm.

2.3.4 Lack of education

Education can significantly empower girls, enabling them to achieve economic and social independence and reducing their vulnerability to child marriage. This highlights why countries with lower levels of education tend to have higher rates of child marriage, and there is a consistent correlation between limited education opportunities and child marriage within countries (Ngema, 2021). Lack of education not only hinders children and their parents from understanding and claiming their rights but also perpetuates the cycle of child marriage in communities. This leads to intergenerational poverty and limited opportunities. When girls are taken out of school at the onset of puberty, they are deprived of the chance to acquire knowledge and skills that could empower them (Gemignani and Wodon, 2015). Talukder et al. (2019) demonstrate that the level of education directly influences the likelihood of early marriage. Women with secondary education or higher are less likely to enter into early marriages compared to those with primary education or no education, including literacy and numeracy levels. Various barriers hinder girls' access to education, including socio-economic factors like poverty and inadequate resources such as infrastructure. In Zimbabwe, for example, girls who consistently perform poorly in school are often forced into early marriages (Ngema, 2021). Henceforth, women from wealthier households are more than twice as likely to be literate than women from poorer households, and there is an interconnection between women's educational attainment and household income

2.4.5 Religion

Religion has a significant influence on child marriage practices. In countries with long-standing Islamic populations, Islamic scripture is interpreted by local customs in a way that allows and even promotes child marriage (Jisun, 2016). This is one of the main causes of the high rate of underage marriage in the region's relatively big Islamic-population countries. Reputable religious figures in these nations occasionally openly endorse child marriage and express strong hostility to initiatives that aim to prevent it. They believe that it is acceptable for a girl to experience her first menstruation while living with her in-laws. For instance, in The Gambia, where there is a large Muslim majority (95% of the population), child marriage is not widely seen as morally wrong or against the best interests of the child (Talukder, 2019). Similarly, in Malawi's Mangochi district, where Islam is prevalent, there have been reports of arranged marriages involving girls as young as 12 years old. Christianity is another religion where women are likely to marry at an early age. In Zimbabwe, the Johanne Marange Apostolic sect, guided by the Holy Spirit, believes that its members should not question the decisions made by prophets and elders. Consequently, girls belonging to this sect are often married off at a young age, depriving them of adequate education (Sibanda, 2015). In some regions, child marriage is even considered a rite of passage, symbolizing a girl's transition into womanhood, which leads to encouragement for young daughters to marry early.

2.3.6 Legal frameworks

The existing legal systems worldwide contain provisions that facilitate and even encourage child marriage. Child marriage is still common in Africa, which highlights the difficulties of introducing practical actions into compliance with "top-down" legal frameworks like international agreements and national constitutions. In Zimbabwe, for instance, the government has established legislative and policy frameworks to promote and protect children's rights (Sibanda, 2011). It has also aligned its legislation with international legal instruments related to child rights that it has authorized. However, despite these efforts, there are still gaps in effectively implementing and enforcing these laws and policies. This results in legal ambiguity surrounding child marriage, allowing it to occur without consequence (Bantebya, 2014). The status of two clashing laws within the same statutory legal system is another factor contributing to the legal uncertainty surrounding child marriage. For example, according to a report by the Centre for Human Rights (2018), while a nation's civil law may stipulate that 18 is the legal age of marriage, other sections of the same law may provide exclusive exceptions. In Malawi, for instance, despite the new Marriage, Divorce, and Family

Relations Act establishing the minimum age of 18, the constitution of Malawi allows minors between the ages of 15 and 18 to marry with parental consent, leading to legal ambiguity.

2.3.7 Inadequacy of registration procedures for birth and marriage.

A significant obstacle to preventing child marriage in some African countries, particularly in rural regions, is the absence of proper birth and marriage registration systems. Marriages that are not recorded or registered are widespread in Africa even though all marriages must be registered (UNICEF, 2021). In Africa, marriages are not correctly registered or documented for several reasons. The conditions and procedures for the required registration of all marriages are not specified by domestic legislation in at least six countries (AUC/UN Women, 2017). Furthermore, there is no regulation governing the registration of marriages performed under religious or customary law. Depending on the nature of marriage, marriage registries, and registration procedures differ in settings where several legal systems overlap. A variety of marriages are frequently governed by different, unrelated laws. These differences cause misunderstandings, improper registration, and eventually failure to comply with the registration requirements.

Furthermore, some regions of Africa lack birth registration protocols, which makes it virtually impossible to enforce the prohibition of child marriage. The most effective means to confirm that individuals are of legal age and capable of giving their informed permission for marriage is through birth certificates. According to the Fund for Global Human Rights (2024) report, the lack of birth registration is a factor in the occurrence of child marriage in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), especially in rural areas, as well as in Mozambique and Cameroon. The difficult reality faced by new mothers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in registering their newborns within the required 90-day period, especially for those living in remote areas and with limited resources, is said to have led to girls in the DRC, for example, turning to using forged birth certificates or electoral cards to get married.

The sparse and under-resourced civil registration offices, coupled with the requirement of bribes and lack of information for parents, contribute to the low birth registration rates. Additionally, the penalties and fees imposed for late registration, often lead parents to forgo registering their children if they are older than three months. Hence, this can lead to child marriages.

2.4 Effects of child marriage

Early marriage often disrupts young children's education, limiting their chances for personal development and economic independence. For girls who experience child marriage, their physical, emotional, and psychological well-being can be severely affected (UNICEF, (2016). Child brides may face higher risks of domestic violence, health complications related to early pregnancy, and limited decision-making power within the household. Their social networks and support systems may also be restricted, leading to isolation and increased vulnerability.

Child marriage and poverty can have adverse effects on families in rural areas. Families under financial strain frequently force their daughters into early marriages because they may consider it as a means of lessening their financial obligation (Malhotra and Elnakib, 2021). However, this perpetuates the cycle of poverty by limiting the educational and economic opportunities for both the child bride and her family (Webb et al. 2023). Child marriage and poverty in rural areas have broader implications for the community. When young girls are married off, it perpetuates the cycle of poverty by limiting their potential to contribute to the workforce and economic growth. According to Anand and Singh, (2015:1), “child marriage limits knowledge, skills, resources, mobility, autonomy and social support of young girls and those who lack this are extremely vulnerable to physical and sexual violence and psychological and economic abuse”. Moreover, child marriage restricts girls’ access to education, as it often results in them voluntarily or forced to withdraw from school.

2.5 The role of NGOs in reducing child marriage and poverty in Mutoko rural.

2.5.1 Awareness and Advocacy

NGOs work to increase public awareness of the detrimental effects of child marriage and poverty in rural areas. They raise awareness about gender-based violence and discrimination by advocating for the rights of girls and women. NGOs engage with policymakers, government officials, and other stakeholders to influence policy agendas and promote gender-responsive legislation (Mosedale, 2014). Through advocacy efforts, NGOs amplify the voices of marginalized groups, challenge discriminatory practices, and create an enabling environment for gender equality. This is supported by Sibanda (2011) who notes although legal reforms can be beneficial they may not always be successful because individuals are often reluctant to abandon long-standing customs and traditions. However, other strategies like awareness-building and conversation can be used to bring about a shift in these traditions. For instance, Save the Children implemented the "Marriage: No Child's Play" program in Bangladesh, which had a goal aimed at reducing child marriages through

awareness campaigns and community mobilization (Mosedale, 2014). The program engaged community members, parents, and religious leaders to raise concerns about the norms of society and support educational opportunities as well as the empowerment of young girls. It also provided economic support to families to reduce the economic pressures that often contribute to child marriage.

2.5.2 Capacity building and education

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are essential in combating child marriage since they carry out educational campaigns and capacity-building projects. These organizations empower girls, women, and communities through life skills training, vocational education, and entrepreneurship programs, enhancing economic opportunities and promoting financial literacy (Mosedale, 2014). Child marriage has a detrimental impact on girls' education as child brides often drop out of school, depriving them of the opportunity to complete their education. This significantly reduces their earning potential and perpetuates poverty cycle that affects both them and their kids (World Bank, 2018). However, research by Walker (2013) highlights that educating girls is a crucial tactic for putting an end to child marriage, as it provides them with greater freedoms and skills to challenge social and gender injustices they face. Education empowers girls and equips them with decision-making abilities that can help prevent child marriage. NGOs such as the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) in Zimbabwe have implemented initiatives to support girls' education and combat child marriage. CAMFED has built hostels near schools to ensure safe and accessible education for girls, and they provide financial assistance to girls to continue their education (Munosunama, 2018). Such programs have proven effective in empowering girls and reducing the likelihood of early marriage (Berliana et al., 2021). Similarly, CARE International implemented the "Tahani" program in Yemen, which focused on addressing child marriage and promoting girls' education through safe spaces, educational support, and vocational training opportunities (Care International, 2018).

