

**BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION**  
**FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**



**Child marriages in zimbabwe: catalysts, impacts and strategies to enhance girl child empowerment. Case of sohwe village, Muzarabani disrict, Zimbabwe**

**BY**

**PERSISTANCE CHITORO**

**B201043B**

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**SUPERVISOR: DR.SIZIBA**

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Name of Student: Persistence Chitoro

Student Number: B201043B

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate my research to my loving parents F. Chitoro and S. Chitoro, who have provided me with the support and inspiration to complete this work. I also dedicate this dissertation to my supervisor Dr. Siziba, my friends, family, Higherlife Foundation and everyone else who put effort to the success of this study. I also dedicate this work to all young girls and women in Zimbabwe who are affected by child marriage. This dissertation is my small contribution to raising awareness about this important issue and advocating for their rights.

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## ABSTRACT

*Child marriages that are also known as early marriages are a global issue that emerge with economic and health concerns. The problem is mainly dominated in developing countries for example Zimbabwe, Zambia, Ghana only to mention a few. The most recent data from UNICEF indicated that the percentage of child marriages in Zimbabwe is quite high. According to their figures, approximately thirty-one (31%) of girls in Zimbabwe are married before the age of eighteen years and around seven (7%) married before they turn fifteen (15) years of age. This research investigated the intricate and dynamic nature of child marriage in Zimbabwe, with a focus on the Muzarabani District of Zimbabwe. A sample of fifty (50) people participated in the study. There were four (4) teachers by gender two (2) males and two (2) females, twenty (20) parents, by gender ten (10) males and ten (10) females, twenty-three (23) children aged nine to seventeen (9-17) years of age by gender eighteen (18) girls and five (5) boys, one (1) healthcare worker and one (1) community councilor and one (1) headman. By combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, including questionnaires, interviews, eye observation, focus group discussions, and direct quotations, the study aimed to understand the catalysts, impacts, and potential strategies for eradicating child marriages. According to the results the district early marriage rates were very high with main catalyst being poverty, peer influence, cultural beliefs and illiteracy of parents. It was discovered that early marriages mainly affected girls. Impacts as well as solutions to the impacts of child marriages were also discussed in the study. The major recommendations were that the government of Zimbabwe should increase raising awareness about the harmful effects of child marriage, strengthen policies and laws that protect girls from child marriage, develop community-based interventions that address the root causes of child marriage and engage traditional leaders and community members in dialogues and educational campaigns about the negative consequences of child marriage, emphasizing its impact on girls' health, education, and future prospects.*

Key words: Child marriages, Catalysts; Impacts, Eradication, Girl child empowerment



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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

AIDS-Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

CAMFED-Campaign for Female Education

CEDAW-Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women

CSO-Central Statistics Office

DHS-Demography and Health Survey

EMES-Ethiopia Early Marriage Study

HIV-Human Immune deficiency Virus

ICRW-International Centre for Research on Women

IYPD-International Young People Developers

NGOs-Non-Governmental Organizations

PSAF-Panos Institute South Africa

STD-Sexually Transmitted Diseases

STIs-Sexually Transmitted Infections

UN-United Nations

UNICEF-United Nations Children's Fund

UNPF-United Nations Population Funds

USAID-United States Agency for International Development

WHO-World Health Organization



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 OVERVIEW**

This chapter focused on the introduction of the research. The background provided context for the research, while the statement of the problem articulated the specific issue or gap in the literature. The study purpose outlined the overarching goal, and the study objectives delineated specific, measurable outcomes. Research questions guided the inquiry, while the study significance emphasized the potential impact. Delimitations defined the study's boundaries, and limitations acknowledged its constraints. The definition of the study clarified key terms, and the organization of the study outlined its structure. Finally, the chapter summary encapsulated the key points discussed.

#### **1.2 BACKGROUND**

Child marriages also known as early marriages is a problem that has spread globally, regionally and locally. In Zimbabwe, early marriages have become a serious problem and threat to the health and education of young girls (UNICEF, 2021). Girls are married off due to several reasons that include the parents' desire to receive marriage tokens from the one marrying their daughter and as well preventing unwanted pregnancy from their daughter (Tongai, 2018). Among Zimbabwean societies, a girl brings shame to her family if gets pregnant without a husband. Among all Zimbabwean Provinces, Mashonaland Central has the largest rate of early marriages of fifty percent (50%), followed by Mashonaland East with thirty-eight percent (38%), followed by Manicaland with thirty-six percent (36%), followed by Masvingo with thirty-five percent (35%), followed by Midlands with thirty percent (30%) and lastly Matebeleland with only fifteen (15%) (UNICEF 2021). According to the United Nations (2019), Niger has the high percentage of early marriages in Africa. In the West African country, more than three fourths of girls aged under eighteen (18) years of age were married, with nearly thirty percent (30%) of them being younger than fifteen (15) years old.

According to the UN (2022), early marriage is more common in rural areas were sixty percent (60%) of girls usually get married before reaching eighteen (18) years whereas fifty-five percent (55%) of girls in urban areas fall preys to child marriages. UNICEF (2021) states that there are 290 million child brides in the region, accounting for forty-five percent (45%) of the global total.

Child marriage in Zimbabwe is more practiced than it is published, said the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) in 2017 Zimbabwean communities have economic hardships and that is another factor that rises the early marriages rate. Teenagers are prone to child bearing problem and put their health at risks (Zororo, 2019). This is because their bodies will not be physically strong to care for pregnancy carrying and delivering (Girls Not Brides, 2019). This hence has led to the research about child marriages in Zimbabwe which is monitored by the problem statement, the study purpose, background, the study significance, limitations and the delimitations.

Haviland (2020) explained marriage as a union which is sanctioned socially or a relationship between individuals that is recognized that formulated rights and goals between them, and it results in either adopted or biological children between them and their families. Generally, cultures and religions that differentiate marriages. Several societies in Zimbabwe have norms that prevents teenagers from getting married before the age of eighteen (18) years but however the teens’ psychological development does not limit them from getting into marriages (Mnyaka, 2018).

UNICEF (2019) defined child marriage as the formal or informal marriage of an individual that is below the age of eighteen years which usually denies girls access to their rights, education and health facilities. The definition gave emphasis on those early marriages poses negative impacts on the rights of girls and well-being and also sheds lights on the fact that the practice violates the human rights of across the world. The below table shows different definitions of early marriages provided by different sources.

Table 1.1: Definitions and sources of child marriages

Definition	Source
“Marriage that takes place before the legal age of adulthood, which is typically eighteen.”	United Nations International Children’s Education Fund (UNICEF,2019)
“A formal or informal union between a child under the age of eighteen and an adult and or another child. The practice is harmful to the child’s health and well-being.”	World Health Organization (WHO,2020)

“A formal marriage or informal union before the age of eighteen.”	United Nations Population Fund (UNPF,2017)
“A formal or informal union where one or both of the parties are under eighteen years of age.”	Girls Not Brides (2019)

In this study, the preferred definition was the one from World Health Organization (WHO) (2019) source. The definition was comprehensive and accurate. It included an explanation of the early marriages causes and consequences and also the definition included the description of the practice itself. The definition moreover has been endorsed by a highly respected organization with expertise in health and development issues.

In some societies of Zimbabwe, child marriage is taking place just because it is a system that has been happening for years since long ago (Shuro, 2021). Some communities groom a girl to become a woman once her mensuration cycle starts. Once the grooming lessons are over, the following step is marriage (Shandai, 2018). In Zimbabwe, mainly traditional practices and beliefs and the gender undermining of girls and women usually leads to child marriages (Mwenje, 2020).

Child marriage limit the enjoyment of childhood by young girls, education right and the right to freely choose spouses for their own choices (UNICEF, 2021). According to Suyanto (2023), early marriages on girls imposes negative impacts that limit the young to education and work opportunities due to domestic work responsibilities. Child marriages shoulder burdens to young girls with difficult responsibilities that can in turn harm their health for example, child bearing. (Kokerai, 2020). Again, early marriages sometime expose girls to domestic violence and verbal abuse that hurt their feelings. The child is exposed to increase in risk of contracting STIs and post-traumatic stress such as feelings of hopelessness, helplessness mad severe depression (Shuro, 2021). The increasing number of child marriages across Africa has led to policy makers putting more attention to the issue.

Boys and girls under the age of eighteen years are too young for marriage and sexual activities, Gangoli and Chantler (2019). This supports the point that marriage is not for people under the age of eighteen (18) years but however this has been unsuccessful as the rate of child marriages continue to dominate across Africa. In the study district Muzarabani, the rate of child marriage is

dominant due to gender inequality which sup has beliefs that girls are inferior to boys. Poverty has too led to parents marrying off their young daughters to much older men. Their lobola (bride price) is used to sustain the family, lack of educational opportunities and limited to access to health care.

Due to poverty, parents and guidance to children marry off their daughters in exchange for lobola price and bridal tokens. This is because the parents and guidance do not precisely know the consequences that it has on their children's health and social being (Mapfunde, 2021). Society's ignorance also makes them believing in marrying off or convincing young girls to get married under the age of eighteen (18) years. Contrary and as a matter of fact, child marriages expose children usually girls to life problems that they fail to handle physically and mentally for example, stress, difficulties in child delivering and also domestic violence (U.N, 2018).

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Child marriages is a complex issue that is usually influenced by a number of factors that include poverty, gender inequality, lack of education tradition, religion, cultural norms and weak legal protections (Jackal, 2020). The system poses unfavorable factors to children particularly girls. For example, susceptibility to gender-based-violence, limited education and economic opportunities, physical and psychological health problems. The government of Zimbabwe and NGOs are encouraged to address the various factors that influence the practice and support girls' empowerment and protection. Though child marriages have been advocated for in Sohwe village, the practice keeps on accelerating. Very few catalysts, impacts and solutions to child marriages are known hence the study presents bulk research about the nature of child marriages, causes, effects and the mitigations to solve child marriage in Sohwe Village under Chief Kasekete, Muzarabani District in Mashonaland Central, Zimbabwe.

### **1.4 STUDY PURPOSE**

The study purpose was to do the investigation on the nature of child marriages experienced in the district of study, the catalysts, of child marriages impacts of child marriages and strategies of eradicating child marriages in Sohwe Village in Muzarabani District.

