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MITIGATING COVID 19 INDUCED SCHOOL DROP OUT FOR THE GIRL CHILD A CASE OF THREE SCHOOLS IN WARD 11 IN MHONDORONGEZI DISTRICT

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In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the **BACHELOR OF SCIENCE HONORS DEGREE IN BIOLOGY EDUCATION**

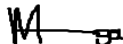
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DECLARATION FORM

I BHUNU LILIAN, do hereby declare to Bindura University of Science Education that this dissertation is my original work and all materials and academic sources of information have been duly acknowledged. This work has not been submitted to any other academic institution for the purposes of an academic merit



Signed

Date...

18 September 2022.

DEDICATION

To my beloved husband Farai Takawira, my son Blessed and my daughter Angel. Your support and love make me a happy woman.

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I would like to give glory to the Heavenly Father who made this intellectual expression a reality. Most importantly, I am so grateful for my supervisor Doctor Mandoga who was always there to help me through.

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ACRONYMS

BEAM - Basic Education Assistance Module

EFAP- Education for All Policy

NGO' s - Non-Governmental Organizations UNESCO - The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization

GCC - Girl Child Concerns

CAMFED - Campaign for Female Education

GCN - Girl Child Network

UNICEF - United Nations International Children's Education Fund

LEAP - Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty

ZIMPLATS - Zimbabwe Platinum Mines

ABSTRACT

This study's main purpose was to mitigate COVID 19 induced school dropouts for the girl child focusing on three schools in Mhondoro Ngezi District. The study was qualitative and quantitative in nature and the descriptive survey research design was used. This research design was preferred because it is the most appropriate design where self-reported beliefs and opinions of participants are sought out through the use of questionnaires, interviews and document analysis as research instruments. The population under study included all school dropouts' girls and key informants in form of headmasters and teachers. A total of 30 questionnaires were distributed to girls and (twenty) 20 completed the questionnaire. Fifteen (15) teachers also completed the questionnaire and three headmasters were interviewed. Convenience and purposive sampling was used to select respondents. Descriptive statistical analysis and content analysis were used to analyze data. The findings revealed that the major causes of dropouts are early marriages, teenage pregnancy, poverty, poor academic performance and long distance to school. The study established that the solutions to COVID 19 related school dropouts for the girl child are Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), income generating projects by parents, community mobilization and support for pregnant girls, legislative measures and ensuring meaningful participation for adolescent girls. Therefore, the study recommends that schools should conduct counselling sessions with girls, educating them on the importance of education, the government should build more schools so that girls who walk for long distances to school can complete their secondary school. The parents should have income generating projects for them to be able to pay school fees for their children. There is need to eliminate cultural barriers that act as obstacle to girl children's desire to stay in school. The teachers should ensure that there is meaningful participation for adolescent girls in school to reduce school dropout rate. It also recommends that the schools should link to funding organisations so that they assist in payment of school fees for all underprivileged girls.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction of the study

The COVID 19 pandemic has brought about a serious problem of school drop out for the girl child. It is important for a girl child to remain in school for the purpose of finishing studies. Education is vital for the development of a country socially and economically. Dropping out of school deprives the girl child of the right to education. Due to the prolonged COVID 19 lockdowns in the country, there was closure of schools. Some of the girls travelled to the cities in search for work as house maids and never returned to the classroom while some of the girls got married since the lockdowns were too long. In this case it is critical for the teachers, the school administration, families, the community, the government and other stake holders such as non-governmental organisations to find alternatives to solve the problem of school dropout for the girl child that has been induced by COVID 19. This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, and significance of the study, limitations and definition of terms used in the study

1.2 Background of the study problem.

For girl child, COVID 19 closure of schools have managed to trigger a high risk of exploitation and gender based violence resulting in school dropout (Cennimo 2019). Child marriage and early pregnancy is rising which is increasing the risk of dropout (Efrat, 2019). Due to closure of schools for a longer period of time, there was interruption of services that are important which help to keep girls in school such as clubs and co-curricular activities (Grant and Hallman, 2020).

Some of the girls lost hope of returning back to school when only the exam classes returned to school. As the number of girl child school dropout continue to increase there is limitation of employment opportunities since the economy requires labour force that is literate with technological skills. There is also high rate of income between school dropouts and other citizens in the country. As the girl child continue to drop out of school during the COVID 19 lockdowns, there is high rate of premature sexual activity which can lead to early pregnancies, drug abuse, suicide and crime (Akesson, 2020). The European Union on average has a dropout rate of 10 to 12% with Romania and Spain leading the continent with 16.4% and 16% respectively. In

Hungary the rate of dropout is at 12.5%. The United Kingdom has an average dropout rate of 6.4% and the learners are from ethnic minority groups with disadvantage backgrounds (Mostafa, 2021).

According to UNESCO (2019), the Asian region has the world's largest share of school drop out of about 46 million which is 45% of the worldwide total of about 104 million. School closures since the outbreak of COVID 19 in early 2020 have resulted in school dropout and disruption of children's education. Girls in South East Asia are dropping out of school to assume domestic chores during COVID 19 at high rates.

According to Hancock and Dorn (2020), about 232 000 learners never returned back to school in North America during the COVID 19 era. In South America, school dropout rate reached 6% in Chile and Argentina. In Africa, 40% of the children in Eastern and Southern Africa are out of school due to COVID 19 induced closures in school which include Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Uganda, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania and Kenya (UNICEF, 2021). According to Dzinamarira and Musuka (2021) in Zimbabwe about 840 000 learners dropped out of school and in Manicaland province over 400 girls dropped out of school due to lockdown pregnancies.

1.3 Statement of the problem

The number of children dropping out is alarming and becoming a cause of concern among educators, the Government of Zimbabwe and the world over (Chinyoka, 2015). UNICEF (2021) noted that more than 230 000 secondary school girls dropped out of school during the COVID 19 pandemic. A study conducted in 2008 in Zimbabwe rural areas showed a decline in the number of girls registering for the Ordinary Level examinations (Chinyoka, 2015). This shows that the issue of dropouts is a major concern hence there is need to come up with strategies to deal with it.

Besides, the Universal Declaration of Rights of 1948 clearly states that education is a basic human right. Alongside this, the 1948 Convention on the Right of the Child and the Zimbabwean Education Act (2012) state that every child should have the right to education (Mandina, 2015). Dropping out of school has deprived students their right to education hence viewed as a serious educational and social problem (Waiyaki, 2015). Leaving school before completion seriously affect the entire social and economic lives of dropouts. This implies that their future is severely

compromised and the fundamental right to education is infringed and neglected (Rumberger, 2018)

According to Chinyoka (2015) dropout cases among students may not decrease in the near future unless critical measures are taken by the society in general and government in particular to address the situation. The researcher being a teacher at Chingondo Secondary School, in Mhondoro Ngezi District has noted an increase in the dropout rate.

Although the government of Zimbabwe have made efforts on the welfare of the girl child to be improved through the Introduction of Basic Education Assistant Module (BEAM) and the introduction of the STEM program, the COVID 19 pandemic came as a huge blow resulting in school dropout. Despite the efforts that are being made, school drop out for the girl child remains a problem that is threatening schools (Grant and Hall, 2020). The desire to find out the mitigatory measures to COVID 19 induced school drop out for the girl child persuaded the researcher to carry out this study. This is vital since education is very important to the girl child due to contribution to the economic and social development of the country.

1.4 Main research question

- ★ What are the solutions to COVID 19 related school drop outs with respect to the girl child?