One innovative strategy in the fight against child marriage is education. Girls with greater education are more likely to know their rights and fight for them, to marry later in life, and to produce children who are healthier and better educated. Studies have shown that increasing a girl's education by at least seven years delays her marriage by an average of four years (Enige in Chitempa, 2017). Capacity building and education empower individuals to challenge discriminatory practices, promote gender equality, and become agents of change within their communities

2.5.3 Community engagement

NGOs actively engage with rural communities to understand their unique needs and challenges related to child marriage and poverty. They foster community participation, encouraging dialogue and collaboration to design context-specific interventions. NGOs collaborate with local groups, parents, and leaders in the community to foster behavior change and trust to develop sustainable solutions (Verhulst, et al., 2022). One example that emphasizes community engagement is the "Mudzimu Nhinji" program, which is run by the organization Girls and Women Empowerment Network (GWEN) in Zimbabwe. This program works to engage local communities in discussions about child marriage and the harmful effects it has on girls and women. The program also aims to provide training and offer support to young girls who are forced to become child brides (Bisika, et al (2017). These initiatives encourage community members to actively participate in preventing child marriage. NGOs recognize the importance of engaging with communities to create sustainable and context-specific solutions. For instance, in Zimbabwe Plan International organisation has actively engaged communities to combat child marriage. Plan International facilitates community dialogues, conducts training programs, and establishes safe spaces for girls to discuss their concerns and aspirations (Plan International, 2020). By working closely with community members, NGOs gain insights into local customs, beliefs, and practices related to gender norms (Bisika, et al (2017). This understanding helps them build trust, develop culturally sensitive approaches, and ensure that interventions are accepted and supported by the community. Community engagement fosters ownership, collaboration, and collective action, empowering community members to change harmful cultural norms and advocate for gender equality from within.

2.5.4 Health and well-being services

NGOs focus on providing health and reproductive rights education and services to girls who face the threat of child marriage. They offer information on reproductive health, facilitate access to contraceptives, and assist in making informed health decisions. According to Chitempa (2017), these programs enable girls to make independent choices about their health and delay marriage until both are physically and emotionally prepared (Chitempa, 2017). For example, Pathfinder International introduced the TESFA program in Ethiopia, which sought to reduce child marriage and improve reproductive health outcomes. The project provides girls in rural communities' access to contraceptives, thorough reproductive and sexuality education, and counseling (Verhulst et al., 2022). NGOs also focus on tackling maternal and

child health issues, providing healthcare facilities and services to ensure the well-being of both mothers and their children (Gogate, 2019). NGOs recognize the unique health needs of girls and the critical importance of access to healthcare services. By offering healthcare services, NGOs contribute to reducing maternal and infant mortality rates, addressing reproductive health issues, and promoting overall well-being.

2.6.5 Economic empowerment

NGOs implement economic empowerment programs to alleviate poverty and reduce the likelihood of child marriage. They provide vocational training, microfinance support, and business development opportunities to girls and women, enabling them to generate income and become financially independent (Chitempa, 2017). These initiatives equip individuals and communities with the necessary resources and skills required to break the cycle of poverty and make informed choices about their futures. NGOs focus on economic empowerment programs that provide girls with skills training, vocational education, and entrepreneurship opportunities (Rumble et al., 2017). One such organization is the International Rescue Committee (IRC). The IRC's ENSURE project, which stands for Empowering Adolescent Girls through Education, Resilience, and Social Enterprise, works to empower young women by increasing the availability of education and job placement services and promoting social and economic empowerment. The project operates in the DRC and Rwanda. The International Center for Research on Women is a further example, it strives to empower women as well as girls through programs and research interventions that promote gender equality and economic empowerment. ICRW has programs in several countries, including Bangladesh, India, Kenya, and Uganda (ICRW, 2015). By equipping girls with marketable skills, NGOs enable them to secure decent jobs, start businesses, and become financially independent. Economic empowerment not only improves the girls' livelihoods but also has a positive impact on their families and communities by alleviating poverty and promoting economic growth

2.6.6 Challenge harmful gender norms

NGOs actively challenge harmful gender norms that perpetuate discrimination and inequality. They work to dismantle stereotypes, biases, and social expectations that limit the civil rights and opportunities of girls as well as young women (Muteshi and Ndhlovu, 2019). NGOs promote alternative narratives, emphasizing the value of gender equality and the benefits it brings to individuals and communities. Through awareness campaigns, community dialogues, and cultural interventions, NGOs challenge traditional norms and promote more inclusive and

equitable gender roles. Several NGOs have been working to challenge harmful gender norms to promote gender equality. One example is BRAC, a global development organization based in Bangladesh. BRAC has implemented several programs that aim to promote gender equality (Shaheen, et al 2023). Another example is Action Aid, an international charity that works with local partners to empower women and girls and promote gender equality (Verhulst, et al, 2022). They have implemented projects in many countries that focus on improving girls' education, providing women with economic opportunities, to ending violence against girls and women.

2.6.7 Legal support and protection

NGOs offer legal support and protection to individuals affected by child marriage and poverty. They raise awareness about existing laws and policies, provide legal counseling, and offer assistance in accessing justice systems (Parry, 2019). NGOs collaborate with law enforcement agencies, legal aid organizations, and human rights advocates to guarantee that girls' rights are protected, followed, and implemented. For example, the Tostan organization based in Senegal works across several African countries. Their "Community Empowerment Program" uses human rights as a framework to address child marriage. Through community discussions and education on human rights, health, and hygiene, Tostan has been successful in changing social norms and reducing child marriage in Senegal and other countries (UNICEF, 2021). It plays a crucial role in providing legal support to girls who face various forms of discrimination, violence, and exploitation. In Zimbabwe, the Girls Not Brides organisation also offers legal counseling, raises awareness about existing laws and policies, and helps girls' access justice systems. By providing legal support, NGOs contribute to protecting girls' rights, ending violence against women, and reducing early marriages (Girls Not Brides report, 2019). Legal empowerment gives girls the agency to assert their rights, seek justice, and challenge harmful practices that perpetuate gender inequality.

2.7 Challenges faced by NGOs in reducing child marriage and poverty in rural

2.7.1 Cultural resistance

NGOs often encounter cultural resistance when working to address child marriages and poverty. In certain communities, child marriage may be deeply rooted in traditional practices and beliefs, making it challenging to change mindsets and challenge long-standing norms (Lamb, 2016). Early marriages are often deeply rooted in cultural as well as traditional practices in rural areas. Challenging and changing these norms can be difficult, as they are deeply respected and followed by the community. NGOs face resistance and opposition from

community members, religious leaders, and even families who perceive child marriage as a social norm. For example, in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, such as Niger, child marriage is deeply entrenched in cultural practices (UNICEF (2017)). NGOs working in these areas face resistance from community members who believe that marrying girls at a young age is a socially acceptable and expected practice.

2.7.2 Limited access to education

The other greatest challenge to addressing early marriage and poverty in rural regions is the lack of access to high-quality education. Education may assist girls as well as women to become independent and make wise decisions about their lives. It is also a major factor in economic empowerment (Ngema, 2021). Girls may encounter hurdles that keep them from regularly attending school, such as gender-specific impediments, insufficient facilities, long commutes to school, and lack of transportation. For example, females in rural Mozambique confront many obstacles in accessing education, such as a lack of schools, security concerns, and cultural norms that value boys' education more than girls'. Assuring females' access to school and establishing secure learning settings provide challenges for NGOs operating in these areas (Rashid and Malhotra, 2021).