### **1.5 STUDY OBJECTIVES**

The following objectives monitored the study:

1. To assess the child marriages nature found in the district of study

2. To explore the catalysts of child marriages in the district of study
3. To assess the impacts of child marriages in the study district
4. To examine strategies for eradicating child marriages and enhance girl child empowerment in the district of study

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What is the nature of early marriages found in the district of study?
2. What are the catalysts of child marriages in district of study?
3. What are the impacts of child marriages in the district of study?
4. What are strategies for eradicating child marriages and enhance girl child empowerment in study district?

## **1.7 STUDY SIGNIFICANCE**

Child marriage is a global issue that continues to affect millions of young girls and women each year, and it has a profound impact on their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Understanding the catalysts that drive child marriage, identifying its various impacts on the individual and society, and developing effective strategies to eradicate this harmful practice is crucial for promoting gender equality, protecting children's rights, and advancing global health and development goals.

### **1.7.1 Significance of the study to the researcher**

For the researcher, this study will provide a valuable opportunity to contribute to the literature on child marriage, build research skills and expertise, and gain insight into the lived experiences of girls affected by this practice.

### **1.7.2 Significance of the research to the residents**

For the residents of the case study village, this study will offer a platform to share their experiences and perspectives, raise awareness about the issue, and potentially influence policy and practice to improve the lives of girls in their community.

### **1.7.3 Significance of the study to the government and Non-Governmental Organizations**

This study will not only provide valuable insights into the factors driving child marriage, but also contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the consequences of child marriage. The findings will inform policymakers, educators, and civil society organizations on effective strategies to

prevent and eradicate child marriage, thereby supporting efforts to promote gender equality, reduce poverty, and improve the health and wellbeing of girls and women worldwide.

#### **1.7.4 Significance of the research to the academic society**

Lastly, for the academic society, this study will provide a deeper understanding of the complex factors that contribute to child marriage, and offer new insights into strategies for its eradication. This knowledge can be used to inform future research, and contribute to a growing body of evidence-based interventions to address this important global issue.

#### **1.8 DELIMITATIONS**

The researcher set boundaries for the scope of the research. Delimitation can refer to the aspects of the study that were intentionally excluded to make sure the research was manageable and focused. In this research, the main key was on girl child empowerment through child marriages eradication. The place of study involved that which early marriages were dominant. Girls and boys were included in the study. Elders both males and females were also included. Village stakeholders were also included in the study such that they provide information they had on early marriages. Moreover, the researcher hoped that the parents' participation in the research would assist in contributing to a positive change and bring some sense to the pre-existing information on the essentiality of education among girls.

#### **1.9 LIMITATIONS**

The researcher faced many drawbacks that seek to halt the success of the research. However, in spite those hardships the data collected assisted in the best outcome of the research and reliable information was acquired. The main setback was logistics. The researcher found it expensive to travel to Muzarabani District the project area. This was self-sponsored research hence it costed the researcher. Moreover, parents acted as a barrier to the success of the research project. Parents were not willing to share information fearing retaliation. Time was another limitation since the researcher was always occupied with assignments from other courses of the program, in class tests and also group presentations. Unavailability of participants was also a huge barrier. The researcher somehow failed to get participants since parents feared to draw their children from marriages. Some did have trust issues with the researcher and some of them were totally illiterate hence the researcher involved the headman to convince the village to participate.

## **1.10 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**Child:** An individual that is trill below the age of eighteen (18) (UN, 2018)

**Marriage:** A union which is sanctioned socially or a relationship between individuals that is recognized that formulated rights and goals between them, and it results in either adopted or biological children between them and their families (Haviland, 2020)

**Child marriage:** The formal or informal marriage of an individual that is below the age of eighteen years which usually denies girls access to their rights, education and health facilities. (UNICEF, 2019).

**Girl child:** Female child under the age of eighteen (18) years (Girls not Brides, 2023)

**Enhance:** To improve something by adding features or to lift up and promote (Oxford Mini Dictionary, 2020)

**Empowerment:** Giving moral or physical power, faculties, abilities, or abilities to (English Dictionary, 2023)

**Rural:** Relating to the countryside and not urban (Peters, 2020)

**Remote Area:** A distant and primitive place (Peters, 2014).

**District:** An administrative division of an area (Malvern, 2017)

**Province:** The part of a country outside its capacity capital city (Peters, 2018).

## **1.11 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

### **1.11.1 Chapter one (1)-Introduction**

In Chapter one (1) the focus was on the introduction of the research.

### **1.11.2 Chapter two (2)-Literature review**

In Chapter two (2) of the study, the focus was on the literature review, which presented a comprehensive analysis of existing research and scholarly works related to the study's topic.

### **1.11.3 Chapter three (3) -Methodology**

In Chapter three (3), the methodology of the research took center stage, encompassing a comprehensive overview of the approach adopted.

#### **1.11.4 Chapter four (4)-Presentation of the findings**

In Chapter four (4) the presentation of the findings unfolds through a structured and comprehensive approach, providing a detailed insight into the research outcomes.

#### **1.11.5 Chapter five (5) - Conclusion and Recommendations**

In Chapter Five (5) of the research, the conclusion and recommendations were presented in a structured and comprehensive manner, providing a thorough exploration of the research outcomes.

#### **1.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In summary, the first chapter explained the study background, the study significance, objectives, questions of the research, and study purpose limitations together with delimitations. The next chapter focused on the study literature review early marriages. The research paid particular attention to the investigating the catalysts, impacts and strategies of eradicating child marriages in Sohwe Village Muzarabani District, Mashonaland Central Province in Zimbabwe.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 OVERVIEW**

This chapter provided a comprehensive exploration of child marriages, beginning with a global overview before delving into the specific context of Sub-Saharan Africa and Zimbabwe. The chapter identified the gap in understanding child marriages in Zimbabwe that the study aimed to fill. It established a theoretical framework for analyzing the nature of child marriages, explores the catalysts behind this phenomenon, and examines its profound impacts. Moreover, the chapter outlined various strategies aimed at ending child marriages. Finally, the chapter concluded with a summary that encapsulated the key insights and findings presented.

#### **2.2 CHILD MARRIAGES IN ZIMBABWE**

In Zimbabwe, an estimated number of thirty-four percent (34%) of child marriages was recorded in 2015 where small girls got married before reaching eighteen years and six percent (6%) got into marriage without reaching fifteen (15%). Only three percent (3%) of boys were involved in child marriages. (Girls Not Brides, 2019). The Constitutional Court in 2016 passed a law that no child under the age of eighteen should be married off whether male or female (Mushangwa, 2017). It is therefore against the law for parents or guidance to accept the bride price (lobola) for a girl under the age of eighteen years. However, child marriages have not yet been totally criminalized in Zimbabwe (Gumbi, 2019). The Marange Apostolic Christian sect is involved in child marriage practicing without any legal action taken upon them. The Marange Apostolic sect is large group of an estimated number of 2 million members. The group is very powerful and influential religious group in Zimbabwe. The Marange have been engaged in child marriages for years (Mukonoweshuro, 2021). It is believed that the government of Zimbabwe has several times attempted to regulate the sect and their practices but they have failed due to significant pushbacks from the sect and its members. It is also believed that the government may feel hesitant to temper with the sect and criminalize them fearing to create social unrest and conflict within the country. Moreover, the practice is a religious practice and criminalizing it would be regarded as an attack to religious freedom (Changome, 2016). The Marange sect practice has been condemned widely by the International Human Rights Organization where over 50% of girls are married before eighteen years (Mafunga, 2015). The government of Zimbabwe has been reluctant to take action.

Furthermore, the Marange region is richly deposited with diamonds and is one of the rich diamond's regions in the world. The sect has significant control over the mining and sale of diamonds in the region. This however has raised concerns that any action taken against the sect could have a negative impact in the Zimbabwean economy (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

The practice of dead spirit appeasement with a girl child is widely spread in Zimbabwe especially in rural areas where the Zimbabwean culture is strongly upheld (Mangeya, 2018). The perpetrators are not criminalized yet it is an act of the violation of human rights. The reason could be that the practice is deeply rooted in the culture of the country and it may be difficult to change cultural traditions and beliefs (Mavhunga, 2020). Moreover, there may be concerns about how such a law would be enforced and whether it would bring more harm than good to the country. Moreover, according to Chakanetsa (2017), the practice is a religious ritual and criminalizing it would be regarded as an attack to religious freedoms. Again, members of the community regard it as an important part of the culture hence removing or changing it would be regarded as an attempt to erase their culture or identity (International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law, 2019).

Early marriages affect particularly the health of girls by exposing them to STIs, premature death, domestic violence among other factors (Gwatiringa, 2020). Many organizations have worked tirelessly to reduce child marriages. Some organizations have put blame on parents and guidance for the increase of child marriages in Zimbabwe for poorly raising their children (Gwasela, 2013.). This has been followed by reports of school dropouts of girls whose education is funded Higherlife Foundation and the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED). This is dominant in Mashonaland Central and Midlands Provinces that has the cash prevalence due illegal gold miners (Jamba, 2019) and in Masvingo Province.

In Zimbabwe, early marriages are commonly found in remote areas, where more than half of young girls become child brides. (Chidavaenzi, 2020). Poverty is the major causal factor as well as traditional practices and cultural beliefs. In some communities, most families use girls to repay debt by marrying them off to the families that they owe. Other families practice the "Kuroodza" system where they marry off their daughters whilst young to older men. Once the girl reaches mensuration stage, she will be ready to go to the older man she was married off to. This is usually practiced by poor families who regards "Kuroodza" practice as a financial breakthrough. In other cases, families, may view early marriages as a sure way to give protection to girls from sexual

violence (Maradzike, 2020). Child marriages pose serious consequences to the girl child for example, high risk of early pregnancy and childbirth complications and a lower chance of completing their education. In Zimbabwe, the Mashonaland Central Province has the largest prevalence rate of early marriages with over half of young girls getting married before the age of eighteen, Masvingo Province about one-third of girls are victims of early marriages (Sithole, 2021). Matebeleland South Province, over forty percent (40%) of girls are experiencing child marriages, only to mention a few provinces. In Mashonaland Province, districts which has got high prevalence rates of child marriages are Guruve, Mt Darwin and Muzarabani. Traditional and cultural beliefs about the role of women and girls in societies often contribute to child marriages in these districts. For instance, in some communities, girls are regarded as objects that can be exchanged for wealth and cattle. The government of Zimbabwe and NGOs have made efforts to address child marriages in Mashonaland Central Province, including working with traditional leaders to change attitudes about gender roles and marriage (Takavada, 2021).