1.5 Sub- research questions

- ★ What are the causes of school drop outs in Mhondoro Ngezi District?
- ★ What is the role of the school in reducing COVID 19 related school drop out for the girl child during this COVID 19 pandemic era?
- ★ How can teacher to parent collaboration help to mitigate the COVID 19 induced school drop out with respect to the girl child?
- ★ What are the policies that are being implemented currently in reducing the rate of school drop out for the girl child?
- ★ How can non-governmental organizations be involved in reducing school dropout rate for the girl child?

1.6 Research aim

The aim of the study is to mitigate COVID 19 induced school drop outs for the girl child focusing on three schools in Ward 11 Mhondoro Ngezi District. The research seeks to address measures that can be employed during the COVID 19 era for girls to remain in school.

1.7 Research Objectives

- ★ To assess the role of the school in mitigating the school drop out for the girl child
- ★ To assess school- community collaborations on school drop out for the girl child
- ★ To evaluate the contribution of the non-governmental organizations in mitigating the school drop out for the girl child.

1.8 Significance of the study

The stated problem of school dropout was worth investigating since it has negative impacts on the education system in Zimbabwe. This study helped to find solutions to COVID 19 induced school drop out for the girl child in Mhondoro Ngezi District. The results from this study will help to contribute to the body of knowledge which is vital in policy making. The statistics obtained in the study will be useful to policy makers when implementing policies as a way of promoting the education for the girl child. The school authorities and parents will be guided on improving the education system and to reduce the rate for the girl child school dropout. The results of the study will be used to come up with suitable measures to be implemented to reduce the dropout rate in the schools. The fact that this study is site specific means that solutions will not be generalised but focused on schools in Mhondoro Ngezi District. Through interacting with respondents the researcher can improve interpersonal skills. The research will be used by other students for reference in their academic work during the duration of their studies.

1.9 Limitations of the study

Saunders and Thornhill (2016) defines limitations as factors that may hinder the researcher during the research process. It was difficult for the researcher to find information that is valid enough from the respondents because some of the schools and villages are scattered and are distant from each other. To solve this problem, the researcher asked for permission to stay in the villages for some days to collect data that is valid and the researcher also managed to find research assistance who reside in the areas who offered help during the collection of data. The researcher had inadequate financial resources to undertake the study that is money to travel to the schools and to print documents that include questionnaires. In this case, the researcher sought for help to sustain her funds from well-wishers. Besides, the research was done within a short space of time in which the researcher had to attend lessons and write assignments. However, the researcher had to find time to travel during weekends and look for the required data. The other biggest challenge was that the schools were inaccessible for there was no transport to get there. The researcher had to walk to get to the places. Lastly, the research is mainly focused on three rural schools, hence the results cannot be generalized to reflect the true situation in all rural schools in Zimbabwe.

1.10 Delimitations of the study

Delimitations refers to the characteristics that define boundaries and limit the scope of the study (Faircloth, 2019). The area under study is Ward 11 of Mhondoro Ngezi District. The findings of the research will be generalized to population and schools in this area. Mhondoro Ngezi District is found between Harare and Midlands Provinces. It is 80 km from Harare and 72 km from Midlands. There is high rate of mining activities which is evidenced by the presence of ZIMPLATS mine.

1.11 Methodology

According to Chung and Lee (2018) methodology can be defined as the methods or contextual framework of research that is based on the values, beliefs and views that guides the choices that are made by the researchers when collecting data. The researcher included mixed methods which include both qualitative and quantitative methods. The researcher visited three schools so as to

find out about the statistics for the girl child school drop outs. The communities were visited to find the causes for dropping out of school. Qualitative data collection method involved the use of interviews. Structured and semi structured interviews were used by the researcher. Semi structured interviews allowed the researcher to collect a wide range of information on solutions for the girl child school dropout. The researcher focused on the objectives and research questions.

Quantitative methods included the use of questionnaires. The questionnaires comprised a series of questions which were answered by respondents. Closed and open ended questions were used and the identity of the respondents was protected. The research was conducted in Ward 11 in Mhondoro Ngezi with girl child school drop outs. The information about the girls who dropped out of school during the COVID 19 lock down was provided by the class teachers through the use of registers and also by the school administration.

1.12 Definition of key terms

Nistico (2019) defines girl child as a female human who is young and the legal age is set by the laws of a particular country and in most countries is usually below 18 years.

School dropout refers to someone who leaves college or school before completing studies (Kara 2019).

Dropout rate is the rate at which school going children can leave school without finishing their studies (Altinkurt, 2019).

Cennimo (2019) defines COVID 19 as an illness that is caused by a severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 which was first identified in China due to an outbreak of the respiratory illness and the person infected can suffer from fever, shortness of breath and fever.

A school is an educational institution which is designed to provide learning environments and spaces for the teaching of learners (Akesson, 2020).

A community is a social unit which contains aspects in common such as religion, values, norms, identity and customs (Nistico, 2019).

1.15 Organisation of the study

The study include the background of the study which looks at the closure of schools resulting in school drop out for the girl child, the statement of the problem which seeks to address on the solutions to school dropout induced by COVID 19. Some of the research questions are answered in chapter 2 on review of literature. The study is significant in policy making. Chapter 3 include mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The research design include the research approach, paradigm and strategy. The sample was selected from the population and the data collected was analysed. The researcher respects the ethics in research. In chapter 4 the data was analysed and discussed. Summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations were given in Chapter 5.

1.1.6 Conclusion

The chapter introduced the study and gave an insight on the statement of the problem. Research questions, sub research questions, research objectives and research aim were stated. The significance of the study, limitations of the study and delimitations of the study were discussed. Mixed methods included qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed during data collection. Key terms which include girl child, school dropout, dropout rate, COVID 19, a school and community were defined. The researcher gave a summary of organization of the study. The next chapter focuses on the review of literature.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe is one of the countries which is struggling with the problem of school drop out for the girl child that has negative impacts on sustainable development. Girls who drop out of school lack the skills that are necessary for them to cope up with the changing world. The school, community, government and other stakeholders have the responsibility to make sure that every child progresses with their education until they finish their studies. There are various strategies that can be employed by the members above in order to solve the problem of school drop outs that was induced by the COVID 19 pandemic. This chapter is focusing on the causes and solutions of school drop outs for the girl child, the role of the school, teacher to parent collaborations, contributions of non-governmental organizations and government policies.

2.2 CAUSES OF SCHOOL DROP OUTS

2.2.1 Early marriage.

Customary marriages such as “kuzvarira” are still common which involves marrying an under-age girl without her consent to a rich man who already has another wife or wives in exchange for money, food and other material possessions. In Zimbabwe more than quarter (¼) of young girls marry before they reach the age of 18 for parents prepare them from a very early age for life as child bride. Research has shown that the drop-out rate in both primary and secondary schools is higher among girl children than among boys (Njile, 2015).

The other cultural belief that has caused the girl child to drop from school is widower inheritance (chimutsamapfihwa in Shona). The practice is still a norm in most ethnic groups of Zimbabwe that when the aunt dies, the person should be replaced by a clan or family member. A family member is believed to help the family of the deceased to have a smooth transition. The belief is that a stranger may abuse the children of the deceased hence they need to be replaced with the deceased' s own. The problem lies in that the culture ignores the age of the girl child. The children fall victims of HIV and AIDS especially when that would be the cause of the relation' s death (Fau 2016).

2. 2. 2 Poor academic performance

According to Chinyoka (2015) most learners drop out at Ordinary level stage when the students fail to pass their examinations and continue to repeat until they eventually stop. Moreover, parent' s desire to pay school fees also depends on the children' s pass rate at school. Hence poor academic performance has a role to play in contributing to school dropout.