2.7.3 Limited resources

NGOs working in rural areas may face resource constraints and limited capacity to implement comprehensive programs. The lack of funding hinders the NGOs to provide sustainable solutions that can bring sustainable change. Implementing effective programs requires financial resources to provide education, awareness campaigns, support services, and community engagement. Limited funding can hinder NGOs' ability to reach a larger population and sustain their efforts in the long term (Adebajoko and Walter, 2014). In rural areas of Bangladesh, where poverty is prevalent, families choose early marriage as a means to reduce the economic burden (Shaheen, 2023). NGOs working in these areas need to provide income-generating opportunities and financial support to families to reduce the economic pressures that result to underage marriage. Henceforth, without adequate resources, NGOs may not be able to provide the necessary services and support to those in need.

2.7.4 Limited Government support and enforcement

NGOs often rely on supportive government policies and effective enforcement mechanisms to combat child marriage. However, in some cases, governments may lack the political will or capacity to implement and enforce laws effectively. NGOs may face challenges in

collaborating with government agencies and obtaining the necessary support and coordination. For example, in certain regions of Africa, child marriage is prohibited by law, but enforcement continues to be difficult because of a number of issues, including cultural customs, ignorance, and a lack of resources (UNICEF, (2021). NGOs working in these areas face the challenge of collaborating with local authorities to enforce existing laws and protect girls from early marriage

2.7 Gaps analysis

Child marriage continues to violate the rights of children, affecting their education, health, and overall well-being. Regardless of the presence of both regional and global regulations against the practice, it persists with severe consequences, especially for girls. Efforts to eliminate child marriage globally have been made, but there is still much work to be done. The existing research often adopts a global or national perspective, neglecting the nuanced variations at regional and local levels. Understanding the unique socio-cultural and economic contexts in which child marriages take place in various communities and regions is essential. This calls for more focused research to gain a thorough understanding of the variables influencing child marriages and poverty in particular areas. Therefore, it is important to study this issue at a local level, such as in the case of Mutoko rural, to get a more profound comprehension of the phenomenon. Henceforth, so the researcher intends to evaluate the work of NGOs in reducing child marriage and poverty in Mutoko rural by examining the power dynamics within families, communities, and societies that perpetuate harmful practices and restrict opportunities for education, empowerment, and economic independence as supported by Bronfenbrenner ecological system theory which explains the causes of child marriage in different systems.

2.8 Chapter Summary

The chapter reviews the study's theoretical framework by assessing pertinent literature to identify research gaps that need to be filled. The chapter looked at the reasons for early child marriages, their effects, the role that NGOs play in reducing them, and the challenges that these organizations encounter while doing so.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the research methods used to determine the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in reducing, Mutoko Rural child marriage and poverty. The chapter provides a thorough grasp of the research design, data collection strategies, and analysis methodologies used in this qualitative study.

3.2 Research methodology

To evaluate the contribution of NGOs to the reduction of child marriage and poverty in rural areas, the researcher employed qualitative research methodologies. Qualitative research is a naturalistic research technique that seeks a thorough

understanding of social phenomena within their natural environment. (Das and Devi, 2023). As qualitative research is descriptive in nature, it tends to provide a perspective on the phenomenon and allows participants to express themselves. By employing qualitative research methods, the researcher explores the experiences, perspectives, and perceptions of key stakeholders involved in the efforts to address child marriage and poverty in rural areas.

3.3 Research design

In this study, a case study research design was used. According to Thomas et al. (2017), case study research design is a qualitative research method that focuses on a thorough examination and comprehension of a particular case or phenomenon within its actual setting. It entails an in-depth review of a confined system, which could be a person, a community, an organization, an event, or a group. The goal of the case study design is to offer a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the dynamics and intricacies of the topic being studied. The approach was appropriate for this kind of study since it tackles the real issue that is, the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in preventing underage marriage and poverty in Mutoko rural that impede people's ability to support themselves, their families, and their general development.

3.4 Targeted population

The target population of the research was young people under the age of eighteen who had more personal experiences with child marriage and poverty in rural areas. Key informants were targeted and they comprised Plan International workers, social welfare workers, community members, and village heads. They were chosen based on their experiences with the problem of child marriage in rural Mutoko. The reason behind focusing on the target

population is to be able to gather accurate, in-depth, firsthand data from the informant's experiences.

3.5 Sample size

Twenty participants made up the sample size, which was selected from Mutoko District, which has a population of 161,091 according to ZIMSTAT population censuses, (2022). According to Sukmawati et al. (2023), sample size is a subset of the number of people under study that serves as a representation of the population's size or number. The total number of the target population, from which the sample was taken, also influenced the sample size. The sample consisted of ten children five of whom were assisted by Plan International (beneficiaries) and five who were not, two key informants from Plan International organization, two community members, two village heads, two members from the women's affairs department, and two members from social welfare.

3.6 Sampling technique

As the research mainly targeted the youthful age group, the sampling techniques used were purposive sampling and convenience sampling. Purposive sampling, sometimes referred to as judgmental sampling, is a kind of non-random sample in which the researcher deliberately chooses the participants based on certain characteristics or criteria (Obilor, 2023). In this study of child marriages and poverty, the participants were chosen based on their age, gender, and socioeconomic status. In qualitative research, this kind of sampling is frequently employed because it enables the researcher to concentrate on particular groups or individuals who can offer the most understanding of the topic (Etikan, et al. 2016). This type of sampling is often used in qualitative research, as it allows the researcher to focus on specific groups or individuals that can provide the most insight into the topic (Etikan, et al 2016). The selection of Plan International's key informants was done through purposeful sampling as well who possess relevant knowledge and experiences regarding child marriage and poverty reduction efforts in rural areas

Convenience sampling was also employed in the research, the role of NGOs in reducing early marriage and poverty in Mutoko rural. Convenience sampling is a form of random sampling in which the researcher selects participants based on their availability and accessibility (Obilor, 2023). Convenience sampling was employed in this particular evaluation since the researcher was able to select participants who were easily accessible and had direct experience or knowledge in these areas, making the data collection process more feasible and

efficient. By selecting participants who were ready and available, the researcher was able to gather data more quickly, enabling them to meet project deadlines. It enables the academic to gain initial insights, understand and identify potential themes or patterns related to the role of NGOs in addressing early marriage and poverty.

3.7 Data collection

Participants' data were gathered for this study using qualitative data gathering methods. Written material was employed as a secondary mode of data gathering, with semi-structured interviews, key informative interviews, and focus group discussions serving as the main techniques. These instruments worked in concert to provide the information needed for this study.

3.7.1 Semi structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were one of the methods the researcher used to obtain data on the role of NGOs in addressing child marriage and poverty in rural. Individual viewpoints could be thoroughly explored through semi-structured interviews as well as insights related to the topic (Belina, 2023). The flexible nature of semi-structured interviews enables researchers to adapt their questions and probe further based on the interviewee's responses (Belina, 2023). This adaptability is crucial when examining complex issues like child marriage and poverty, as it allows the interviewer to explore specific aspects in detail and gain a comprehensive understanding of the context. Participants are able to share unique stories, personal experiences, or local knowledge that would be difficult to capture through standardized surveys or questionnaires. Child marriage and poverty in rural areas are influenced by a multitude of factors, hence semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to explore these contextual factors, understand the underlying causes, opportunities for intervention, and challenges

3.7.2 Key Informant Interviews

Data and information were gathered from individuals using a key informant interview research tool. A person with in-depth knowledge of a problem resulting from a particular circumstance can be considered a key informant (Sukmawati, Salmia, and Sudarmin, 2023). The researcher strategically selected eight key informants from various organizations that have close associations with the children. The researcher interviewed representatives from Plan International organizations as well as representatives from the Ministry of Women Affairs, Social Welfare, and the District Development Coordinator for this study. Because

they were able to supply some crucial data for the research, the key informants were essential to this study.

3.7.3 Focus group discussions

To collect information and present concrete examples and proof, a focus group discussion was conducted. Focus groups are used in qualitative research to gather data by asking participants about their views, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes on a concept, idea, advertisement, product, service, or packaging (Munsch, 2021). Yayah (2021) claims that questions are posed in an engaging group environment where participants are allowed to talk with one another. Focus group discussions were necessary for this study because they allowed the interviewer to assess participants in a more relaxed setting where they felt free to share their thoughts. Parents, community members, and children involved in child marriage participated in focus groups.