The Masvingo Province has got about one third of girls married under the age of eighteen years (UNICEF, 2020). Child marriages are most widespread in some districts that include Chiredzi, Bikita, Zaka and Gutu. In the named districts, families marry off their daughters as a way of poverty alleviation or because that have faith that the act protect their daughters from sexual violence or marriage outside the wedlock. Nevertheless, child marriages have the opposite effect, leading to domestic violence, HIV and AIDs, maternal mortality a, school dropouts and lack of economic opportunities (UNICEF, 2020). Government of Zimbabwe, in trying to address child marriage in Masvingo Province, the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development has been assisting communities to raise awareness about the issue. The ministry also has been offering support to child brides and their families and helping the victims to return to school. The Ministry has been working hand in hand with the police to investigate child marriage cases and ensure that the perpetrators are held accountable (Tsava, 2019).

Child marriages are also prevalent in Matebeleland South Province in districts that include Beitbridge, Gwanda and Umzingwane ((Mtimanze, 2021). Child marriages consequences are suffered particularly by girls who are forced into marriage with older men. They experience sexual abuse, school dropouts and mental abuse. Districts in Matebeleland North Province that include Nkayi, Lupane and Binga are also involved in child marriages (Molapo, 2020) The Midlands

Province also has got districts with high recovered child marriages. These include Gokwe, Chirumanzu and Mberengwa (Mwenje, 2020). Causes of child marriages in these districts include poverty, gender inequality and limited economic opportunities for girls. The Manicaland Province also is affected by child marriages in districts such as Mutare, Chipinge and Chimanimani. In these districts, Child marriages are influenced by poverty, religious beliefs and lack of understanding of legal age. Mudzi, Marondera and Mutoko are the district with highest rates of child marriages in the Mashonaland East Province (Mnyaka, 2018).

Several NGOs have worked together to address the challenges of child marriages in the named districts. This is because child marriages are one of the drivers of underdevelopment in Zimbabwe (Magwaliwa, 2020). The NGOs include Zimbabwe's Women's, Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN) which gives women and girls empowerment and to promote gender equality. There is also the African Women's Development and Community Network which works to promote women's rights and girls in Africa (Shandai, 2018).

### **2.3 GAP FILLED BY THE STUDY**

While the above research by named several scholars has provided valuable insights into the drivers and impacts of child marriage, there remains a significant gap in understanding the intricate and dynamic nature of this harmful practice in rural contexts. The proposed study aims to deepen our understanding of the catalysts, impacts, and potential strategies for eradicating child marriage by delving into the lived experiences and perspectives of girls, boys, parents, traditional leaders, and other stakeholders in the Muzarabani District of Zimbabwe.

### **2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Ecological Systems Model:

This study of girl child empowerment through child marriages eradication used Ecological Systems Model as its base which was developed by Urie Bronfenbrene. The theory states the development of an individual is influenced by several systems or environment which have an interaction to affect development of an individual. Through the Ecological Systems Model theory, child marriages can be understood as an issue difficult to make precise which a product of influence of a number of factors. In this theory, the author made a suggestion that child marriages are influenced by microsystems, meso-systems, ecosystems, poverty and economic conditions, family and community norms, social and cultural factors and education.

The theory states that the behavior and the development of a child is determined mostly by the environment she or he grown and play. Family and community norms, poverty and economic condition, social and cultural factors can act as a base that is primarily for the development of a child. The meso-system in Ecological Systems Theory explains that family, school, peers and the community bring focus on the development and learning of a child basing on the positive relationship of a home and school (Morris, 2017). Therefore, the community can allow a child to get married while mature or whilst young. Organizations and governments have the ability to end child marriages through providing health education and reproductive education to families and different communities. Hence, basing on the study, the catalysts of child marriages have revealed by the theory in which cultural beliefs, tradition and religion tend to be the major drivers.

## **2.5 NATURE OF CHILD MARRIAGES**

The most common trio of events in several human lives include birth, marriage and death. Of the three common standards, marriage only is a matter of choice. Marriage as means of free choice has been recognized by the law and has been put under the human rights (Mapfunde, 2021). This however, has been contradictory in most areas worldwide where most girls and a smaller number of boys are forced to enter in marriage without given the opportunity to freely choose spouse (Shandai, 2018). Younger girls and less boys are forced into marriages by guidance or parents before that are mature enough to make decisions about marriage partners. It is their ignorant that some guidance or parents reply on to give what passes as their 'consent' to the marriages (Tsava, 2019).

Child marriages are very dominant in Sohwe Village, the area of study. Early marriages have negatively impacted seriously on both boys and girls. The system poses physical, psychological, emotional and intellectual impacts to its victims. The system permanently affects the educational opportunity in young girls and boys and also their personal development (Moyo, 2020). In addition, child marriages normally lead to early pregnancies which poses effects to child bearing and also lead to a life physical and emotional violence. The young girls usually have no control over the consequences (Gumbi, 2019).

In several areas where child marriages are practiced, the boys' value is different to that of girls. Many societies view education of a girl child as a waste of resources since she would eventually get married and become the groom's family (Zororo, 2019). This is the reason why many parents

fail to understand the need for girl child education. Most families prefer to educate boys since they are regarded as carriers of the family name. Yet in turn if the girl child is education, she can invest in her family and also her self-development. This can prevent her from falling prey to human rights violators that seeks to marry young girls before they are mature. Girl child empowerment through education also enables her to know her rights and what to do if she is victimized. Social norms and practices are also drivers of early marriages in societies. The girl child not portrayed as a useful thing other than a future wife (Yeuchidza, 2015).

In the context of child marriages, the interplay between peer influence and self-decision is a complex and significant aspect. Peer influence has a broad influence on young children, potentially leading them to make decisions that they may not have made independently. This influence can be particularly pronounced during the vulnerable period of adolescence when individuals are more susceptible to the opinions and actions of their peers (Zororo, 2019).

Conversely, the ability of children to make self-determined decisions regarding marriage can be impacted by various factors, including their level of self-reliance and self-knowledge. The empowerment given to children to have development of self-reliance and self-knowledge can play a crucial role in enabling them to make decisions that align with their own values and aspirations, rather than succumbing to external pressures (Shuro, 2021).

Several factors have contributed to child marriages in Sohwe Village and children particularly girls have suffered from the consequences. Many organizations have contributed in dealing with the issue. Despite that, rates of child marriages in Sohwe Village have continued to accelerate and this has pushed the researcher to investigate about child marriages, adding more knowledge to the already existing information. Gaps on the catalysts, impacts and ways to eradicate child marriages in Sohwe Village have been filled.

## **2.6 CAUSES OF CHILD OR EARLY MARRIAGES**

The practice of child marriages that is dominant in various parts of the world. It is a practice that is as a way of tradition, religious commitment, and also a poverty driven practice. In early days, parents married off their daughters as a way of building or maintaining or uniting two families. In this modern present day, child marriages practice is still practiced in rural areas or in areas with less girl' prospects. The victims have no say on the issue or no decision on the matter. It is parents or guidance who are responsible the marriage arrangements.” Poverty drives child or early,

marriages at most in Zimbabwe”, says Girls Not Brides (2019). Girls are regarded as poverty security by parents and they marry them off as a way of reducing economic burden. Many poor families practice child marriage as a way of reducing number of children to clothe, feed and educate (Kokerai, 2020). Moreover, most families abide to societal norms and pressure which lead them agree marrying off their daughters whilst they are still young. This might be a case in Sohwe Village of Chief Kasekete in Muzarabani, Mashonaland Central Province in Zimbabwe. Shandai (2018) added that children who refuse to get betrothed to the chosen family sometimes get harsh punishment or get their exiled from the village.

Parents in Sohwe Village feel comfortable and proud of betrothing their daughters to a well-respected family for they acquire good social status in the community. The practice moreover makes them feel that they have served their daughters from rape, pregnancies outside wedlock, and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (Vunganayi, 2021). UNICEF (2021) explained several drivers of child marriages of girls that include the undermining of girl child education. Unmarried girls are regarded as a liability to the family. Most families do not send their daughters to school believing that it is a waste of family resources. This is because their lack of education makes them believe that girls are only meant to be raised and finally married. It is believed that educating a girl child is a waste of time and finance since she is investing in the groom’s family. This might be the perception of several families in Sohwe Village. UNICEF (2021) further explained weak enforcements of the law as another driver of early marriages. There is poor law enforcement in societies where child marriages are commonly practiced. Also, parents and the victims of child marriages have limited knowledge of the law.

Major causes of early marriages include poverty, traditional beliefs that include ensuring chastity and virginity of the bride, social ties, and ignorance towards girl child education as parents fear to invest in girls’ education, lack of health education and lack of counselling (Moyo, 2020). It was discovered that child marriages globally usually occur among societies that share the following common perspectives and backgrounds for example, among poor people, the unemployed and the illiterate (Shuro, 2021). Some other catalysts of early marriages in Sohwe Village includes lack of education and awareness, inaccessible media, ignorance of policies of government and the guardians or the parents fear to invest in a girl. Another Organization stated that to reduce child marriages, young girls need to be educated and know their rights (PSAF, 2020). Sadly, parents

withdraw their children from school when have not yet acquired any sex and health education. The organization further hints that there in need to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and need to address the causal factors and impacts of early marriages.