2.2.3 Lack of financial support

According to Kara (2019) lack of finances for transport in rural areas where there are no nearby schools has caused the girl child to drop out from school. Some parents in remote areas of Africa have their nearest school about seven kilometers away. This has caused the girl child to lag behind in schooling as they go to school much older than their male counterparts. Long distance from school can also be a cause of early teen pregnancy and marriages. Lack of school fees and proper schooling dress may cause the girl child to lose confidence and self-esteem. This result in school dropouts due to fear of humiliation (UNICEF, 2019).

2.2.4 Poverty

Poverty is a cause of early teen pregnancy and marriages as parents marry off their daughters in search of dignity and survival resulting in school drop outs. In some cases the girl child may drop out from school for a certain period of time and then join later after the brother has completed or when the parents are economically stable. Across the globe in countries such as America twenty percent (20%) of girls between the age of fifteen and seventeen are involved in early teen marriage or pregnancy (UNICEF 2019). Poverty is as a result of limited employment opportunities in relation to the number of people available which result in people living in absolute poverty. There is high rate of poverty in rural areas which is worsened by the unavailability of employment opportunities (Fisher and Wambu 2015).

2.3 Theoretical framework

2.3.1 The feminist theory

According to Cammish 2019, the feminist theory seeks to explain the phenomenon of school dropout targeting mostly the girl child. School dropout among girls is a product of gender

imbalances which are enforced by gender roles and culture which neglects the potential of girls in matters to do with education. This results in the girl child dropping out of school. There are certain tribes in Africa which still practice such traditional beliefs (Robson, 2018).

2.3.2 Maslow hierarchy of needs theory

The theory is of the view that there is need to meet the basic needs for one to adjust to his or her own environment effectively. According to Kara 2019 the theory is based on the assumption that a need is a basic requirement that must be put into consideration for optimal adjustment to the environment. This has got implications to education in that if food is not available at home the girls cannot adjust to the school environment. The hungry children cannot cope with school work and in most cases they end up dropping out of school (Altinkurt, 2019).

2. 4 Solutions to school dropout for the girl child.

2. 4. 1 Lifting financial barriers that prevent girls from going to school.

According to Hunter (2020), the pandemic is hitting poorer families the hardest. A recent study that was carried out in Kenya revealed that 68 percent of respondents had skipped a meal or eaten less as a direct result of COVID-19. The economic impact on families and communities leaves adolescent girls at higher risk of child marriage, sexual exploitation and child labor. Providing school and examination fees could facilitate girls return to school. Strategies such as cash transfers for the most girls have proven to be effective. Sierra Leone government waived tuition and examination fees for all girl child learners for two academic years to motivate parents to send girls back to school. Additionally, in Ghana, keeping girls safe and learning is a priority during school closures. The Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection will increase cash transfers under the Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty (LEAP) Program for extremely poor households across Ghana, to facilitate girls' return to school in communities hard hit by the economic impact of COVID-19 (Ubogu, 2020).

2.4.2 Intensifying community mobilization and support for pregnant girls' education.

Communities should be actively engaged in supporting girls going back to school. Communities

must monitor girls' attendance once schools reopen, through school management committees and parent and teacher associations, and support their distance learning (Robson 2018).

The communities should ensure that girls can access learning materials online and offline during school closures, and that families remain committed to girls' education. For example, in Guatemala, UNICEF is working with the government to support communities in remote areas with poor connectivity and no electricity by providing printed material, TV, and radio messaging. This large-scale campaign is accompanied by distribution of baskets that include basic groceries and gender-responsive learning activities. (Bennell, 2020).

According to Hunter (2020), in Sierra Leone, the COVID-19 crisis forced a reassessment of policies that excluded pregnant girls from attending school. Learning from this experience, Sierra Leone's minister of basic and senior secondary education recently issued a new policy on radical inclusion and comprehensive safety, allowing pregnant girls and adolescent mothers to attend school, take exams, and learn safely once schools reopened.

2.4 .3 Prioritizing girls' safety and protection.

Violence against women and girls increased during COVID-19 lockdowns. Governments must prioritize measures to protect girls from gender-based violence, early marriage and pregnancy to facilitate their return to school (Cammish, 2019).

The government of Jordan, in partnership with UNICEF and the U.K. government, has responded with a set of comprehensive policies that include psychosocial support for girls through the non-formal education system, and teachers' professional development in life skills education and effective ways to support victims of violence. More than 180,000 children have benefited from these programs so far. In Cote d' Ivoire, with support from UNICEF, the government launched a nationwide distance learning program, called my school at home. Under this system, teachers, mothers' groups, community health workers, and community leaders track how the pandemic is affecting students and families, and offer insights on who may need protection from gender-based violence, child marriage and early pregnancy (Bennell 2020).

2.4.4 Ensuring meaningful participation for adolescent girls.

According to Ubogu (2020) adolescent girls and boys can be agents of change in their communities, but for this to happen, the education system needs to intentionally ensure equity of voice and opportunity of participation for all adolescent girls. An education system that recognizes that girls' voices are valuable and allows for their meaningful participation contributes towards girls' and women's empowerment. Innovative approaches can help to highlight girls' voices (Cammish, 2019).

Without urgent action to remove barriers to girls' education, the COVID-19 health crisis could become a children's rights crisis by denying students their right to learn. Now is the time for governments to reimagine education systems so that girls and boys have equal opportunity to attend school, or access quality learning (Robson, 2018).

2.5 The role of the school in reducing COVID 19 related school drop out

2.5.1 Awareness campaign

The school should create an awareness campaign team that will consist of the teachers and the other girl child learners. The teachers can start by collecting information about student enrollment and knowing the girls that have dropped from school. According to Kara (2019) the awareness campaign team can communicate with the parents, girl child and other teachers for identifying the drop out girl child learners. There is need for the team to increase the role and importance of parent to teacher associations. Together as parents and teachers they can help each other to implement the laws on compulsory education. The awareness campaign team sets up some goals of returning girls back to school, planning for the awareness campaign for proper implementation, (Altinkurt, 2019)

2.5.2 counselling for the girl child

School counselors have a task of identifying potential girl child drop outs and to find alternative ways for them to complete their education. The teachers as counsellors should be able to handle problems of girl child who drop out of school. Both individual and group counselling should be

employed so as to give support to girl child. Through counseling the girl child is given proper guidance on how to deal with problems that are psychological which can badly affect their attendance to school. The girl child can develop problem solving skills. According to Berkhum (2017) through counselling the girl child can be able to tell teachers about many experiences that make them uncomfortable in school.

Since the learners are behind in terms of coverage of the syllabus due to COVID-19 lockdowns, some of girl child can decide to drop out of school after feeling that they are behind in terms of coverage of the syllabus. Remedial classes can help to assist the girl child learners that are weak to cope up with low academic performance. The teachers can engage in career counseling. This can assist the girl child to develop in school activities. Through career guidance the girl child can be able to understand personal strengths and weaknesses and match them with skills and interests. Getting to know the career choice motivates the girl child to stay in school and to proceed with educational studies, (Foxyman 2020).

Career counselling can also help the learners to develop in school activities. The counselor can organize different co-curricular activities and all the girl children are encouraged to be involved for example a sports match. The main goal is to involve all the girl child and ensure that each and every student has a responsibility in the activities. The girl child can feel closer to school and other classmates and will think of school as a place of studying and fun. Each and every child will be entrusted with responsibility and an opportunity is given to know that she provides value and is valued by the teacher and other classmates (Michael 2019).

According to Backwell (2018) the teachers as counsellors can also organize other activities such as dividing the learners into groups and they discuss on topics such as the dangers of abusing drugs which can result in school dropout. Through working in groups a bond is created between the learners and they can find it interesting to come to school thereby reducing the chances of school dropout.