3.7.4 Secondary Data Collection

The researcher additionally consulted published articles on Plan International's contribution to a reduction of child marriages and poverty in Mutoko rural. Written documents which include reports and journals concerning child marriage and poverty were also used.

3.8 Data presentation and analysis

The researcher made use of bar graphs, tables, and pie charts to present data which was obtained during the research process. Data analysis refers to the process of analyzing, cleaning, modifying, and interpreting raw data to extract relevant information, make conclusions, and support decision-making (Khoa, et al 2023). It involves applying various methods and techniques to organize, summarize, and analyze data to uncover patterns, relationships, and trends.

3.9 Data analysis technique

The information gathered from focus groups and interviews was analyzed using qualitative data analysis methods including thematic analysis which includes identifying, evaluating, and analyzing patterns or themes in the data. According to Das and Devi, (2023), thematic analysis involves examining the relationships between themes, looking for variations or contradictions, and interpreting the significance of the findings. Themes can include interventions, strategies, challenges, successes, or community perceptions related to NGO efforts. Thematic analysis facilitates the researcher's exploration of the viewpoints and experiences of different stakeholders, including NGO staff, community members, and

individuals affected by child marriage and poverty. It allows for a thorough exploration of their views on the effectiveness, relevance, and impact of NGO initiatives in addressing these issues in rural areas.

3.10 Validity

The researcher employed qualitative validity to verify the accuracy of the findings related to the topic being addressed. One of the benefits of qualitative research, according to Khoa (2023), is validity, which is predicated on assessing the findings' accuracy from both the researcher's and the participant's points of view. It involves assessing the research's legitimacy and dependability as well as making sure that any interpretations and conclusions derived from the data are solidly supported. Validity was considered from two perspectives, researcher validity was enhanced through triangulation which involves using multiple sources, methods, or perspectives to gather data. Participant validity was enhanced through sampling where the researcher found individuals who were able to provide rich and diverse insights of the topic. Validity ensured that the right questions with proper ingredients were used in viewing, to minimize errors when it came to conducting the findings.

3.11 Reliability

Qualitative research aims to capture the depth and complexity of human experiences, which inherently involve some level of subjectivity and variation. Reliability refers to the stability as well as consistency of the research findings (Suri, 2020). To enhance reliability, the researcher ensures consistency in data collection procedures to minimize variations in responses. Therefore, establishing reliability in the research was to ensure consistency and transparency in the research process.

3.12 Ethical considerations

Throughout the whole research procedure, ethical considerations were accorded the utmost importance. All participants expressed informed consent, which ensured their voluntary participation as well as confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were told about the study's goal, their rights, and data collection processes. All of these principles were considered followed to obtain trustworthy and valid information on the research findings while preventing biased information.

3.13 Chapter Summary

The chapter highlighted the methodology employed in this qualitative research study on the contribution of NGOs to the reduction of rural early marriage and poverty has been

emphasized in this chapter. There was a detailed description of the research design, sample selection, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques. Additionally, steps to guarantee reliability and rigor as well as ethical considerations were provided.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The findings of the research, which came from semi-structured interviews, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions, are presented in this chapter. The study questions concerning the causes and consequences of child marriages, as well as the role of NGOs in reducing child marriage and poverty in Mutoko rural are covered in this chapter. Texts, tables, and figures were used to compile the data. The thematic method is utilized by the researcher to present and discuss the data since it provides a clear summary of the findings.

4.2 Research objectives

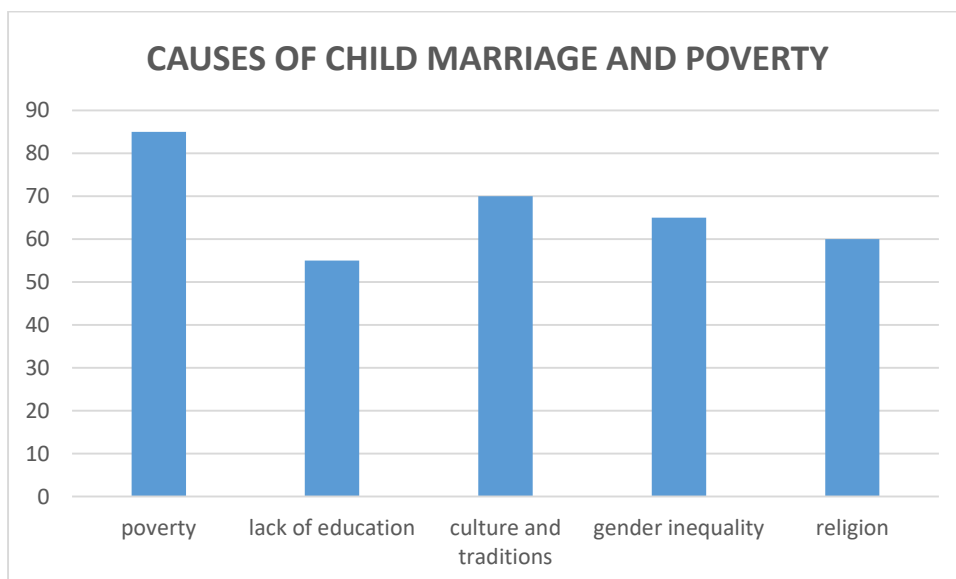
The issue of adolescent girls getting married as children was the main topic of this study. The objectives of the study were used as the study's guide:

- Examine causes of child marriage and poverty in Mutoko rural.
- Evaluate different NGO programs implemented to reduce child marriage and poverty in Mutoko rural.
- To examine challenges that are being faced by NGOs in fighting against child marriages and poverty.

4.3 Factors contributing to child marriage and poverty in Mutoko rural.

This study sought to look at the factors contributing to child marriage and poverty in Mutoko rural. These factors are shown in Fig 4.3.

Fig 4.3 Factors contributing to child marriage and poverty.



Source: Researcher (2024)

Participants review that poverty, religion, culture and tradition, gender inequality, and lack of education as factors contributing to child marriages and poverty.

4.3.1 Poverty

The results of this study demonstrated that one of the main causes of child marriage in Mutoko Rural is poverty. This result is consistent with the macro system developed by Bronfenbrenner, which shows that a child's development is influenced by their environment.

In Zimbabwe, intergenerational marriages are required by several variables, including poverty, which both, influence child marriage but also perpetuate it.

The study revealed that from at least five, only one of the married participants was married to a boy under the age of eighteen, the remaining women were married to men who were over eighteen (in certain instances, an adult twice her age). This indicates a significant gender disparity in child marriage, with the majority of underage girls being wed to adult men often much older than them because of economic vulnerabilities. From the key informant interviews, with Plan International, Social Welfare, Women Affairs, and the village heads it was reiterated that the poverty level of residents in Mutoko rural is high and is the major cause of child marriage. Many families in the area rely on mining and farming for their livelihoods. Residents in most cases were to farm due to less rainfall making prospects of economic growth harder. This is supported by one of the village heads who said,

“These conditions make it difficult for families to provide for their children’s basic needs, such as food, shelter, and education. As a result, many young girls are forced into early marriages as a way to escape poverty and provide for their families”,

One of the parents, from the interview said that

“I didn’t want to give my first daughter in marriage, but economic circumstances forced me to. My husband had been sick for two years and we were very, very poor. I had to give her away when she was 14 as we could not afford to keep her.”

One example of a mining area where child marriage is prevalent in Mutoko rural due to widespread poverty and limited access to education and health care is Makaha. One such case involves a 14-year-old girl whose parents are both miners in Makaha. The family struggles to make ends meet, and they see early marriage as a way to secure a better future for their daughter. Consequently, the girl was married to a 35-year-old miner, who promised to provide for her and her family. However, the reality was far from what the family had hoped for. The girl was compelled to drop out of school and work in the mines alongside her husband, exposing her to hazardous working conditions and putting her health and safety at risk. This was confirmed after interviewing the girl,

“My father could not afford to send me and my siblings to school and I ventured into mining for survival. Last year my father compelled me to marry a miner in our area. I tried to object but my parents blackmailed me saying if I refused the whole family

was going to die of hunger including my two-year-old sister. They both pleaded with me to marry the miner. When I was three months pregnant I faced complications and was admitted to All Souls Mission Hospital for two months. Unfortunately, I had a miscarriage (tears flowing). Despite wanting my husband's support, he rarely visited and refused to help with hospital bills, claiming to be busy at the mine. Upon returning home I realised that he was staying with another woman of my age. Despite my pleas, to go back home my parents refused and insisted on staying with my husband, who began abusing me every time he came from the mine. He could beat me and shout at me that I killed his baby which wasn't true at all. After enduring for two months, I fled and survived in Makaha shopping center through prostitution. My parents rejected me and I dislike the life I lead here. I am destitute and constantly face abuse from different men (makorokoza) demanding unprotected sex and refusing to pay afterward," she said.