### **2.6.1 Poverty**

Poverty is one of the major drivers of child marriages at global level. In homesteads where poverty is intense, a girl child is seen as an asset that can serve the whole family from economic burdens. This hence leads to the family or guidance to marry off their daughter to a financially better family or an elderly man that is financially upright. The practice of poverty driven child marriages is most common in Middle Eastern and South Asian societies (Digets ,2016). In several societies, the family of the bride usually receives tokens from the bride commonly in form of cattle and money or clothing. The system recently has reviewed that young girls from poor families in Egypt are being married off to the elderly in exchange of precious token. A recent study of UNICEF shows that economic burdens has stirred the practice of child marriages also in populations that were not used to the system. In Eastern Africa, poverty has influenced caregivers that cares for orphaned girls to also betroth the poor girls at a tender age (NAC, 2022). Furthermore, research has also found that families in Burundi refugee camps have also indulge I marrying off their young children as a way of survival. Iraq has recently reported the rise of child marriage as a result of poverty (UNICEF, 2021). Also, civil wars in Afghanistan have also influenced child marriages where poverty has stricken the county and parents resort to child marriages so as to earn a living through the receiving of bridal tokens.

The United Nations in 2017 reported that poverty was the major causes of child brides in Zimbabwe. Parents and guidance benefit from marrying of their daughters' richer families. They are given cattle and food in return that sustains them from poverty and starvation. Parents in Sohwe Village fail to recognize their long-term effects child marriages have on children but rather are satisfied with the short-term benefits they get from the bridegroom. Some literature sources by Yeuchidza (2015), acknowledge that several households in Sohwe marry off their daughters because they cannot afford the costs to raise their children, need for finance and food security and also need for better social status in the community. Moreover, natural factors such as death of a family breadwinner, poor harvest leading to low yields may led to families marrying off their



daughters and these factors can be drivers of early marriages among Zimbabwean societies (Zororo, 2019). This might be the case in Sohwe Village in Muzarabani District in Zimbabwe.

### **2.6.2 Traditional Beliefs**

Societies that practice child marriages believe that it is a way of ‘protecting’ the girl child (Changome, 2016). Parents and guidance give away their daughters to older men whilst they are young to understand the concept of marriage. The young girls are married young, submits to their husbands, do all the household chores of their homesteads or of their in-laws, bear ‘legitimate’, children that ‘binds the love ‘between her and the spouse, maintaining good family name. Parents and guidance usually feel comfortable knowing their daughter is in ‘safe’ hands of a grown mature man. Research have reported several times in Northern Uganda marrying off their daughters whilst young so as to acquire respect and upholding the family name. It has been reported that rates of early marriages have increased in Somalia following the regular political conflicts (Samana, 2016).

Many societies prioritize the virginity of a girl before marriage and they have beliefs that it symbolizes sexual purity and trustworthy of the girl hence they practice early marriage to make sure that girls are married ‘clean’. (Gumbi, 2019). Marrying off daughters whilst young enables prevention of premarital sex and clean marriage initiation. In many countries including North East Africa and Middle East, several practices are done to make sure the girl child are married virgins and sexual pure. For example, girl can be restricted from some kind of clothes or she go for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). In some societies, they practice excision where girl’s clitoris is cut to avoid excess sexual desires (Goli, 2023). Several parents in Sohwe Village fish out their daughters from school once they start mensuration as a way of ‘protecting’ them from interaction with male pupils in classroom (Masinire, 2018).

### **2.6.3 Negative attitude towards educating girls**

The United Nations (2018) conducted research that exposed negative attitude towards girl child as a driver to child marriages. Girls’ success in their academic endeavors is to a larger extent anchored by parents and guardians’ attitude and support. Gender roles of girls and women together with traditional beliefs convince parents and community attitude towards the girl child education. (Tsava,2019). Young girls are viewed as future wives that are ought to be submissive to their future husbands and to quench sexual gratification of their future men. Societies regard girls as less significant in the community due to their nature of being physically weak hence it is believed that

they need a male counterpart to protect them. This belief has continued to be dominant even in the present days of socioeconomic development (Mapfunde, 2021). The development has made education accessible to girls and not only for their social life improvement but also for the development of the living standards of other individuals, their families and communities. The ancient traditional beliefs have continued to enhance the unfavorable attitude to girls' education which limits the family and community participation in girls' education. It is essential to detect and assess these attitudes before seeking solutions on what should be done to bring change (Maradzike, 2020). It is unchallengeable that the participation of parents and the engagement of the community sustains girl child education improvement (UNICEF, 2021).

Several parents and communities' members view the education provision to a girl child as wasting resources since girls end up in marriage and their education sustaining the family of the bridegroom. The girl's family consider it as a great loss, (United Nations, 2020). If parents in Sohwe Village could value and respect education of a girl child, it would have been recorded even 4% or less of child marriages in the study area (Jamba, 2019). A girl named Fatima; a Yemen got married at twelve years. According to her interview with UNICEF in 2018, she promised to educate her five children which she had by 2018. According to her, educating a girl is supposed to be a goal in life because girls are mothers, teachers and doctors, (Kauseni, 2018)

#### **2.6.4 Gender Discrimination**

Refers to the distinct treatment according to gender (Peters, 2019). Child marriage especially inclining to girls lays its roots in unequal gender status (Jehu,2021) The majority of children that get married each and every year are girls and that exposes the social norms that value males than females. Social norms do not consider girls as potential development agencies. The norms convince parents and guardians into believing that once a girl starts mensuration, she is now ready to be mother and bear children (Mukonoweshuro, 2021). This is the reason why girls in several traditional societies were married young. Also, through the social norms that girls are denied education. Girls are discriminated from boys who can be educated to levels of their choices (Takavada, 2021).

#### **2.6.5 Peer Pressure**

There has been an increase in the recorded number of early marriages in Sohwe Village for the past few decades (Kokerai, 2020). One of the identified causes was peer pressure. Peer pressure is

the encouragement or the influence by one's peers or friends (Johns, 2017). Many children prefer to be like their friends and this has led to some girls ensnared in early marriages (Shuro, 2021). The types of peer pressure that most children are affected with are as follows:

**a) Influences of peers to indulge into sexual activities**

Most children globally have succumbed to pressure from peers that influence them to indulge into early sexual activities (Tongai, 2018). Most of them would be lacking sex and health education hence it results in unprotected sex that leads to early pregnancies and therefore lead to early marriages for both partners especially the girl child (Njawaya ,2017).

**b) Substance Abuse**

Peers influence each other to substance abuse. During teenage, children often find pleasure in experiencing and abusing substances such as Marijuana, Drugs and Beer. The habits either directly or indirectly results in unprotected sex which leads to early pregnancies (Kelly, 2016).

**c) Sexual Abuse**

Peer influence can also result in teenagers getting into unsafe or unfavorable places such as pubs and night clubs where they can get sexual abuse such as getting raped. This can be a consequence to the health of teen especially girls where they can have unwanted pregnancies (Timothy, 2018).

## **2.7 EFFECTS OF CHILD MARRIAGES**

Child marriages affects mainly the girl child (Jacobs, 2020). The effects are not only suffered by the girls but even the girls' family, the government and also the community. Child marriages have also been believed to save the girl child from promiscuity and diseases but however digging deeper, one may find that it poses several adverse impacts to the above-mentioned groups, (Herbert, 2016). The scholar further argues that unmarried girls are less likely to be affected by diseases such as HIV and AIDS and STIs than married girls. He stated that women are likely to get affected with HIV from unprotected sex than males. Positive effects of child married are still not known.

### **2.7.1 Maternal and Infant Mortality**

Pregnancy of a young girl can affect her health system and even lead to death (Herbert, 2016). The suppression of the immune system may lead to the acquiring of diseases such as malaria. Most

young girls succumb to the disease there by increasing maternal mortality and decreasing the human capital.

United Nations (2020) revealed that most child brides are likely to succumb to the pain during childbearing as compared to women in their twenties. The organization further reveals that most girls under the age of fifteen years, experience still birth or their infants are more likely to die in the first month of birth. These effects have prevailed in Muzarabani District and also some other parts of Zimbabwe that include Bocha, Marange and Masvingo. More numbers of maternal mortality rooted in early marriages are being discovered each year (UN, 2020).

### **2.7.2 Poor social development of women**

Child marriages acts as a barrier to girl child education and development (Mnyaka, 2018). The situation robs her capability for self-development and skill development that can enable her economic empowerment opportunity. The United Nations (2021) revealed that women with no or less education that are likely to get married under the age of eighteen years. Child marriages result in school dropouts since the girl could be now supposed to take care of the family and home (Zororo, 2019). This hampers the potential in girls to show the world their capabilities in various sectors of life. Women who are involved in early marriages usually work harder to get little salaries and they usually lead miserable lives of poverty (Mwenje, 2020). This might be a case in Sohwe Village where most young women are earning a living through doing ‘Maricho’, a form of living where one works for another one for financial or other goods benefit. The local government has born the burdens caused by child marriages as it affects the county economy through robbing the children’s rights, security, education and health (UNICEF, 2020).

### **2.7.3 Adverse health impacts on girls**

Children who got married whilst young more likely get infected by HIV and AIDs, and STIs. This is as a result of being married to an older man that do have more sexual partners and more sexual experience. (Moyo, 2020). Child brides also usually are restricted to socialize and mingle with other community members as their possessive husbands fear sexual and physical reports (Tongai, 2018). This increases vulnerability to healthcare during pregnancy and family planning due to less or no access to the health care.

#### **2.7.4 Excessive population growth**

Demography and Development (2017) reported the effects of population growth as a result of high fertility. Most women married before eighteen years are more likely to bear more children. This increases poverty and increases complication in living standards were the basic services of the nation such as health care and educational facilities become scarce.

### **2.8 STRATEGIES TO ERADICATE CHILD MARRIAGES AND ENHANCE GIRL CHILD EMPOWERMENT**

Child marriages have seriously affected the mental wellbeing and the health of girls (UNICEF, 2021). The practice has got several adverse impacts to children especially the girl child. Most maternal and infant mortality are recorded on young women under the age of eighteen years. The International Centre for Research on Women (2018) revealed several solutions to the prevention of child marriages. The United Nations (2022) viewed child marriages as the violation of rights and hindrance to key development outcomes. The interesting part is that, globally there are now several child prevention programs that are aiming for the eradication of the child marriages. Most programs are working on fighting the end of gender inequality that is believed to be a driver of early marriages (Girls Not Brides, 2019). However, according to Africa End Child Marriage (2023), it will take more than 300 years to the total eradication child marriage.