2.5.3 Female teachers as role models to reach girls

According to Dili (2015) female teachers can be selected in groups to raise awareness of the education of girls and to be able to express their concerns. The female teachers can establish

clubs for girls and to engage female learners that are senior in leadership of school. The selected girls can play an important role in motivating other girls to return to school. As mentors and role models the female teachers allow the girl child to feel more comfortable to come to school. Female teachers help to improve the education of girls and provide them with an environment which is safer and more comfortable. Women as role models in the education system help to reduce the school dropout rate since the girl child can admire female teachers and become eager to continue with education (Kara 2019).

2. 5. 4. Creation of programs at school

The programs should have prevention plans which are comprehensive and training, including conflict resolution, dealing with potential violence and crisis management help to create a safe learning environment for the girl child. They should also address sexual harassment, fights and rape and vandalism. To be successful, these programs should develop a safety plan and implement the plan updating it every year. Life skills on social competence, and problem recognition should be taught to the girl child. This strategy is a vital measure to ensure that girl child attend and remain in school without fear (Foxyman 2020).

2. 6. The role of the teacher to parents' collaboration in reducing school drop out

The teachers can involve parents in trying to solve girl child school dropout caused by the COVID 19 pandemic. According to Bradley (2018), students who continue with their education tend to have parents that are concerned, informed and involved with the education of the girl child. The teachers play an important role in bringing home and school together. Parents that are involved actively and who are engaged in children's education reduces the chances of school dropout. The teachers can increase the involvement of parents by drafting schedules for parent teacher meetings, availing their email addresses to parents and encouraging communication between teachers and the parents

The teacher can communicate the importance of involvement of parents through conducting an assessment of the students and families regarding the involvement of parents. According to Backwell (2018), a strategy that can be used to increase the involvement of parents is through organizing groups of parents that help in communicating with girl child through encouraging

them to stay in school. The teachers can provide parents with fact sheets in order to prepare for teacher - parent meetings describing steps to take before, during and after the meetings. Teachers can assist to reduce the school dropout rate through working with parents closely. The teachers can send letters and promote two way communication through the use of phone calls and emails. Special programs and peer support initiatives can be used by counsellors by addressing the instructional needs of the girl child (Bradley 2018).

According to Altinkurt (2019) service learning opportunities for learners is a strategy to reduce the rate of school dropout. Service learning is a learning and teaching method which connects meaningful and service experiences of the community with personal growth and academic learning. Through service learning the girl child can learn by doing learning from each other and promoting the engagement in community based projects. The girl children can collaborate with the community and engage in projects such as gardening, poultry keeping and sewing uniforms. The projects can encourage the girl child to remain in school. According to Kara (2019) the learners who are involved in service learning activities demonstrates increase in social, personal, academic and career development.

Teachers play a vital role in service learning. The teachers can discuss with the girl child on service learning projects through conducting guidance lessons in the classroom and the significance of developing character education skills which include empathy, gratitude, respect and humility. Service learning gives a great opportunity for learners to work as a team and they can be able to build self-esteem, self-efficacy and they can collaborate with positive adult role models (Backwell 2018).

The collaboration between the school and the community takes place when members of the community give support which is collective to the school to develop good infrastructure and an environment which is supportive for the girl child. For collaboration between school and community to be successful there is need for funding contributions, shared visions of having girl child to succeed and to remain in school until finishing of studies (Hunter 2020).

2.7 Contribution of non-governmental organizations in mitigating school drop out

According to UNICEF (2019) in Uganda the Uganda National Teachers Union (UNATU) is implementing a project to ensure the completion and retention of girl child education. In collaboration with the community, the organization is aiming at improving the education of the girl child and to prevent school drop outs. UNICEF also works with the government in Zimbabwe in order to develop menstrual hygiene and the packages of interventions in order to keep the girl child in school. There is provision of gender segregated bathrooms which improves sanitation service. This allows the girl child to manage the menstruation without discomfort. The organization is also providing materials that include tablets, computers, school kits with materials for science apparatus and text books. The availability of the materials help in such a way that learning becomes meaningful to girl child thereby reducing the chances of school drop out of girl child. In 2017 UNICEF also reached out to various parts of the country making efforts to return children to school.

Non-governmental organizations have played an important role in Zimbabwe in reducing the rate of children dropping out of school. These organizations have been active in providing education stationary such as school uniforms and textbooks. Organizations such as World vision have been critical in improving the education system of girl child which also enhance children' s eagerness to learn (Bennell 2020).

According to Robson (2018), in Malawi Camfed identified girls who had dropped out of school due to early pregnancy and child marriage and who wanted to be reintegrated into the education system. Through the help of the community Camfed worked to ensure that the girls get enough support as they returned to school. Support to girls was provided in such a way that there were bursaries for school fees and school uniforms and sanitary products to ensure that these girls stayed in school. Capacity building workshops were also provided to build the girls capacity in areas of self-esteem, education and sexual reproductive health. Sustainability was ensured through generating emotional and financial support to help girl to stay in school. A large number of girls in countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Ghana have benefited from the awareness campaign and some have become teachers, leaders and entrepreneurs that take girl child and helping them to stay in school (Cammish 2019).

2. 8.Government policies

In 2000 the Government of Zimbabwe had goals which include supporting compulsory and free education up to Ordinary level. The links between social services and the education system were strengthened to the education of girl child and development. The other goal was to make sure that there was equal distribution of resources from different partners for the girl child to remain in school. The BEAM funds played a vital role in keeping girls in school and the funds were channeled through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. The duty of the Ministry of Education was to keep all the girls in schools at all costs while ensuring the safety of the girl child through free and compulsory education. The school timetables were to be made more flexible to allow girl child heading families to attend and finish their education.

According to Ubogu (2020) in Ghana there was a policy that involved the creation of incentives for learners. The implementation of the initiative was aimed at attracting children to retain to school. This was in line with some established views that laws that make schooling compulsory were less likely to succeed and that initiatives that make schooling attractive by improving access to quality facilities have better chances of addressing issues like school dropouts and child labor.

2.9 Research Gap

A research gap is a problem that has not been answered or addressed in the previous studies in the form of journal, articles, reports and books (Pubrica, 2021). The geographical location where the research is being carried out makes the research unique. The research has not been conducted in the rural areas of Mhondoro Ngezi District in the context of COVID 19. The population under study include girl child learners aged between 13-16 years.

2. 10 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a theoretical basis for ease of interpretation of the research findings. It has given a clear understanding of the root of the research problem of school drop out for the girl

child. The causes and solutions were discussed. The researcher also stressed the importance of teacher to parent collaborations, the role of the school, involvement of non-governmental organizations and government policies. The next chapter will describe the research methodology used in the area of study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to highlight the research methodology used in the study. The chapter presents the research design which includes the research paradigm, research approach and the research strategy, population sampling, data collection methods and data analysis. Ethical considerations are also discussed.

3.2 Research design

Research design is the framework of research techniques and methods that are employed by the researcher (Magwa and Magwa, 2015). Kumar (2018) defines a research design as a plan, structure and strategy of investigation to obtain answers to research questions. It is the blueprint for conducting the study and is concerned with the type of data to be collected, how it will be collected and analysed. Designing a study helps the researcher to plan and implement the study in a way that will help to obtain intended results, thus increasing the chances of obtaining accurate information. (Sutton 2017). A descriptive survey approach was employed in this study. This research design was preferred because it is the most appropriate design where self-reported beliefs and opinions of participants are sought out through the use of questionnaires, interviews and document analysis as research instruments. It gives the researcher the opportunity to integrate both the quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. In addition the research findings can be comprehensive and it allows the researcher to analyze facts and helps in developing an in-depth understanding of the research problem (Travan, 2019).