These findings confirm previous studies conducted by Fattah and Camellia, (2022), which reviewed that child marriage and poverty are connected, where poverty occurs, early marriage will probably be present. According to the study, parents and guardians who are facing financial difficulties force them to marry off their daughters, considering the custom as a way to generate money since they will receive a bride price known as "lobola" in the community. These findings also concur with another study by Abera, et al (2020) which claims that poverty and contextual economics are the root causes of child marriage and that child marriage is seen as a coping mechanism and means of survival for families experiencing financial instability. As a result, child marriage becomes a generational custom and the cycle of poverty is sustained.

4.3.2 Lack of education

The analysis also revealed there was limited access to education. For a community and the country as a whole to grow, education is essential. One of the main causes of child marriage in Mutoko Rural is a lack of education, which attracts behaviors that might be harmful to the most vulnerable groups. This is supported by Ngema (2021) who states that there is a strong correlation between child marriage and education attainment. Lack of education prevents both children and their parents from understanding and claiming their rights. In communities where both children and their parents are uneducated, child marriage is more likely to persist, leading to intergenerational cycles of poverty and limited opportunities.

A participant from the focus group supported this viewpoint, stating that:

“Child marriage is due to lack of knowledge, when the parent and the child have not been to school or are not interested in school, they will lack knowledge of knowing that child marriage is wrong and has many bad consequences”.

One participant under the age of eighteen said the following:

“I was not in school and I have never been to school, it was logical to just get married. I did not go to school because of the distance between my house and the school being far. I could not walk that far daily, so I stayed home”.

The majority of the girls surveyed had dropped out of school and stated that they couldn't continue their education after marrying or becoming pregnant. Girls cited a variety of reasons, including not having enough money for school tuition, having to take care of their kids, not having enough adult classes, and having chores to do. Some stated that after being married, their partners would not let them finish their studies, calling them unfaithful when they insisted on going to school.

One girl commented:

“My father refused to let me go to school. He said it is a waste of money to educate a girl. He said marriage will bring him respect in the community”.

Another key informant from social welfare review that:

“The community is suffering from lack of finances to send their children to school as they strongly rely on farming in their gardens. With the shifting of the rainy seasons, the community is failing to supply a lot of produce to Mbare Musika in Harare so those closer to the streams and rivers are looking for cheap labor which makes most parents suffer as they are failing to get enough money to feed the family later on to send their daughters to school”.

Henceforth, this shows that the unpredicted shift in rain seasons has worsened the situation in Mutoko as the parents continue struggling to generate enough income to support their families and send them to school.

4.3.3 Culture and Traditions

The findings showed that underage marriage is often derived from ingrained cultural norms that emphasize early marriage and consider it acceptable or even desirable. These norms are influenced by cultural traditions, customs, and community expectations.

One of the village head supported this view as he said

“.....tsika yekuti vanasikana vakurumidze kuroorwa yakatanga kare. Tsika idzi dzainzi kuzvarirwa, chigadzamapfiwa, mudzimai wengonzi, nechimutsamapfihwa dzinoreva kuti kana tete vakashaya mwana, mwana wehadzanzi yavo ndiye anosara achiroorwa nemurume watete uye nekuchengeta mhuri yasiwa natete. Kuzvarirwa zvaireva kuti kana mukadzi akaroorwa asi oshaya mbereko munin'ina anoita bonde nemurume wemukoma wake. Tsika iyi yakawandira kumamisha uye tsika iyi ndiyo imwe iri kuwedzera kuti vanasikana vakurumidze kuroorwa vachivadiki.....”

“.....Early child marriages are dated back since time in memorial and were fostered by cultural norms known as kuzvarirwa, chimutsamapfiwa, chigadzamapfiwa and mudzimai wengozi. Kuzvarirwa this is when a young girl is given to a rich man or as taken of appreciation to the man who has helped the family in difficult times. Chimutsamapfiwa this is when an aunt or elder sister dies, a young girl is given to the man to mother the remaining children instead of taking another woman who is not related to these children. The idea is to maintain the good upkeep of the children and the relationship between the families. Mudzimai wengozi is when someone kills someone, the avenging spirit asks for a wife, who will come into the family to replace the deceased. Lastly, chigadzamapfiwa is when an aunt or elder sister fails to conceive a young sister or niece is taken to bear on her behalf...”

Culture shapes the attitudes and behavior of community members. In Mutoko rural, early child marriage is seen as a means of upholding family honor and safeguarding girls' chastity. The development of breasts or the onset of menstruation are physical changes that indicate a girl's preparedness for marriage. This is consistent with the Ecological System Theory's macro system, which examines how patriarchal structures, social norms, culture, and religion impact child marriage, particularly for young girls living in rural areas (Abera, et al., 2020). It argued that the concept of adulthood is misunderstood, the people view the adult size for women as menstruating. Additionally, it supports the research by Okonofua (2022), which

attributes child marriage to cultural misconceptions and the custom of shielding a girl's sexuality. Furthermore, cultural and societal norms state that a girl will be a shame to her family when she does not marry by the age of 18.

This is supported by what was said by one participant in the focus group discussion,

"Once a girl reaches puberty all teachings are directed towards pleasing one's future husband as well as being a gentle and obedient wife. Her sexuality is further defined for her, as she is taught how to use it for the benefit of the male race".

In addressing how cultural ideas contribute to early marriage, a few participants mentioned the following:

"The practice of child marriage is as a result of social norms and expectations and gendered discrimination. Some families marry their children at a tender age because virginity is highly respected and girl children must preserve it to avoid bringing the family name to shame. In regards to this parents prefer marrying their children earlier before something goes wrong"

This highlighted that child marriage is truly often rooted in deep social norms that consider early marriage to the community.

4.3.4 Gender inequality

Girls' inferior status in society is socialized and deeply entrenched in Mutoko rural. Only one in three girls in Mutoko feels confident to speak up and be heard when in the presence of boys and men. Women are stereotyped as mothers and housewives, limiting their ability to participate in public life, whether political or economic. They believe that the men are the one who is the head of the family, so he must be the one who must go work and get educated to be able to support his family

This was supported by one of the participants who said,

"when I failed my grade seven, my father refused to send me to school to start my form saying there is no need for me to learn as I'm going to be married soon and my work would be taking care of my children and husband, he also said that I need to start learning now on how to care for the family whilst I'm home".

Another participant

"Usually child marriage tends to be proposed by parents to the child because of the gender discrimination and inequality between men and women that does not give a girl child to make the right choice for themselves. They believe that the role of a girl child is only to be a wife and not to be economically productive"

These support earlier research by Parsons and McCleary-Sills (2018), which found that gendered discrimination, social norms, and expectations drive the practice of child marriage by undervaluing the independence of women as well as girls.

4.3.5 Religion

Religion is indeed another driver of child marriage in Mutoko rural, with more of the respondents in the study indicating that religion is another factor leading to early child marriage in the area. The people in these communities are affiliated with the apostolic sects, and the Johanne Marange and Johanne “Masowe” sects are particularly dominant and popular for their supporters’. This is evident in the quotation below,

Key informant,

“The death of young Anna Machaya who died in labor, after being married to an adult who was over 15 years her elder reviewed that child marriage is still rampant in the area. These events took place in the context of the practices of the Apostolic Church. Pregnant, the young bride died in childbirth and was buried by her church in the following hours. In the need of a replacement, the Church was planning on giving the younger sister of the bride, a nine-year-old girl, as a “replacement” to the widowed husband”.