#### **2.8.1 Girl Child Empowerment with information, skills and networks of support**

Several programs have been involved in empowering young girls with life skills and giving them information. This is done to enable young girls know themselves (UN, 2020). Many development programs are giving girls life skills such as teaching them about health, money, communication, legal awareness and decision making. This has been done to make them have alternatives to marriage. Save the children (2019) reported to have given life skills to girls in Kishari Abhijan (Bangladesh) and Maharashtra Life Skills Program in India. The program targeted young girls in the range of ten to twenty-four years. The programs moved in schools and homes giving girls life skills. Many programs view delayed marriage as part of the several efforts to accomplish girl child empowerment. Some programs offer support to both boys and girls but some do not (Malia, 2019). The PRACHAR which was a program which worked together with boys and girls in giving life skills. Several programs that focused on girl child empowerment filed notable and interesting changes in attitude and knowledge in relation to child marriages (Pali, 2019).

In Zimbabwe, several efforts are being made to protect the girl child. IYPD Organization in 2020 launched an awareness campaign against child marriages in Silobela, Kwekwe that aimed at giving young girls awareness about the negative effects of marrying earlier. The Zimbabwean government has also worked tirelessly in eradicating early marriages. The Zimbabwean government revisited the 2004 Gender Policy and assessed its weaknesses and strengths. Therefore, another second National Gender Policy 2013-2018 was formulating, (Vanyaradzayi, 2020). Efforts are being made to eradicate child marriages and enhance girl child empowerment.

### **2.9.2 Parents and Community Engagement**

Most development programs use the strategy of parental and community engagement as a trial to end child marriages (Magwaliwa, 2020). Young girls usually do not have power to decide when and who to marry, hence parental and community engagement enables giving parents and the community education that seeks to dilute social norms that lead to early marriages (Malthora, 2020). This is also done to enable parents and community participation towards the education of young boys and girls. Programs such as Ethiopia Early Marriages Evaluation Study (EMES) was conducted where there were private meetings with guidance and parents, the community members and the religious stakeholders (ICRW, 2020). The ICRW (2020) in partnership with the Population Council (2019) educated the community through education sessions on the effects plus solutions to early marriage effects in India and Egypt. The Integrated Action on Poverty and Early Marriage was also carried out in Yemen to educate and give awareness to parents, youths and grandparents about the effects of early marriages (Swamo, 2018).

### **2.9.3 Promoting the accessible girl child education**

UNICEF (2021) reveals that education of a girl child is fostered by a prolonged marriages through education. Girls who have less education girls are more likely to experience child marriage. The attendance of schools helps to dilute social norms about early marriages. Schools are safer places for the elimination of child marriages. Girls in schools are regarded as students not the right candidates from marriages. The ability of girls is to attend schools gives them power and capabilities to develop social networks and do their interest negotiation (UN, 2020). Because of all these reasons, formal education stands out to be the strongest program invention to eradicate early marriages and empower girls (ICRW, 2021). In Afghanistan, the building of schools, improvement of school facilities was done through the Community Based Rural Livelihoods

Program. (Changale, 2021). In Malawi, for girls to be enrolled and remain schools, there were programs that offered them cash, scholarships, free subsidies and uniforms. The programs included The Zomba Cash Transfer (Banda, 2020).

#### **2.9.4 Promoting an enabling legal and policy framework**

Several regions especially those with more recorded rates of early marriages have made laws that prohibits of child marriages (Molapo, 2020). The CEDPA (1974) did the Indonesia 1974 National Marriage Act in Indonesia that seeked to establishment of minimum age of marriage that is legal. In Yemen, there was the implementation of a campaign to raise concern to adverse impacts of marriages by the Oxfam and its partners (Farida, 2014). The women in Afghanistan organized ‘Shuras’ (structures of the local government) to react to issues of gender and child marriages (Malipa, 2018).

#### **2.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The chapter revealed that early marriages limits education of young girls, exposes them domestic violence, emotional abuse as well as exposing them to various health disorders. The programs organized by different organization for example, CAMFED and UNICEF have enhanced girl child empowerment through education. Most girls become vulnerable to child marriages due to limited awareness. Hence, study aims at empowering girls and eradicate child marriages in Sohwe Village in Muzarabani District in Mashonaland Central.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 OVERVIEW**

This chapter offered a comprehensive overview of the research design and methodology. The chapter elucidated the research design, including the target population, sample size, and sampling techniques employed. Moreover, it discussed the data collection instruments and methods, as well as the data analysis techniques utilized. The chapter also outlined the data collection procedures, ethical considerations, and deliberations. Finally, it concluded with a summary that encapsulated the salient points discussed in the chapter.

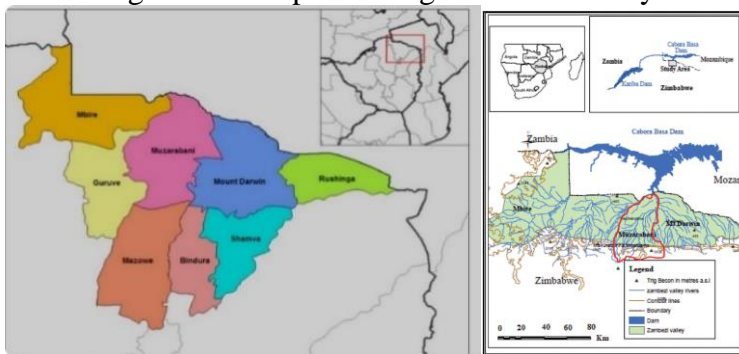
#### **3.2 AREA OF STUDY**

The conduction of the research was done in Sohwe Village in Muzarabani District. Muzarabani District is a rural area in the Mashonaland Central Province of Zimbabwe which is known for its rugged terrain and stunning landscapes. The district is home to a number of ethnic groups, including the Kore-Kore, Ndaou, and Tswana, each with their unique cultural practices and traditions. The district is known for its agricultural production, with maize, tobacco, and cotton being the main crops grown by smallholder farmers in the area. Despite its potential for agricultural development, the area faces a number of constraints, including a limited irrigation infrastructure, low soil fertility, and frequent droughts. The district's proximity to the Zambezi River, however, offers potential for increased agricultural production through the development of irrigation schemes and small-scale irrigation initiatives (Mukonoweshuro, 2021).

Muzarabani also faces several challenges, including child marriages, poverty, limited access to healthcare and education, and environmental degradation. In Sohwe Village which is under Chief Kasekete, it is very usual for young girls aged thirteen or fourteen to get married to older men, frequently with the consent of their parents. The marriages are often seen as a way to secure a girls' future and provide financial stability to bride's family.



Figure 3.1: Map revealing the area of study



Source: Mukonoweshuro (2022)

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative data to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon. The mixed-methods approach allowed for the triangulation of findings, providing a more nuanced and robust understanding of the research questions (Creswell, 2015). In qualitative data collection, interviews and Focus Group Discussions were used. FGD were conducted with twenty-three (23) children selected through purposive and stratified sampling techniques. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with fifty (50) participants, selected through purposive and stratified sampling techniques. The interviews were transcribed verbatim which was the process of converting the spoken content of an interview in to a written or text format, capturing every single word and utterance exactly as it was spoken. The qualitative data provided rich, in-depth insights into participants' experiences, perceptions, and perspectives.

In quantitative data collection, a survey questionnaire was administered to fourteen (14) participants, selected through purposive sampling. The questionnaire consisted of ten (10) items, using a mix of Likert scale and open-ended questions. The quantitative data provided a broader understanding of the research phenomenon, allowing for statistical analysis and generalizability (Creswell, 2015)

The qualitative and quantitative data were integrated during the analysis phase, using a concurrent nested design which is a research methodology that involved the simultaneous collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data provided an in-depth understanding of the research phenomenon, while the quantitative data provided a broader

understanding of the trends and patterns. The integration of both datasets allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions (Griffin, 2017).

The qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying patterns and themes that emerged from the data. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools that included Microsoft Word Excel and Chi-square tests. The results of both datasets were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research findings. This mixed-methods research design allowed for a robust and comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon, providing a rich and nuanced understanding of the research questions (Creswell, 2015).

### **3.3 TARGET POPULATION**

Sohwe Village comprised of an estimated number of 500 villagers. The target population for this study involved children aged nine to seventeen years (9-17), parents, civil servants and the village stakeholders for example, the headman, chief and the village councilor. According to Tromp (2021), population refers to an entire group of people or elements that have at least one thing in common. The researcher had faith in that her new gathered information from the research would contribute a lot to the already existing information about child marriages among girls in particular and a few boys in Muzarabani District.

### **3.4 SAMPLE SIZE**

The sample size for the study was determined through the use of Yamane's formula. Below were the sample calculations:

$$n = N / (1 + N) (e^2)$$

Where n=sample, N=target population (500), e =margin of error (0.14%)

$$\text{Thus, } n = 500 / (1 + 500) (0.14) (0.14)$$

$$n = 50, 91857102$$

Therefore n=50 (1 significant figure)

Therefore, the sample size for the study was fifty (50) people rounded off to one (1) significant figure. The researcher rounded off the sample to 1sf because it simplified the representation of the complex number, making it easier to work with and understand. Also rounding to 1s.f enhanced

the accessibility and comprehension of the sample size, especially for non-technical audiences (Saunders, 2022).

The sample of fifty (50) people was broken down as follows: four (4) teachers by gender two (2) males and two (2) females, twenty (20) parents by gender ten (10) males and ten (10) females, twenty-three (23) children aged nine to seventeen (9-17) years of age by gender eighteen (18) girls and five (5) boys, one (1) healthcare worker and one (1) community councilor and one (1) headman.

### 3.4.1 Sex ratios of the respondents

Table 3.1: Sex ratios of the respondents

Status	Males	Females	Total
Teachers	2	2	4
Parents	10	10	20
Children	5	18	23
Health worker	Nil	1	1
Councilor	1	Nil	1
Headman	1	Nil	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>50</b>

n=50

The table 3.1 shows the sex ratios of the population that was used as a sample in the study. According to the illustrated data, it shows that males were nineteen (19) and females were thirty-one (31). The female gender is mostly affected by child marriages, hence there was a huge gap between females and males.