3.2.1 Research paradigm

A research paradigm is an approach or model to research that is usually considered the standard by a number of researchers in the field based on having been both verified and practiced for a long period of time Mertens (2018). The research paradigm employed by the researcher involved the use of quantitative and qualitative methodology. This means that the researcher used mixed methods in the study. According to Cresswell (2015) quantitative methods involves positivism which is an approach of the measurements and numbers while qualitative methods involves

constructivism which is an approach of words and images. The research employed use of both numbers and words. The research paradigm also involved the process of data collection. The researcher obtained a letter from the institution which requested the headmasters of schools to cooperate and participate in the research process.

3.2.2 Research approach

A research approach refers to the procedure that is selected by the researcher to collect, analyze and interpret data (Klein, 2019). Quantitative approach is the collection and analysis of numerical data to explain, describe, predict or control a phenomena of interest. Qualitative research approach is the collection, analysis and interpretation of comprehensive visual and narrative data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest (Cresswell, 2015).

The researcher used mixed methods combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches by including both kinds of data in the study. According to Mertens (2018) mixed research methods enables the researcher to build on the relationship and strength that exists between qualitative and quantitative research approaches. This enables the phenomena that is being researched to be better understood. The methods of data collection that were used by researcher include questionnaires and interview.

3.2.3 Research strategy

A research strategy is a systematic process of how a research is conducted to solve an inquiry problem (Lincoln, 2017). The research strategy was selected basing on the research questions and objectives, the extent of existing knowledge, the amount of time and resources. The researcher was granted permission to conduct the research in the District. The researcher explained the purpose of study to the participants. There was the distribution of questionnaires to teachers in the three different schools and the headmasters were interviewed. The school headmasters provided statistics on girls that dropped out of school. Girls who dropped out of school also completed the questionnaire.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODS

3.3.1 Population Sampling

The process of selecting a portion to represent the entire population under investigation is known as sampling (Barker, 2017). Due to limited time and financial constraints, it was impossible to study the entire population hence a sample was selected.

Travan (2019) suggest that a target population is a group of people from which the required information is obtained. The study population included three secondary schools in Ward 11 which include Chingondo, Wanganui and Rimuka. It is in these schools that the researcher targeted teachers; school heads and dropouts from the community. Their names and addresses were given by the school authorities as well as community parents surrounding each and every school and this enabled the researcher to locate other girls who dropped out of school.

The population under study included 70 girls who dropped out of school. The key informants were 3 headmasters who were interviewed, 15 teachers who completed the questionnaire and 20 drop out girls who responded to the questionnaire. Some of the girls who dropped out of school migrated to other areas and were not reachable. The learners who dropped out of school were identified through non probability sampling method of snow bowling. The girl child who had dropped out of school led the researcher to others who had dropped out of school.

In this study, the researcher adopted convenience and purposive sampling. Convenience sampling is whereby samples are selected because they are accessible to the researcher (Kumar, 2018). Since the research was carried out during the course of the term, the teachers were busy concentrating on other activities so the researcher only worked with those available. Purposive sampling is a procedure where the participants are chosen based on the purpose of the study (Travan 2019).The researcher used purposive sampling technique in which the headmasters, teachers and girls who dropped out of school were purposively selected to provide relevant information of the study.

3.3.2 Data collection

Data collection instruments are methods of gathering or collecting data (Waiyaki, 2015). The study used primary and secondary data sources. Primary methods used include interviews and questionnaires. The researcher had to walk to different schools and the community to distribute questionnaires and to interview the school authorities. Secondary sources used include school enrolment documents. According to Triola (2018) data is referred to as all the information of different kinds that are obtained by researchers on their research subject. The data was collected from both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative data involves the use of description and quantitative methods involves the use of numbers (Saunders and Thornhill, 2017). Questionnaires included both open ended and closed questions and the data was collected from both the community and the school.

Sutton (2017) states that the questionnaire solicits factual informed information from respondents. Open ended questions gave the respondents an opportunity to give their full view of issues and thinking. Like any other research instrument, a questionnaire has some advantages and disadvantages. One of the strength is that responses are in permanent written form, which the researcher can always refer to. The disadvantage of a questionnaire is that there is no face to face interaction between the researcher and the respondent hence the respondent may fail to interpret the demands of the question thereby distorting the results of the whole study (Barker, 2017). The researcher arranged for a date with the participants on collection of the questionnaires and the researcher went in person to collect the questionnaires.

This researcher used face to face interviews with the school headmasters. Kumar (2018) describe an interview as a planned communication between two or more individuals of which one person assumes the position of an interviewer, asking questions on the topic and interviewee responding to the questions. According to Travan (2019), the level of interest shown by the interviewer can either spur the interviewee to open up or to make a mockery of the exercise thereby distorting the whole idea. The interview questions comprised of both structured and semi structured questions. The researcher chose the semi-structured interview in order to collect detailed information by

means of probing. Semi-structured interviews are flexible and allow the interviewer to exercise his or her initiative by modifying the initial list of questions in the course of the interview (Barker 2017).

3.3.2 Data analysis

Saunders and Thornhill (2017) define data analysis as the process of organizing, structuring and interpreting collected data. The data was analyzed using content analysis where similar information was selected and organized into categories related to the research questions. Descriptive format was employed since the data collected was through interviews and questionnaires. Both quantitative and qualitative analytical tools were employed when analyzing the data. There was analysis of numbers and description that gave detailed information. The data analyzed was from tables, pie chart and graphs.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Research is an activity that affects people's lives, therefore research should be ethical. Kumar (2018) perceives ethics as the application of moral principles while interacting with others in order to be respectful and fair so as to promote healthy relationships. The researcher should be careful enough not to hurt people who have to do with the research. Instead, there is need for openness; explaining the purpose of study and other information that might increase the research participants' willingness to participate or which could help them decide whether to agree or decline to participate in the study (Travan 2019). Sutton, (2017) maintains that every researcher has the obligation to protect participants' rights and welfare.

The ethical considerations that were considered by the researcher included informed consent, confidentiality and the right to privacy. The respondents were informed accurately since the nature of research needed their consent. The respondents were assured that the information that they were providing was kept private and confidential. To achieve this the respondents' names were not put in the questionnaires. The identity of the researcher was open to respondents. The researcher ensured that deception was not used for the purpose of obtaining information which was accurate from the respondents. There was respect on the right to privacy of respondents

since there was no attempt to access information from the respondents without their knowledge. Barker (2017) states that respondents' anonymity should be preserved to avoid possible embarrassment for providing certain information. Therefore, in agreement with this principle, the researcher assured the respondents that their views would be absolutely anonymous and confidential.

3.5 Summary

The research design was a framework that included qualitative and quantitative methods. This involved the use of data collection tools which include interviews and questionnaires. Interviews were structured and semi structured, questionnaires had open ended and closed questions. The data was collected using mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative methods. The ethical considerations included confidentiality, informed consent, deception and the right to privacy. The next chapter presents, analyses and discusses the study findings.

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 was the research methodology with include both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The school headmasters, teachers and girl children provided information concerning school drop outs. The information provided was through interviews and questionnaires. The interview questions were both structured and semi structured. The data collected involved description and numbers. The questionnaires included both open ended and closed questions and the data was collected from both the school and the community. Both quantitative and qualitative analytical tools were used when analyzing the data. The ethical considerations that that were taken into account included informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to privacy. Chapter 4 is focusing on data analysis, presentation and discussion of the results. This study was guided by the following research questions.

- ★ What are the solutions to COVID 19 related school drop outs with respect to the girl child?
- ★ What is the role of the school in reducing COVID 19 related school drop out for girl child during this COVID 19 pandemic era?
- ★ How can teacher to parent collaboration help to mitigate the COVID 19 induced school drop out with respect to the girl child?
- ★ What are the policies that are being implemented currently in reducing the rate of school drop out for the girl child?
- ★ How can non-governmental organizations be involved in reducing school dropout rate for the girl child?