Some girls were being forced into child marriages due to religious beliefs that prevented them from refusing or going against their religious leaders. Specifically, the Johanne Marange Apostolic sect was found to pressure girls into marriage. This revealed that religious practices increase early child marriages.

In an interview with a key informant from the Department of Social Services, it was revealed that,

“Some old men in apostolic sects continue to marry young girls even if they are aware that the practice is harmful to the girl child. Some of the girls who get married at an early age suffer abuse and can fail to shoulder the burden and the duties that are socially considered responsibilities of wives. Sometimes they can escape the

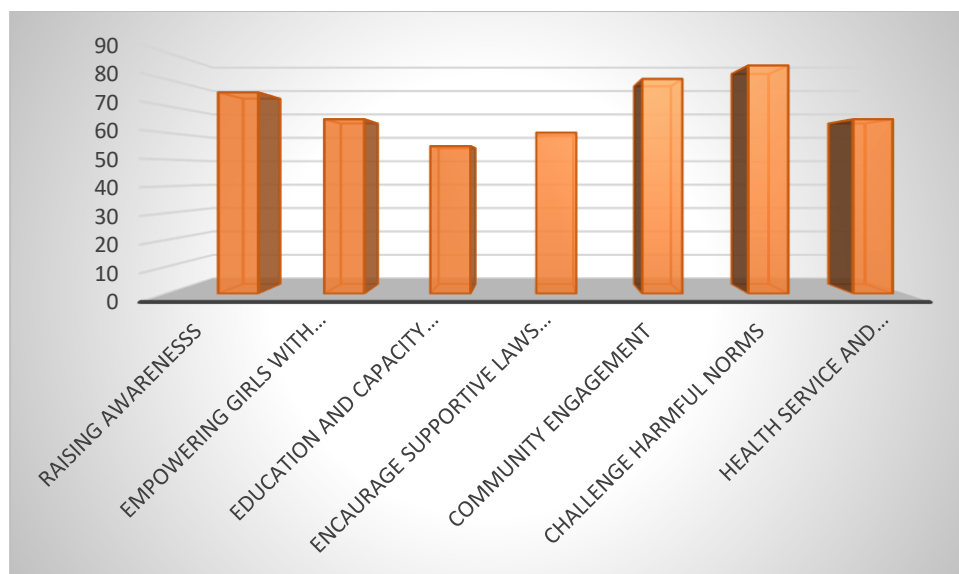
marriage by running away. Previous marriage experiences can lure former child brides to engage in prostitution.”

Thus, religion directly promotes early child marriages while also indirectly promoting prostitution when a marriage is disrupted by divorce. While the majority of participants blamed religion for the practice of child marriage, there were some variances in answers among Christians. Respondents from religion stated that their faith firmly opposes child marriage and promotes marriage. As a result, religion has a vital impact on the occurrence of early marriages in farming communities, even though other religions prohibit child marriages. Additional factors also have a significant role in Mutoko's high rate of child marriage.

4.4 The role of NGOs in addressing child marriage and poverty in rural.

The study sought to assess the strategies employed by NGOs in reducing child marriages in Mutoko rural. Many NGOs in Mutoko are playing a crucial role in reducing child marriage and poverty but the study will focus on one organisation which is Plan International Organisation which started to operate in Mutoko in 1999. The participants noted the role of Plan International in the fight against child marriages including awareness campaigns, empowering girls with information, skills, and support networks, education and capacity building, challenging harmful social norms, encouraging supportive laws and policies, community engagement, and providing health and well-being services. As shown in Fig 4.4

Fig 4.4 The strategies employed by NGOs in reducing child marriages



Source: Primary data (2024)

4.4.1 Raising awareness

Plan International's contribution to the fight against child marriage has been emphasized through awareness campaigns regarding the negative implications of child marriage and poverty in Mutoko rural communities. Participants indicated that Plan International educates the general population about gender-based discrimination, violence, and inequities, as well as campaigning for women's as well as girls' rights and the benefits of delayed marriage. The participants discuss how Plan International uses radio, radio shows, and dramas to engage, inform, and raise awareness about the harmful consequences of child, early, and forced marriages. To garner support for the effort to eliminate early, forced marriage, roadshows were employed to reach a larger audience. Large crowds were drawn to the event because local celebrities participated, especially in rural areas.

This is supported by one participant who said that

“Plan International used a local former artist called ‘VARAZIPI’ who acted in a drama about the negative impact of child marriage and also used radio shows, activities such as dances and music that appealed to all, including those hard to reach, such as young people and men”.

According to the responses, Plan International plays an essential role in the fight against early child marriage. Furthermore, the participants indicate that its role has aided Mutoko Rural in the fight against child marriage.

4.4.2 Empower girls with information, skills, and support networks

The participants stated that one of Plan International's efforts for minimizing child marriage in Mutoko Rural is to empower girls with information, as well as support networks and skills. It provides training that encourages girls to become self-sufficient and realize their full potential by promoting financial literacy, female entrepreneurship, start-up funding, and female mentoring programs. The ability for girls to make informed decisions about their lives is made possible by the development of life skills. This is particularly important for child brides who are not seeking school, training, or employment and who are highly dependent on their partners and families.

For instance, one participant highlighted that

“The SAGE program by Plan International supports girls and boys to complete primary school, transition to secondary education, and progress on to technical vocational training or employment. Girls are also being supported through the Leave No Girl Behind funding window, which consists of interventions for highly marginalized, adolescent girls who are out of school either because they have never attended school or have dropped out without gaining a basic education and are taught skills. They linked girls with skilled members of the community to gain skills, which they are now passing on from girl to girl or in some cases their children”.

The program was successful which was shown by the participants who appreciated the work done by Plan International which is trying so hard to put an end to child marriage by empowering young people with skills. Some of the beneficiaries are now using their new knowledge in their day-to-day lives. P I had created pathways for their futures and were already challenging underlying gender norms. Some of the girls had been trained in male-dominated trades such as welding and carpentry and were being employed to fix things in their communities. Plan International provided homes with economic resilience so that families could not claim that they were marrying off daughters because they lacked food. This has resulted in skills for small enterprises and savings schemes at the community level. This highlighted by

A participant from a focus group discussion who review that,

“ndinotenda plan international nekundiendesa kunoita mabasa emaoko nokuti ndakange ndada kunororwa mushure mekunge ndashairwa mari yechikoro vaingo koshesa hanzvadzi yangu chete,iko zvino ndakukwanisa kuzvishandira”(appreciated

the work of PI because of its implementations, my parents tend favour a boy child, I am now able to work for herself and it prevented me to get married.)

Based on the responses, Plan International has made a significant impact in combating early child marriages.

4.4.3 Education and capacity building

Enhancing girls' access to high-quality education has been pointed out as another strategy by Plan International in the fight against child marriages in Mutoko rural. Plan International guarantees to provide all girls with access to and completion of a high-quality primary, secondary, and tertiary education that includes thorough health education and life skills to assist them develop the competencies necessary for individual welfare and empowerment a prerequisite for success in life.

One participant said that

“Plan ikubatsira zvisingaite panyaya dzekudzidza kwevana, ikupa mabooks nekubhadharira vana mari yefees uye ikuvakirawo vana matoilets nekuonawo kuti vana vaonawo mvura padyo nechikoro”. (Plan International is helping the vulnerable who could not afford fees by paying their fees, it's improving school infrastructure like toilets and taped water).

The participants also point out that dropout rates for females who marry young or become pregnant are exponentially greater in Mutoko rural than for girls who are either married or pregnant. As a result, Plan International offers alternative and informal learning alternatives, as well as support services like child care for mothers during school hours, to help these girls resume their education. Married girls can complete their education thanks to all of these methods. The 'Building Skills for Life' Programme, for instance, gets female not-in-school students ready for their re-entry into the system so they can pursue secondary education and graduate. The program covers girls' schooling expenses and provides them with educational resources. In addition to supporting the government's 'Second Chance Education Policy', the program improves school education quality by implementing adolescent sexual reproductive health education, girls' empowerment groups, and school-based child protection programs. The majority of the girls in this project have re-entered the formal education system, and many have achieved academic success. These girls serve as mentors for younger girls, encouraging them to stay in school rather than marry early.