### 3.5 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

Research on child marriages in Sohwe Village, Muzarabani District required a systematic and rigorous approach to selecting participants. Sampling techniques suitable for this study were categorized into qualitative and quantitative approaches.

The researcher used purposive sampling as a qualitative technique in this study. It involved

selecting individuals with expertise or experience related to child marriages. The researcher used this technique to select teachers, the healthcare worker, community stakeholders and literate parents to participate in the study. As Creswell (2015) recommended, this approach ensured that participants have in-depth knowledge and insights into the phenomenon, providing rich and detailed data.

The researcher also adopted stratified sampling as a quantitative sampling technique to use in the study. The technique divided the population into strata based on relevant characteristics such as age, gender, education level and professions. The researcher used this technique to select participants in her study because this approach ensured that each stratum was represented in the sample, providing a representative and generalizable sample (Creswell, 2015).

The chosen sampling techniques were appropriate for this study because they allowed for a comprehensive understanding of child marriages in Sohwe Village, Muzarabani District. Purposive sampling provided in-depth qualitative data from individuals with expertise and experience, while stratified, provided quantitative data that was representative and generalizable (Creswell, 2015). By using a mixed-methods approach, this study captured a wide range of perspectives and experiences, ensured that the findings were reliable, valid, and meaningful. The chosen sampling techniques helped to achieve the research objectives discussed in Chapter one (1) of the study and contributed to the existing body of knowledge on child marriages.

### **3.6 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS AND METHODS**

The researcher used Qualitative and Quantitative research methodologies. Qualitative methodology is a type of research that uses non-numerical data to explore a phenomenon in depth (Sides, 2018). Qualitative research methods include Interviews, Focus Group Discussion Observations and Direct Quotations. Quantitative data methodologies refer to the methods used to collect and analyze numerical data. (Olyne, 2020). This includes Surveys, Questionnaires and Experiments among other methods.

In this study, the researcher used Interviews, Focus Group Discussion, Eye Observations and Direct Quotations as Qualitative methodologies. She only used Questionnaires as Quantitative methodology in the research.

Table 3.2: Methods and Instruments used in the research

Method	Instrument
<b>Qualitative Methods:</b>	
Interviews	Interview Guide
Focus Group Discussions	Focus Group Discussion Guide
Eye Observations	Eye Observation Guide
Direct Quotations	Direct Quotation Guide
<b>Quantitative Methods:</b>	
Questionnaires	Questionnaire Guide

### 3.6.1 Interviews

In this study, the researcher chose to use structured interviews over semi-structured or unstructured interviews. This was because structured interviews were easy to replicate and the results were easy to analyze. This was in contrast to semi-structured that could be more difficult to analyze and its results could be less reliable and also the unstructured interviews would be difficult to manage and also the results might be less reliable. Rubin and Rubin (2014) define interviews as a conversation between a researcher and a participant for the purpose of gathering information. The researcher conducted interviews to explore all the four (4) objectives and research questions discussed in Chapter one (1) that were; “What are is the nature of child marriages in the study district?”, “What are the catalysts of child marriages in the study district?”, “What are the impacts of child marriages in the study district?”, and “What are the possible ways to eradicate child marriages and enhance girl child empowerment in the study district?”

In this study, the researcher used both in-depth and key-informant interviews. The interviews were carried out in English or Shona depending with the participant’s preference. The researcher designed Interview Guides for both Shona and English Language which comprised of fifteen (15) questions.

### **3.6.1.1 In-depth Interviews**

In-depth interviews focused on understanding the experiences and perspectives on the individual being interviewed (Kooman, 2022). In-depth interviews allowed for rich, detailed information to be gathered, as the interviewer could ask follow-up questions and explored topics in more depth. This allowed for a deep understanding of the interviewee's perspective. In-depth interviews also allowed for a more natural conversation to develop, which resulted in more honest and authentic report responses. Moreover, they enabled less intimidating for the interviewee, as they felt more comfortable discussing sensitive topics in a one-on-one setting. In this study, the researcher did in-depth interviews on all the fifty (50) participants on all four (4) objectives which focused on assessing nature of child marriages in the study area, exploring the catalysts of child marriages, assessing the impacts of child marriages and examining the strategies to eradicate child marriages and enhance girl child empowerment. The interviewer further interviewed the twenty (20) parents in the study on responses which all fifty (50) participants had provided on what they thought were the drivers of child marriages the study district. She interviewed the parents on what were their thoughts about the acquired responses.

### **3.6.1.2 Key Informants Interviews**

Key informants focused on obtaining specific information from someone who was considered to be an expert on a particular topic (Jazz, 2016). Key informant interviews were a great way to gather information through interviews with individuals who were knowledgeable about the particular topic or issue. They were a great way to get information that might were not available through other methods for example, Focus Group Discussion. They were a great way to get information quickly, as key informants were able to provide a wealth of information in a short period of time. In this study, the researcher gathered (four) 4 local teachers, (one) 1 healthcare worker, (one) 1 community councilor and (one) 1 village head as the key informants in the study. These key informants participated during interviews, exploring the research question four (4) which was, "What are the strategies of eradicating child marriages and enhance girl child empowerment in the district of study?" "The key informants shared their thoughts on the suggested measures to eradicate child marriages in the study district that had been raised by the fifty (50) participants.

### **3.6.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGD)**

In this study, the researcher gathered up the twenty-three (23) children who were part of the fifty (50) participants in the research to participate in the Focus Group Discussion. According to Jazz

(2016), a Focus Group Discussion is a qualitative research method that involves bringing together a small group of people to discuss a specific topic or issue. She conducted two (2) FGDs, one (1) on research question two (2) which was, “What are the catalysts of child marriages in the district of study?”, and another on research question three (3) which was, “What are the impacts of child marriages in the district of study?” A FGD Guide was used for data collection. The FGD Guide comprised of ten (10) questions which were asked in English. The discussion was led by the research author who asked questions and guided the conversation and it lasted for forty-five (45) minutes. The goal of the FGD was to gain a deeper understanding of the topic from the perspectives of the participants (Zikmund, 2020). A Focus Group Discussion was cost-effective as it allowed for multiple participants to be interviewed at once. The method also provided a focus for group interaction, which can generate new ideas and insights. It allowed for the observation of non-verbal cues and body language, which provided valuable information (Kooman, 2022).

### **3.6.3 Eye Observation**

The researcher used eye observation method as a data collection method. She carried out only one (1) eye observation throughout the whole study on research question one (1) of the study which was, “What are the catalysts of child marriages in the district of study?” The researcher observed some factors that were leading to child marriages in the study district. An Observation Guide was used to collect data observed. Eye observation method allowed the researcher to observe people in their natural environment, which provided a more accurate that they representation of their behavior. The method did not require the participants to be aware that they were being observed, so their behavior was less likely to be affected by the presence of the researcher. The method also was non-intrusive that it did not require participants to complete surveys or answer questions (King and Horrocks, 2019). Moreover, eye observation method was inexpensive and easy to implement.

### **3.6.4 Direct Quotations**

The researcher acquired data through direct quotations from participants. Direct quotations were present on all four (4) research questions of the study. Interviewed participants said a lot about child marriages and the researcher found it necessary to apply some of the direct statement in her study as they reflected real emotions of the victims of child marriages and unbiased information about child marriages. Direct quotations also provided an accurate representation of what was said by the respondent, they allowed for a deeper understanding of the meaning behind the words (King

and Horrocks, 2019). They also helped the researcher to identify and understand themes and patterns in the data.

### **3.6.5 Questionnaires**

In this study, the researcher conducted questionnaires to explore research question two (2), research question three (3) and research question four (4) of the study. According to Kooman (2022), a questionnaire is an assemblage of questions organized to enquire a number of questions and collect answers from respondents pertaining to the study topic. The researcher used self-administered questionnaire where the respondent would fill in the questionnaire without the assistance of the researcher. The researcher by physical means distributed the questionnaires to selected fourteen (14) participants who included four (4) local teachers and ten (10) parents (five (5) ladies and five (5) gentlemen selected from the twenty participating parents basing on their level of literacy) after seeking permission from the respondents. This was done to make sure that questionnaires were self-administered since the questionnaires were all designed in English. The researcher selected only fourteen participants to participate in questionnaires because she wanted to gather more in-depth information about child marriages in the village from a smaller number of people. The questionnaires contained both open and close ended questions. The major benefit that was associated with using questionnaires in the study was that it allowed respondents to fill the questionnaire without any pressure. Open questions allowed respondents to widen their views according to their own understanding of the studied issues. Closed questions enabled them to focus on the subject matter (Kooman, 2022).

## **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

According to Babbie (2021), data analysis is a process of breaking data down into smaller units to reveal their characteristics, elements and structure.

### **3.7.1 Microsoft Word Excel**

The researcher used Microsoft Word Excel to analyze both qualitative and quantitative data from all four (4) research questions asked in the study. It was a powerful and easy-to-use application for data analysis and reporting, offering essential features for organizing, analyzing, and visualizing data, thus playing a vital role in decision-making processes. Excel provided powerful tools for data analysis, including the ability to create charts and graphs that are essential for identifying patterns



and trends in data. The software also offered features such as filtering, sorting, and conditional formatting, which were crucial for analyzing and visualizing data effectively (Kooman, 2022)

### **3.8 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE**

The researcher started data collection on 1 March 2024 to 31 May 2024, school calendar. During the data collection period, the researcher visited the village of study, conducted Interviews, FGD, Questionnaires and Eye observations. The researcher carried out her study with fifty (50) participants. The participants included children aged nine-seventeen (9-17) years, community members, some who were parents or guardians to the children, local teachers, a healthcare worker, the community councilor and the headman. Data collection was done in line with the study objectives and research questions discussed in Chapter one (1) of the research which were as follows; “What is the nature of child marriages experienced in the study district?” “What are the catalysts of early marriages in the district of study?”, “What are the impacts of child marriages in the district of study?” and “What are the possible strategies to eradicate child marriages and enhance girl child empowerment in the study district?” Interviews were carried out in Shona or English with fifty (50) participants depending with the participant preference. Further interviews were carried on responses given on catalysts, impacts and strategies of eradicating child marriages in the district of study. This was done to investigate the extent to which raised catalysts of child marriages affected children in the study area and to see the extent to which the raised impacts impacted children, the community, the Zimbabwean government and also the school going children. Key informants were interviewed on the responses given on possible strategies to eradicate child marriages. This was done to observe the effectiveness of the raised measures to eradicate child marriages. Interviews began with general questions that included the age of the participants and what they thought it influenced girls in the village to indulge into child marriages. Interview session’s duration varied from four to six (4-6) minutes per person. FGD was conducted in English with twenty-three (23) children and was done for forty-five (45) minutes. Questionnaires were conducted in English with fourteen (14) participants.