4.2 PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

From the questionnaire that was given to 15 teachers from a sample of 3 schools in Mhondoro Ngezi District, the data collected showed that a school dropout is the one who leaves college or

school before completing studies. All the teachers responded by stating that their schools experienced some cases of school drop outs during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

Table 1: Number of girls who dropped out of school.

School	Number of girls who dropped out of school	Percentage
1	35	50%
2	20	29%
3	15	21%
Total	70	100%

The table showed that school 1 had the largest number of school drop outs followed by school 2 and finally school 3. There are more number of drop outs in school 1 because of poverty. Chinyoka (2015) states that the parents fail to raise their children' s school fees due to poverty because they mainly rely on farming which is continually being affected by inadequate rainfall. Moreover, learners from poverty stricken households come to school on empty stomachs, pay their school fees late, do not have decent school attire and usually faint at school (Rumberger, 2018). Textbooks and uniforms are beyond the means of many poor families resulting in poor academic performance thus leading to dropout (Waiyaki 2015).

4.2.1 Age frequency of drop outs

From the data collected on age range of the drop outs, it showed that a greater number of girls dropped out at the age of 16 to 19 years followed by 13 to 15 years as shown by the pie chart.

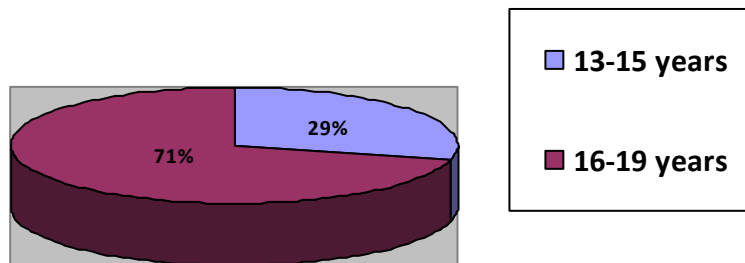


Figure 1.0 Age range of dropouts

This is because at this age peer influence have control over girl children. At this age most girls fall pregnant since they begin to interact with their male counterparts. The age group of 13 to 15 years has a small number of girls that have dropped out of school and this was also cited by school headmasters during the interviews. This is because of peer influence and decision making possibilities which are still low.

4.2.2 Responses from teachers on causes of school drop outs

Table 2: Teachers perceptions to the causes of school drop outs

Causes of school drop outs	Number of teachers	Percentages
Early marriages	5	33%
Lack of financial support	4	27%
Poor academic performance	3	20%
Long distance to school	3	20%
Total	15	100%

Five (5) teachers stated early marriage as the cause of school dropout. Early marriages are a product of cultural norms which include sects such as the Apostolic. The cultural norms are imposed on girl children as they grow up. According to Chinyoka (2015) there is need to eliminate such cultural norms as they have a negative influence in society. There is a link between age and drop out especially among girls, for example when girls reach the stage of puberty, they are sometimes withdrawn from school to get married. Customary marriages such as “kuzvarira” are still common which involves marrying an under- age girl without her consent to a rich man who already has another wife or wives in exchange for money, food and other material possessions (Njile, 2015).

The early marriages can be caused by pupils’ negative attitude towards school. Instead of concentrating on school work, they love money and are lured into marriage with items like phones, food stuffs, and money among others by school leavers particularly gold panners. The problem of early marriages is rooted in poverty as supported by Mandina (2015). Some of the schools are located in the resettlement areas where most families earn a living from farming as well as gold panning. Hence, the girls would want to escape these challenges and are likely to be lured by money into marriage. Again, these families struggle to secure income to finance their pupils’ education including providing for them proper uniforms and stationery. The problem of failing to pay fees especially examination fees may affect those students who have the potential to pass thereby leading them to drop out of school.

Lack of financial support from the parents was cited by 4 teachers. There are limited employment opportunities in rural areas and this places parents at a high risk of failing to pay school fees for their children. Waiyaki (2015) states that due to unemployment rates which are high in rural areas parents are unable to meet the needs of their children. This can cause children from low income families to drop out of school than those from families which are rich.

Three (3) teachers stated that poor academic performance is a cause of school dropout. This is mostly common at O level stage whereby students fail to pass their exams and continue to repeat until they eventually stop. Moreover, the desire of the parents to pay school fees depends on the children's pass rate at school. Hence poor academic performance has a role to play in contributing to school dropout (Rumberger 2018)

The ability of schools to educate and graduate their students determines the dropout rate. Poor academic achievement in schools as measured by grades, test scores, and grade retention is associated with dropping out. School effectiveness at high school level can be measured via dropout rates. This implies that the school's pass rate has a role to play in the retention of its learners (Wang, 2017).

Long distance which the children move to school was cited as another reason for secondary school dropout in Mhondoro Ngezi District by three (3) teachers. The long distance to school results in children failing to attend school certain days. When these children reach school they would be tired and no longer concentrating with their lessons. This will result in children losing interest with their studies which influence them to drop out of school.

4.2. 3 Solutions to school drop outs of girl child.

Table 3: Solutions to school drop out that were indicated by the teachers.

Solutions indicated	Number of responses	Percentage
Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM)	3	20%
Income generating projects by parents	6	40%
Community mobilisation and support for pregnant girls	1	7%
Legislative measures	3	20%
Ensuring meaningful participation for adolescent girls	2	13%
Total	15	100%

Income generating projects by parents had the largest number of responses of 6 (40%) teachers. The projects can economically empower the community members so that their quality of life can be improved. The profits from the projects can enable the parents to pay school fees for their children thereby reducing the rate of drop out of the girl child.

Three (3) teachers stated that BEAM assistance addresses the problem of school dropout through the payment of school fees for vulnerable children such as orphans for them to continue with their education. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare introduced the BEAM.

The use of legislation measures against perpetrators of early marriages and sexual abuse was also another opinion that was suggested by the teachers. These legislations can eliminate all cultural barriers that negatively affect the girl child's education such as early marriages that are a result of cultural aspirations. There is a link between age and drop out especially among girls, for example when girls reach puberty, they might be withdrawn from school and get married (Njile, 2015)

One of the teachers stated that there is need for community mobilisation and support for pregnant girls. The communities should be actively engaged in supporting girls going back to school. This is further supported by Bernell (2020) who states that the communities should ensure that girls can access learning materials online and offline during school closures and the families should remain committed to the girl's education to solve the problem of drop out of the girl child. Two (2) teachers had the response that there is need to ensure meaningful participation for adolescent girls. There is need for equity of participation for all adolescent girls and this can contribute towards their empowerment.

4.2.4 Role of the school to reduce school dropout rate.

Counselling of the girl child

The graph below shows the number of counselling sessions that are conducted by teachers from 3 different schools.