This was effective because education is a human right that can help promote gender equality. It is a useful tool in the fight against unintended teenage pregnancies and early births. Ending child marriage requires ensuring girls have access to high-quality education and removing discriminatory barriers that keep young moms and pregnant girls from completing their education.

4.4.4 Encourage supportive laws and policies

According to a key informant from Plan International, to make sure that national laws supersede any conflicting provisions under customary, religious, and traditional law, PI works and partners with pertinent authorities at all levels, including local, national, sub-regional, regional, and global levels. For instance, the 2008 laws in Zimbabwe were haphazard and inconsistent. At first, the Criminal Law Act's Section 70(4) set a 16-year-old age limit for sexual interactions. Even worse, there was no minimum marriage age set by the Customary Marriage Act (Sithole, 2019). This led to an argument in Mutoko rural because certain laws against child marriage were not effective, and this led some parents and guardians to not be afraid when they marry their daughters at a young age. However, Plan International in collaboration with the government helped to implement a Marriage bill that filled these gaps, it set the minimum age for marriage at 18 in line with Section 78 of the Constitution. This shows that efforts were made to improve the laws against child marriage, which helped Mutoko Rural as the police were able to arrest all those who violated the law by marrying their children at a young age.

A key informant from Plan International said that.

“We support the implementation of a strong legislative framework which sets a minimum age of marriage as 18 with free and informed consent regardless of gender and ensures that national law takes precedence over customary or religious law. For example, the “Because I am a Girl” program on ending child marriage and teen pregnancy advocates for effective laws and policies that reduce child marriage”.

This program was successful as it led to the creation of spaces for girls to share their stories and experiences on the effects of child marriage with policymakers. This has contributed to galvanizing champions at the institutional level to influence the legal environment and obtain support at the highest level. Also, the National legislation establishing a minimum age of marriage was a critical step in the process of eliminating the practice of child, early, and forced marriage. The governments take immediate steps to strengthen, harmonize,

implement, and enforce laws governing the minimum age for marriage in line with international human rights standards.

4.4.5 Community engagement

Community engagement had been mentioned by participants as the role of Plan International in reducing child marriage in Mutoko rural. The participants observed that Plan International organizes events to foster intergenerational dialogue to increase awareness of the causes and effects of early, forced marriage as well as the capacity-building of key guardians, such as religious and traditional leaders, who are stewards of religious beliefs and traditional values that may contribute to practices. Religious and traditional leaders, given their strong positions, can be essential change agents and powerful allies in building widespread support for eliminating the practice of child marriages among their congregations and communities. For example, in 2014, Plan International organized a meeting with the National Chiefs Council to discuss child marriage. The purpose of the gathering was to advocate for a commitment to address child marriage within the framework of customary law and to acknowledge it as a problem. After the meeting, the Chief's Council decided to take action against child marriage and released a declaration to inform the public of this decision.

One of the Chief of Mutoko Rural attended this meeting, this is supported by what was said by a key informant from Plan International who said that

“Our organisation works closely with the community leaders so that they can act as gatekeepers who facilitate the social movement that will transform the environment in which girls live like changing existing gender norms and practices that drive child, early, and forced marriage to reduce child marriages. He also said that when the meeting was held Chief Mutoko attended this meeting which was a great help to Mutoko as he started to advocate for the rights of girls by educating other chiefs headmen and village heads about the consequences of child marriage”.

This is supported by the report from Gives Us Books, Not Husbands (2024) in which Chief Mutoko said *“that society should revert to traditional practices that valued every child and took responsibility for their well-being. Every older man and woman should nurture every child in the community as their own”*. This shows that the traditional leaders in collaboration with Plan International organisation are both advocating the reduction of child marriages in Mutoko rural. Plan International has successfully engaged with religious and traditional leaders in Mutoko rural and was able to facilitate the building of a social movement that

transforms the environment in which girls live, by changing existing gender norms and practices that drive early, forced marriage through the mobilizing of families and communities.

4.4.6 Challenge harmful gender norms

The participants noted that Plan International tackles harmful practices and transforms gender norms, within the communities through engaging girls themselves, parents, traditional and religious and community leaders, and teachers. One participant noted how child marriage is based on negative gender stereotypes, such as controlling female sexuality. To eliminate it, it is critical to confront negative social and gender norms and ensure that girls and young women have control over their bodies, as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Key informant,

“Plan International help in changing deep-rooted norms and attitudes that normalize and justify child marriage and violence against girls and women by increasing awareness and understanding about child marriage, girls’ education, and girls’ rights among families, community members, and gatekeepers”.

Plan International assists girls in identifying potential risks and damages, including physical, sexual, and mental harms, that they may experience when advocating for their rights, and teaches them how to use safety planning methods to analyze such risks and avoid harm.

4.4.7 Health and well-being services

Health and well-being services almost all respondents argued Plan International provides care and support to survivors of violence through case management and psychosocial support to protect and fulfill the rights of married girls. And also provide health and reproductive rights education and services to girls at risk of child marriage. These programs empower girls to make informed choices about their bodies and delay marriage until they are physically and emotionally ready. Plan international implement the All Girls Standing Strong is to work towards and support girls to make informed choices about their lives. It also gives food hampers most respondents argued that PI provides food to the people to minimize the issue of poverty. This was helpful because food assistance tends to minimize the idea of early marriages in different communities.

4.5 Challenges faced by NGOs in reducing child marriage and poverty in rural.

Many challenges have been identified which are faced by NGOs in reducing child marriage.

4.5.1 Cultural resistance

Some participants noted that it is difficult to implement children's rights in remote locations where cultural and religious norms limit and suppress girls' rights. Gender stereotypes, cultural customs, and harmful practices impede girls' access to education. The issue of culture will continue to be a challenge as they implement programs aimed at reducing child marriage. The Mutoko culture favors a patriarchal system in which girls are viewed as second-class citizens, implying that girls must submit to their husbands and that their duty is limited to bearing children, which demotivates girls. This in line with what was noted by Lamb (2016) who argued that NGOs may face resistance and opposition from community members, religious leaders, and even families who perceive child marriage as a social norm. Hence, challenging and changing these norms can be difficult, as they are deeply respected and followed by the community.

4.5.2 Limited access to education

Respondents commented that girls and boys face barriers such as long distances to schools, lack of transportation, inadequate infrastructure, and gender-specific obstacles that prevent them from attending school regularly which is an obstacle to PL as they will not be able to teach the children about their rights and the consequences of child marriage. When a child is unable to go to school she will prefer marriage than setting at home doing nothing and even the boys will think about farming to start a family even though they are underage to start a family. This shows that education is important in the fight against child marriages supported by Ngema (2021) who argued that education is a key driver of economic empowerment and can help girls and women gain independence and make informed decisions about their life.

4.5.3 Limited resources

Participant stated that lack of sufficient funds is also a regular difficulty that is experienced by Plan International in delivering some of the initiatives that are targeted at reducing child marriage and poverty in Mutoko rural.

One key informant from PI

“Sometimes funding becomes a challenge for us to implement some of the programmes that advocates for the reduction of child marriage and poverty.

4.5.4 Government policies.

Government policies can pose significant obstacles for NGOs working to combat child marriage. In many countries, laws prohibiting the practice exist but are poorly enforced,

allowing child marriage to continue unabated. Governments may also be hesitant to enact policies that go against deep-seated cultural traditions surrounding child marriage. Additionally, limited government funding and resources for NGO programs, as well as bureaucratic hurdles in obtaining necessary approvals, can hinder the scale and effectiveness of NGO efforts. Political instability and a lack of cross-sectoral coordination between different government agencies can further undermine NGO initiatives to reduce child marriage

4.6 Chapter summary

The chapter focused on data presentation and analysis of the research findings. The chapter outlined the role of Plan international in fight against child marriages, to examine the factors significantly contributing towards child marriage and poverty and effects in Mutoko rural, and to examine challenges that are being encountered in fighting early child marriages.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on summarizing issues arising from all the preceding chapters. It presents the summary and conclusions of the findings. Possible recommendations on the role of NGOs in the fight against child marriages in Mutoko rural are presented below.