### **3.8 DATA PRESENTATION**

In a comprehensive research endeavor in Sohwe Village, Muzarabani, the nature, catalysts, impacts, and eradication strategies of child marriages were meticulously explored. Through interviews with fifty (50) individuals and eye observations, key catalysts such as poverty, cultural practices, lack of education, and gender inequality were identified, while the impacts of child

marriages extended beyond affected children, impacting the government and the community. Furthermore, focus group discussions involving twenty-three (23) children and questionnaires distributed to fourteen (14) individuals provided additional depth, unveiling the multifaceted nature of this issue. Data presentation was enriched with direct quotations from participants, providing a nuanced understanding of their perspectives, thus enriching the analysis. The insightful research not only shed light on the multifaceted nature of child marriages but also underscored the imperative for context-specific interventions tailored to the unique challenges faced in Sohwe Village. Pie charts, bar graphs and tables were used to present data. The research findings served as a vital foundation for the development of targeted interventions, policy reforms, and community-based initiatives aimed at combatting the complex challenges posed by child marriages, ultimately safeguarding the rights and well-being of children in Sohwe Village and beyond.

### **3.9 ETHICS DELIBERATION**

Doing research was an activity that involved human hence morality consideration was essential. People can differ in their codes of conduct. This then shows that the researcher was to be aware of and follow the likes and dislikes of the participants in the study. Generally, worldwide research officers make it moral and obligatory to be sure that participants in research are voluntary such that their privacy is protected and as well avoiding harming the participants. With the regards to that, the study also followed such ethical conducts such as avoidance of harm, informed consent and voluntary participation.

#### **3.9.1 Informed Consent**

The participants were fully made aware about the study purpose before participation by the researcher. The participants were given options to decide whether to participate or to not. All participants knew that the research was nothing else other than for education purposes.

#### **3.9.2 Voluntary Participation**

The researcher gathered information from voluntary individuals. It was without offense for a potential participant to decline the appeal by the take part in the study.

#### **3.9.3 Harm Avoidance**

Throughout the research, no participant was harmed in any way.

### **3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The chapter presented methodologies and instruments which were used in the study. Furthermore, target population, sample size, sampling techniques, study population were considered in the study. The chapter also revealed data analysis methods which would be used to analyze data which would be presented in the following chapter. Literally, the chapter highlighted how the whole research was carried out. The following chapter presented data collected through the presented methodologies.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

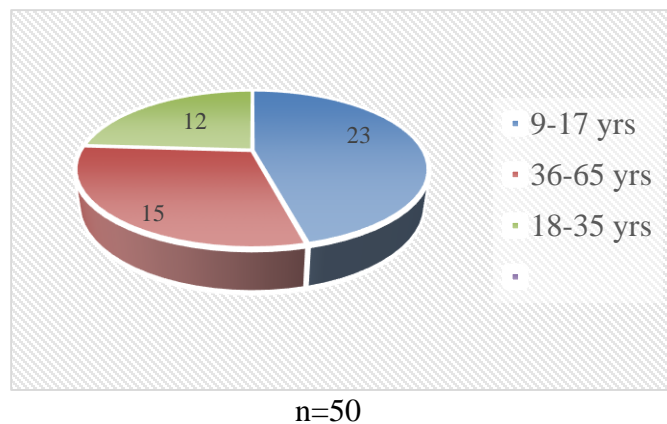
#### 4.1 OVERVIEW

Findings of the research were presented in this chapter. The data went with the stream with discussed objectives, done using the designed research instruments. Bar charts, tables and pie charts were used to present data. Data analysis was done using Microsoft Excel. The researcher conducted interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), questionnaires and eye observations during data collection basing on the research questions that were; “What is the nature of child marriages experienced in the district of study?”, “What are the catalysts of child marriages in the district of study?”, “What are the impacts of child marriages in the district of study?” and finally, “What are the possible ways to eradicate child marriages and enhance girl child empowerment in the district of study?”

#### 4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF THE PARTICIPANTS

##### 4.2.1 Ages of participants

Figure 4.1: Ages of participants in the study district



The figure 4.1 shows the different ages of the participants that were used as a sample in the study. Twenty-three (23) participants were aged nine to seventeen (9-17) years, twelve (12) were aged eighteen to thirty-five (18-35) years while fifteen (15) were aged thirty-six to sixty-five (36-65) years. The majority of the participants were aged nine to seventeen (9-17) years. This was because it is the age group where usually most children particularly girls are mostly affected by child

marriages and the researcher wanted to acquire knowledge on the catalysts, impacts and ways for eradicating child marriages in the village.

#### 4.2.2 Qualifications of the participated teachers and the health worker

Table 4.1: Qualifications of participated key informants

Profession	Professional Qualifications	Frequency
Teachers	Certificate	Nil
	Diploma	4
	Master's Degree	Nil
	Doctor of Philosophy	Nil
Healthcare Worker	Degree	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>5</b>

n=5

The table 4.1 shows the qualifications of teachers and the health worker who participated in the study. All the local teachers were diploma holders and none of them was a degree holder or of a Certificate level. The local Health worker was a degree holder who worked at Karanda Mission Hospital as a sister in Charge.

#### 4.2.3 Education levels of participated pupils

Table 4.2: Education levels of participated pupils

Primary Level (Grade)	Frequency	Percentage%
Five(5)	1	4,3
Six(6)	1	4,3
Seven(7)	2	8,6

Secondary Level (Form)	Frequency	Percentage%
One (1)	5	22,7
Two (2)	4	17,3
Three (3)	7	30,4
Four(4)	3	13,4
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>

n=23

The table 4.2 shows the education levels of the children who participated in the study. The majority were the Form Three (3) students. At From Three (3,) students particularly girls are strongly affected by peer pressure hence more counselling and education is needed when a child reaches Form Three (3).

#### 4.2.4 Professions and education levels of participated parents

Table 4.3: Professions and respective qualifications and education levels of participated parents

Gender and Profession	Professional Qualifications	Educational Level	Frequency
<b>Males:</b>			
Subsistence farmers	Nil	Grade One to Seven (1-7)	5
Barbers	Nil	Form Four (4)	2
Till Operator	Nil	Form Four (4)	1

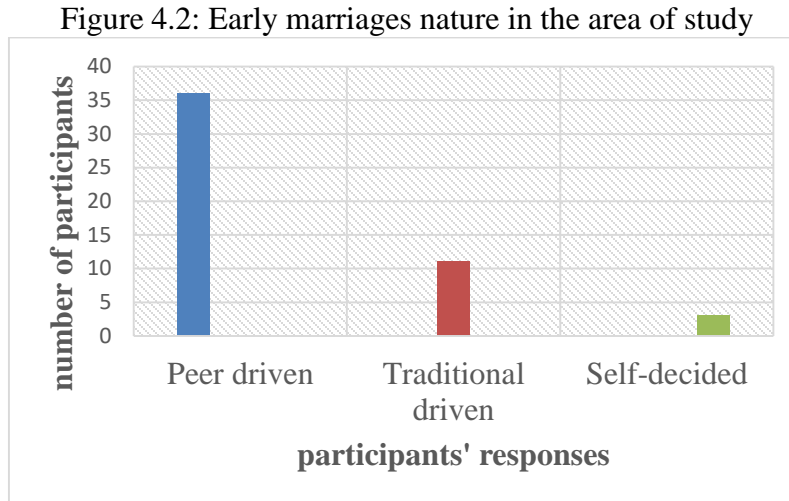
Builders	National Certificate	Tertiary	2
<b>Females:</b>			
Vendors	Nil	Grade One to Seven (1-7)	4
Subsistence farmer	Nil	Grade One to Seven (1-7)	1
Till Operators	Nil	Form Four (4)	2
Tailors	National Certificate	Tertiary	3
<b>Total</b>			<b>20</b>

n=20

Table 4.3 shows the professions and education levels of parents and guidance who participated in the study. According to the illustrated information, some parents were more literate and others were less literate. The researcher did this purposively. She wanted to figure out what the more literate population thought about child marriages in the village and what the less illiterate population also thought about the same issue.