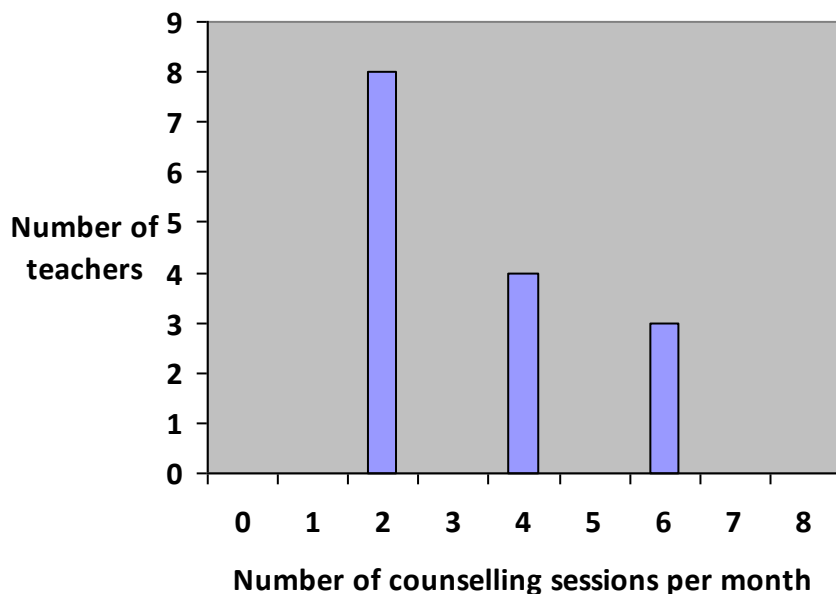


Figure 2: Counselling sessions by teachers

The highest number of teachers eight (8) conduct 2 counselling sessions per month. Four (4) teachers conduct four (4) counselling sessions and lastly three (3) teachers conduct six (6) counselling sessions per month. More teachers are conducting less counselling sessions which can result in an increase in the number of school drop out of girl child. The reasons why there are few counselling sessions in schools include heavy workload. The work load is not properly handled because the teachers have to be class and subject teachers. They are given teaching periods that are equal to general teachers and are expected to plan and provide guidance and counselling services and activities. The time for guidance and counselling is also insufficient. According Fisher and Wambu (2015), guidance and counselling teachers are not sufficiently relieved from their teaching duties to have adequate time to devote to guidance and counselling. The counselling sessions are offered during breaks, lunch breaks and after school. There is lack or a limited required resources such as materials needed in carrying out the counselling sessions, funds and proper teacher counsellor training. The guidance and counseling’ s teachers lack materials such as books, teaching aids and a counselling office which hinder effective service delivery.

Table 4: Teacher- parent collaborations

Teacher parent collaborations	Number of responses	Percentage
Those that collaborate with parents	2	13%
Those that do not collaborate with parents	13	87%
Total	15	100%

The responses from the teachers showed that only 13% of the teachers collaborate with parents in trying to reduce the rate of school dropout while 87% of the teachers do not collaborate with their parents. The reasons why most of the teachers do not involve parents are that the parents rarely come to school even during consultation days and meetings. According to Backwell (2018), a strategy that can be used to increase the involvement of parents is through organizing groups of parents that help in communicating with girl child through encouraging them to stay in school. Teachers can assist to reduce the school dropout rate through working with parents closely. The teachers can send letters and promote two way communication through the use of phone calls and emails.

4.2.5 Government policies

There were a number of policies that were cited by the 3 headmasters during the interviews. Zimbabwe's Ministry of Education, Sport, Art and Culture introduced a conditional reentry in 2010, which ended expulsion of pregnant girls from school and only allowed the girls to return after a three-month leave. According to UNESCO (2018) more than 6,000 pregnant girls dropped out of school in Zimbabwe in 2018. The Zimbabwe's amended Education Act prohibits corporal punishment and the exclusion of pregnant girls from school in accordance with the Constitution of Zimbabwe which guarantees the right to education. The government introduced a law which provides that children are not subject to any form of psychological or physical torture or to inhuman, cruel, or degrading treatment at school, and prohibits teachers from beating

students. A large number of students are affected by corporal punishment in Zimbabwe's schools resulting in school drop outs.

The amended law further provides that every school should provide suitable infrastructure for students with disabilities and requires government authorities to ensure disability rights are protected and accounted for in every school in the country. The law reasserts that no pupil shall be excluded from school for non-payment of school fees. The other headmaster responded that the government of Zimbabwe have the Education for All Policy (EFAP) for children regardless of sex. This positive legislation is being implemented in Zimbabwean schools.

4.2.6 Non-governmental organizations

The headmasters who were interviewed stated that there were a number of non-governmental organizations that help to reduce the rate of school drop out of the girl child. Girl Child Concerns (GCC) is a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to elevate the lives of girls through improved education opportunities. The female students with financial constraints are given scholarships. The Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) focuses on supporting girls in rural areas who are at risk of early marriage in rural areas. It covers needs which include uniforms, sanitary wear, school fees, boarding fees, bicycles, disability aids, pens and books.

The Girl Child Network (GCN) promotes empowerment and education of the girl child. The organization creates safe houses for girls in crisis in rural areas where girls can be protected getting training and are supported on education. The girls that are at risk of dropping out are supported with school fees, food and sanitary wear. The United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) support efforts to prevent girls dropping out of school. It supports the reintegration of pregnant girls back into school. It also enhances non formal education options and intersectional collaboration on education for girls with disabilities

4.2.7 Responses from girls who dropped out of school

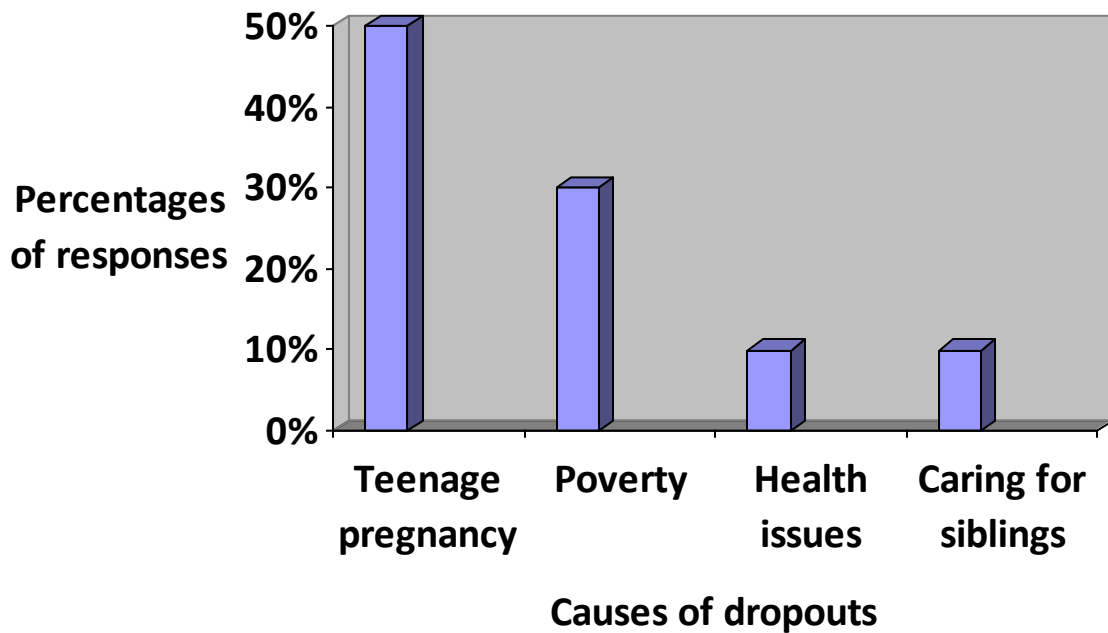


Figure 3. Causes of school drop of the girl child

The data collected from the girls who dropped out of school showed that out of the 20 girls 10 (50%) dropped out due to teenage pregnancy. According to Chinyoka (2015), pregnant girls may feel embarrassed about going back to school, struggle with morning sickness or fatigue and have difficulty in keeping with their classwork. However, the Zimbabwean government has maintained its policy which allows for the continued education of girls who become pregnant in primary or secondary school. The school girls are allowed to take time off from studies to give birth but some learners who become pregnant may not be admitted back to classes depending on the circumstances of each individual case. Although it has been liberalized to provide possibility of re-entry after childbirth, the number of those returning to school is very low.