5.2 Summary

This research focused on the issue of child marriages on adolescent girls. The study was carried out in Mutoko rural District in Mashonaland East Province of Zimbabwe. The study was guided by the following research objectives:

- Examine causes of child marriage and poverty in Mutoko rural.
- Evaluate different NGOs programmes implemented to reduce child marriage and poverty in Mutoko rural.
- To examine challenges that are being faced by NGOs in fighting against child marriages and poverty.

The first chapter was the introductory chapter of the whole study which pointed out on the background of the study, statement of the problem, aim of the study, research objectives. It raised questions that were essential for the study, explored the assumptions and significance of the study, limitations, delimitations and the definition of key terms.

Chapter two of the study focused on the literature review in which views and perspectives of different writers about the study were reviewed. The theoretical framework was also used in this chapter so as to have deeper understanding on best strategies in fight against child marriage for example the Ecological Systems Theory which was developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner. It advanced that child marriage is influenced by various factors at different levels, including individual, family, community, and societal levels. These include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Henceforth, it helped to illuminate the complex interplay of individual, family, community, and societal factors that contribute to child marriage and poverty. A critical analysis was done on the role of NGOs in fight against child marriages in Mutoko rural.

Chapter three of the study presented the research methodology. It portrays a detailed analysis of the research methodology that was used in the study. The chapter defined the research tools used and their purposes. It also gave the target population, sampling and sampling methods, data collection methods and the ethical considerations used in the study. The case study research design was used and key informative interviews, focus group discussions and semi structured interviews were used as the data collection instruments. The study used qualitative research method because it brings out a number of realities to social and human experiences.

Chapter four mainly concentrated on data presentation, analysis and discussion of what came out of the study. The research findings illustrated on the role of NGOs in fight against child marriage in Mutoko rural, the causes of child marriages and the challenges being encountered by NGOs in fight against child marriages.

Chapter five gave an overview of the whole research, summary of the study which is aimed at explaining the research discussed above. Many conclusions were drawn from the field of research through mentioned research methodology tools. Recommendations were given basing on the research findings.

5.3 Conclusion

The research came to a conclusion that a number of overlapping factors contribute to the prevalence of child marriage in Mutoko rural. The research mainly focused on girls below the age of eighteen who are entering marriage due to poverty, cultural and religious beliefs, gender inequality, lack of education on the adverse consequences child marriage, legal frameworks and inadequacy of registration procedures which negatively impacted on the girl child in Mutoko rural. The respondents from NGOs, focus group discussion and interviews were in a position to explore their feelings and knowledge on the question that were asked by the researcher. They managed to identify some of the causes of child marriages and it seems as if poverty was the major cause. The respondents further noted, different global humanitarian organizations have been implementing programs concerning the subject of child marriages in a bid to end the problem.

The research established that Non-government organisations plays an important role in the fight against early child marriages for example they raise awareness campaigns, empower girls with information, skills and support networks so that they can to indulge on income generating projects for sustainability, education and capacity building to the community on early child marriages, challenging harmful social norms, encourage supportive laws and policies and provide health and well-being services

From the research findings it was noted that multiple Non-government organisations are also participating in collaboration with stakeholders from government institutions and community in the fight against early marriages in Mutoko rural. Their work is being limited due to challenges being encountered. For example, cultural resistance, limited access to education and limited resources. The researcher listed a number of recommendations that may decrease the number of early marriages in Mutoko rural itself if adopted.

5.4 Recommendations

- ❖ Following this research, it is recommended that NGOs and other stakeholders need to invest more in girls' and community education. The study highlights that child marriage results in girls dropping out of school. It is highly important to emphasise

the importance of education on child rights to parents and communities in order to reduce cultural influences affecting young people's life development the NGOs and other stakeholders need to educate the community. Girls should be supported to continue their education and to transition successfully from primary to secondary schooling and complete their secondary education.

- ❖ More investments in adolescents' sexual and reproductive health. The respondents cited serious health impacts as one of the key consequences of child marriage, particularly due to early child bearing. All adolescents must have access to comprehensive, age-appropriate and gender-sensitive sexual and reproductive health information and services. Such services including psychosocial support as part of integrated health services for adolescents should be accessible to all adolescents and youth.
- ❖ Increase the awareness of families and communities, especially fathers. The research has shown that parents and fathers in particular, are the main decision-makers regarding girls' marriage. There therefore needs to be concerted efforts, both at the national and the community level, to highlight the negative consequences of child marriage to fathers themselves, including increasing awareness and understanding of the health implications for their daughters and grandchildren. Extended family members may also influence decision-making processes. Therefore, interventions should involve all members of the wider community stop child marriage
- ❖ When time come for the NGO to exit they have to do hand-over job to the government institutions for example Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of youth to mention just a few example. This is important in the sense that the government institutions will continue with work to the community and their programs. The community need a conductor for them to function well and produce fruitful results in their projects.
- ❖ The Government should ensure that the online birth registration system is implemented across the country so that girls' correct ages will be known and the falsification of ages will be prevented. This will enable legal steps to be taken by law enforcement agencies.
- ❖ Children themselves should be engaged to stop child marriage in their communities. They should be made aware of their rights and supported to take action through children's organisations to raise awareness on the detrimental effects of child marriage to families and local leaders, reporting cases when necessary.

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APPENDIX A: Interview guide for semi structured interviews.

My name is Tatenda S Shereni and I am a 4th year student at Bindura University of Science Education pursuing a Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in Development Studies. As part of my study I am conducting a research on the role of NGOs in reducing child marriages and poverty in rural. I kindly request you to provide answers to the following questions. All information that is going to be written on this questionnaire will be confidential and private it will be used for academic purposes only.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1) Indicate your age

10-15	
16-20	
21 and above	

2) Highest level of education

Primary level	
Ordinary level	
Illiterate	

3) Gender

Female	
Male	

- 4) Are you employed? Yes [.....] No [.....]
- 5) Do you have some children? Yes [.....] No [.....]
- 6) How would you define child marriage and poverty?
- 7) Can you briefly explain your socio-economic background and how it influenced you to get married?
- 8) What are the consequences of child marriage and poverty?
- 9) Who are the main offenders in early child marriages and poverty?
- 10) Are you aware of any efforts made by the NGOS to rectify the problem of child marriages and poverty in your community?
- 11) Have these efforts been effective in mitigating child marriages and poverty?
- 12) Can you outline some of the challenges that you face in your marriage relationship?
- 13) In your own opinion what can be done to fight early child marriages and poverty?

APPENDIX B: Interview guide for key informants

My name is Tatenda S Shereni, a student studying Honours Degree in Development Studies at Bindura University of Science Education. I am a fourth year student carrying out a research entitled the role of NGOs in reducing child marriage and poverty. I am kindly requesting your assistance with responses to a few questions that I have. All information will be used for academic purposes only and will be treated with outmost confidentiality. Your participation in this study is highly appreciated.

Questions:

1. What do you understand by the term child marriage and poverty?
2. What is the current local situation on child marriages and poverty in Mutoko district?
3. In your opinion which age group and sex is most affected by early child marriages?
5. As an organization what are the strategies you use in reducing child marriage and poverty?
6. How does the community respond to your strategies?
7. Are you partnering with other stakeholders in the mitigation of child marriages in the Mutoko? If yes what are the contributions of these stakeholders in the reduction of child marriages?
8. How far have you achieved your aim of reducing child marriage and poverty?
9. Are there any challenges you are facing in reducing child marriage and poverty?

10. What are your recommendations?

Thank you for your cooperation.

APPENDIX C: Focus group discussions

My name is Tatenda S Shereni, a student studying Honours Degree in Development Studies at Bindura University of Science Education. I am a fourth year student carrying out a research entitled the role of NGOs in reducing child marriage and poverty. I am kindly requesting your assistance with responses to a few questions that I have. All information will be used for academic purposes only and will be treated with outmost confidentiality. Your participation in this study is highly appreciated.

Questions:

1. What is your understanding of child marriages?
2. What are the causes of child marriages?
3. What are the effects of early marriages to the child, family and the community?
4. How do children in child marriages survive the challenging experiences of married life?
5. What role does NGOS play in fighting early child marriages?
6. Is the role of NGOS effective in fighting early child marriages?
7. How does community respond to the problem of early child marriages?
8. What challenges are encountered in fighting early child marriages?
9. What should be done to ensure effective reduction in early child marriages?

APPENDIX 4: Plagiarism copy

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