Poverty had the second largest number of responses of 30% (6) drop outs. This is so because of limited employment opportunities in relation to the number of people available which result in people living in poverty. The rate of poverty is high in rural areas which is worsened but the availability of limited employment opportunities. This results in parents unable to meet the basic needs of children such as education resulting in school dropout. The pressure to withdraw from

school from children from poorer backgrounds increases as they get older (Fisher and Wambu 2015). 10%(2)girls stated that they dropped out of school due to health issues and the other 10%(2) learners dropped out because they wanted to take care of siblings. All the girls responded by stating that they regret being out of school and if given the opportunity they are willing to go back to school.

4.2. 8 Conclusion

The chapter analyzed and presented data in form of graphs, tables and pie chart. The data was captured from questionnaires and interviews pertaining to the solutions and reasons for dropping out of school by girl child in Mhondoro Ngezi District. The data collected addressed the research objectives. The next chapter will give possible recommendations, summary and conclusion to the study based on the analyzed data.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter gives recommendations to the dropping out problem for the three schools in Mhondoro Ngezi District as well as other nationwide schools. It states some ways that can be employed to solve the COVID 19 related school drop outs with respect to the girl child. Also, the summary of the study and conclusion drawn from the research findings is discussed. The study was guided by the following research questions.

- ★ What are the solutions to school drop out of the girl child induced by the COVID 19 pandemic?
- ★ What is the role of the school to reduce the school drop out of girl child during this COVID 19 pandemic era?
- ★ How can teacher to parent collaboration help to mitigate the COVID 19 induced school drop out of girl child?
- ★ What are the policies that are being implemented currently to reduce the rate of school drop out of girl child?
- ★ How can non-governmental organizations be involved to reduce school dropout rate of girl child?

5.2 Summary of the study

The research aimed at mitigating COVID 19 induced school drop outs for the girl child in Ward 11 in Mhondoro Ngezi District. The first chapter encompassed the background of the problem, research questions, aim, objectives, and significance of the study, limitations and delimitations of the study, methodology, definition of key terms and organization of the study.

The research objectives aimed at assessing the role of the school in mitigating the school drop out for the girl child, school - community collaborations and the contribution of non-governmental organizations in mitigating school dropout rate.

Literature pertaining to the solutions of dropouts for the girl child was reviewed in the second chapter. The third chapter discussed on the methodology where questionnaires and interviews were used as data collection tools. The targeted respondents were teachers, dropouts and headmasters. An analysis of the research findings was done in Chapter four. Data were analyzed and presented in form of pie chart, bar graphs and tables. The final chapter focuses on conclusions that are drawn from the study, and the recommendations.

5.4 Conclusions

The basic conclusions drawn from this study is that girls aged between 16- 19 years have higher percentages of dropping out of school. Early marriages, lack of financial support, poor academic performance, and long distance to school, teenage pregnancy, poverty, health issues and caring for siblings are the major causes of school dropout for the girl child. The solutions to mitigating the plight of girls that drop out of school are involvement in income generating projects, Basic Education Assistance Module, community mobilization and support for pregnant girls, legislative measures, ensuring meaningful participation for adolescent girls, counselling for the girl child by teachers, teacher - parent collaborations and involvement of non-governmental organizations in supporting girl child financially.

5.5 Recommendations

- ★ Schools should conduct counselling sessions with girl child learners, educating them on reproduction and teenage pregnancy, the importance of education and also encouraging to open up and disclose any difficulties or challenges which may cause them to drop out of school.
- ★ The schools should refer all the underprivileged girl children to organizations such as BEAM so that they will assist in their fees payment.

The schools should seek intervention from well-wishers such as the business community who can donate either in cash or in kind towards the purchasing of resources for girl children to continue with their education.

- ★ The teachers should collaborate with parents to solve the problem of school dropout. An effective teacher- parent association, school development committee and pupils partnership should be formed and team up to work together to encourage and assist girls on the verge of dropping out to remain in school. This should include both school authorities and parents since most girls spend most of their time at home and at school.
- ★ Parents should be educated so that they are familiar with the Human Right policy of education telling them of the consequences that may befall them if they fail to adhere to the Education policy which emphasises on education for all.
- ★ Parents and the government should build more schools so that girls who walk for long distances to school can complete their secondary school.
- ★ Parents should have income generating projects such as poultry for them to be able to pay school fees for their children.
- ★ There is need to eliminate cultural barriers that act as obstacle to girl children' s desire to stay in school.
- ★ The teachers should ensure that there is meaningful participation for adolescent girls in school to reduce school dropout rate.

5.6 Conclusion

The research was able to find ways to mitigate COVID 19 induced school drop out for the girl child placing much emphasis on Ward 11 in Mhondoro Ngezi District. There are various ways that can be employed to curb the problem of school drop out for the girl child and some of them include getting assistance from donors, counselling by teachers and encouraging parents to engage in income generating projects. The chapter focused on the summary of the study, conclusions of the study and the recommendations.

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APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

My name is Lilian Bhunu and I am carrying out a research study on mitigating school drop out of the girl child that was induced by COVID 19 as part fulfilment of the requirements of the HBScEd programme. I am requesting you to respond to the questions by way of ticking in the box adjacent to the question. The information that you volunteer will solely be used for the research study. Please note that you are not obliged to write your name on the questionnaire.

1. What do you understand by the term school drop out?

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2. Did your school experience any cases of school drop outs during the COVID-19 lockdowns?

Yes No

3. If your answer is yes how many were they?

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.....

4. Would you know the age range of the drop outs 13- 15 16 - 19

5. What were the causes of the drop outs?

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6. What can be done to curb these drop outs?

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7. How are the counselling sessions of the girl child conducted at your school?

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8. Have you tried to collaborate with the parents to solve the problem of school drop out of the girl child during the COVID 19 era?

.....
.....

APPENDIX 2 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GIRLS WHO DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL

My name is Lilian Bhunu and I am carrying out a research study on mitigating school drop out of the girl child that was induced by COVID 19 as part fulfilment of the requirements of the

HBScEd programme. I am requesting you to respond to the questions by way of ticking in the box adjacent to the question. The information that you volunteer will solely be used for the research study. Please note that you are not obliged to write your name on the questionnaire.

1. What do you understand by the term school drop out?

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2 .At what level of secondary education did you drop out of school?

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3. What is currently being done in your area to reduce the rate of school drop out of the girl child?

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4. What are your reasons for dropping out of school during lock down period?

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5. Are your parents supportive of your education?

Yes No

7. In your own opinion, what do you think can be done to address the problem of school dropout among the girl child learners?

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8. If given the opportunity do you wish to go back to school?

Yes

No

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL AUTHORITIES

What do you understand by the term school drop out?

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.....

Do you keep records of learners who drop out of school?

Yes

No

3. How many girls returned back to school at ZJC and O level?

.....
.....

4. At what school level of secondary education do most girls drop out of school?

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.....

5. What is currently being done in your area to reduce the rate of school drop out of girl child during the COVID 19 pandemic?

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6. Have you tried to engage senior learners to motivate other learners to return to school during the COVID-19 pandemic?

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6. What are the government policies that help to reduce the rate of school drop?

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7.Are non-governmental organizations helpful in reducing the rate of school drop out of girlchild?.....

.....
.....

APPENDIX 4: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN DIFFERENT SCHOOLS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

NAME: BHUNU LILIAN REG NUMBER: B211591B

PROGRAMME: HBScEd Physics/Maths/Chemistry/Biology PART: 2:1

This serves to confirm that the above is a bona fide student at Bindura University of Science Education in the Faculty of Science Education.

The student has to undertake research and thereafter present a Research Thesis in partial fulfillment of the Bachelor of Science Education Honours Degree programme. The research topic is:

Mitigating covid 19 induced school dropout for the girl child a case of three schools in ward 11 in Mhondoro Ngezi District

In this regard, the department kindly requests your permission to allow the student to carry out his/her research in your institutions.

Your co-operation and assistance is greatly appreciated.

Thank you

[Signature]

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