### 4.3 RESEARCH QUESTION ONE (1): WHAT IS THE NATURE OF EARLY MARRIAGES EXPERIENCED IN THE STUDY DISTRICT?

The figure 4.2 shows responses from the interview's early marriages nature in the district of study on the research question on what enhanced such kind of marriages in the area. The researcher interviewed fifty (50) participants from the village-twenty (20) parents, twenty-three (23) children, four (4) teachers, one (1) village head, one (1) village councilor and one (1) healthcare worker.



n=50

The figure 4.2 shows different perspectives of participants on the nature of marriages that were found in the area of study. As shown by the results, thirty-six (36) out of fifty (50) (72%) respondents stated that the most common marriages in the study district were peer-driven, eleven (11) out of fifty (50) (22%) stated that child marriages were traditional-driven while (three) (3) out of 50(6%) said early marriages in Sohwe Village were a decision by oneself. Overall, it was concluded that the nature of child marriages in the area of study were peer-driven. One local teacher interviewed by the researcher said that:

*“I had a conversation with one pupil who in a private meeting told me that she had no experience about mating. She had to be taught new stuff about sex by her friends which aroused her sexual feelings which pushed her into an early marriage.”*

The researcher interviewed another elderly woman in the village who was married with five children who stated that:



*“It’s now twenty-five years since I have been married in this village. Since coming to this village, I have witnessed very young girls and boys getting into marriage. Most marriages are those of children still in shill and it pains me a lot to see those children drooping out of school to take care of their families.*

The researcher had another interview with another man in his fifties the man stated:

*Children are getting married young every day. This is very painful to note as young boys and girls are being influenced by their peers indulge into sex which leads to unplanned pregnancies and marriages. In some cases, I have noticed that the girl child is driven into some marriages due to the practice of spirit appeasement using a virgin girl. That practice should stop!”*

#### **4.3.1 Nature of families who are early marriages victims**

Families who have children involved in early marriages were illustrated in figure 4.4

Table 4.4: Families’ nature who are early marriages victims

<b>Type of family</b>	<b>Distribution of the frequency</b>	<b>Percentage rate</b>
Starvation or Poverty	31	62
Uneducated	16	32
Do not know	3	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

n=50

The 4.4 reveals reports from interviews done on types of families affected by early marriages. Thirty-one (31) out of fifty (50) (62%) respondents stated that families stricken by poverty were victims of child marriages, sixteen (16) out fifty (50) (32%) reported that families with less education were part and parcel of child marriages and three (3) out of fifty (50) (6%) reported that they did not know about the exact families who were victims of child marriages. The researcher had a few minutes interview with the village builder who was not part of the sample. In a short interview, the builder indicated that:

*“We have been noticing that it is families who do not have a positive attitude to girl child education who are part and parcel of early marriage practice. The families choose to marry off their daughters over letting them go to school. It undermines their confidents and rights.*

The researcher interviewed a parent who had twin daughters learning at the local school. The woman said:

*“Children who are normally victims of child marriages are from poor families. These families tend to seek financial breakthroughs by marrying off their daughters to richer families. The woman further said” Pamwe pachu vanoroodza vana kunana saimba chaivo”, a Shona statement which meant that the poor parents at times marry off their daughters to older married men.*

As shown by the study findings about nature of child marriages in the district of study, participants communicated that common child marriages in the area usually were among peers. In an interview, thirty-six (36) (72%) out of fifty (50) respondents were supporting that. Eleven (11) (22%) of the respondents stated that child marriages were traditionally driven and three (6%) stated that they were self-decided.

Peer-driven child marriages are often a result of social influences and the desire to conform to perceived norms. In many communities, peer pressure plays a significant role in pushing young individuals, particularly girls, into early marriages. The need to fit in and gain acceptance within their social circles can lead them to make decisions that are not in their best interest. The desire for peer acceptance can overshadow their own aspirations, trapping them in a cycle of early marriage and its detrimental consequences. The findings of the study were similar to the literature discussed in Chapter two (2) of the study by Zororo (2019) who talked about peer pressure being a nature of child marriages.

Traditional-driven child marriages are deeply rooted in cultural and societal norms, often perpetuated through generations. Traditional practices and customs, such as arranged marriages, dowry systems, and gender-based roles, can exert immense pressure on families and young individuals, compelling them to enter into marriages at a young age. These traditions, although deeply ingrained, can perpetuate harmful cycles of early marriage, denying young individuals the opportunity to pursue their education and personal development (Machida, 2017)

In Chapter two (2) of the study, Shuro (2021) revealed that self-decision could be a nature a child marriage. This however was proven true by the research where three (3) out of fifty (50) participants in the study raised that child marriages in Sohwe Village were self -decided. Self-determined child marriages may arise from the individual's own agency and decision-making. In

some cases, young individuals, particularly boys and girls in more progressive environments, may choose to marry at a young age due to their own beliefs, desires, or unique circumstances. While self-determination is a fundamental human right, its intersection with the complexities of early marriage requires careful consideration, especially when the individuals involved may not have the necessary maturity and life experience to make such life-altering decisions.

Early marriages persistence in the village were measured by the rates of girls who were married before turning eighteen (18) years of age. Howsoever, it was observed that young females residing in rural areas mostly get into marriages twice the number urban girls do before reaching eighteen (Pepper,2019). This however attempted to agree to the present study's outcome.

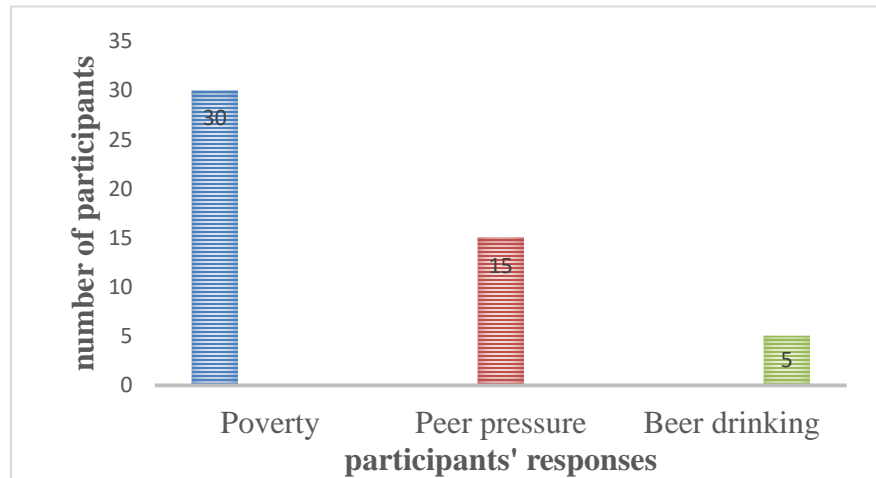
The findings of the study further showed that poverty-stricken families were included mostly practicing child marriages. In an interview, thirty-two (32) (64%) of the respondents said so, while sixteen (16) (32%) indicated that it was illiterate families and two (2) (4%) were not so sure about the case. Jensen and Thornton (2020), acknowledged that poverty can lead parents and guidance to marry off their children at a tender age because of poverty. In polygamous families where children are many, parents usually prefer to marry off their girls young, so as to reduce economics burden. This seemed to be the case in Sohwe Village.

In summary, the nature of child marriages as being peer-driven, traditional-driven, and self-decided underscored the multifaceted dynamics at play in this global issue. Understanding and addressing these diverse driving forces was essential in developing comprehensive interventions and support systems that empower young individuals to make informed choices, free from external pressures and harmful traditions. By challenging harmful social norms, promoting education and gender equality, and fostering self-determination, we could work towards creating a world where children are protected from the detrimental impacts of early marriage, and where their rights and aspirations are valued and upheld.

#### **4.4 RESEARCH QUESTION TWO (2): WHAT ARE THE CATALYSTS OF EARLY MARRIAGES IN THE DISTRICT OF STUDY?**

The figure 4.3 shows illustrations of the respondents' answers on the interview on the catalysts of early marriages in the area of study as per objective number two (2)

Figure 4.3: Catalysts of early marriages in the area of study



n=50

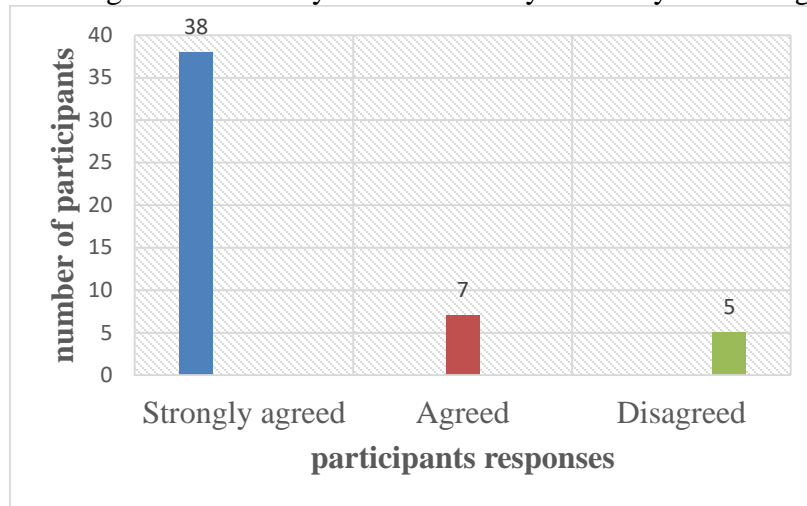
Figure 4.3 indicates what the respondents thought about the causes of early marriages in the area of study. As shown by the results, thirty (30) (60%) respondents reported that poverty was the main driver whereas (fifteen) 15(30%) were sure that child marriages were caused by peer influence and (five) 5(10%) nevertheless responded that it was beer consumption that led young children into marriages. One of the respondents stated that:

*“Here in Sohwe Village, poverty has seriously affected several families and has driven early marriages. My parents let my elder sister married to an older man when she was still Grade Six. This happened after my parents were given a lot USD notes by that man who was an illegal gold miner in Shamva.”*

#### 4.4.1 Starvation or poverty as a main catalyst of early marriage in the area of study

Figure 4.4 shows the respondents’ perspective in an interview that was carried out on poverty as a main catalyst of child marriages

Figure 4.4: Poverty as a main catalyst of early of marriages



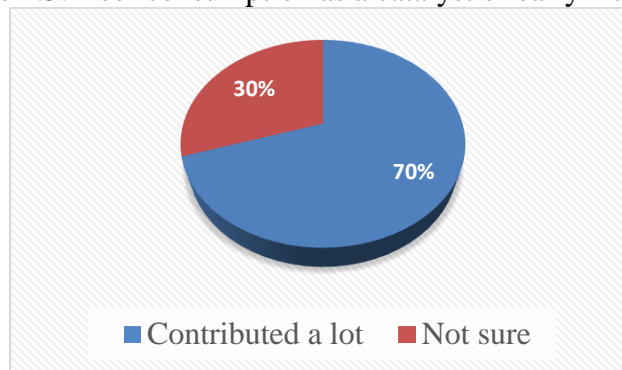
n=50

The results gathered from the community members on how they perceived poverty or starvation as a catalyst of early marriages were as follows; thirty-eight (38) (76%) of the respondents strongly agreed, seven (7) (14%) moderately agree and 5(10%) disagreed. Overall, poverty was concluded as the main driver of early marriages in the area of study.

#### 4.4.2 Consumption of beer by young children as a catalyst of early marriages

The researcher carried out in-depth interviews with twenty (20) parents on beer consumption as a catalyst of early marriages.

Figure 4.5: Beer consumption as a catalyst of early marriages



n=20

Figure 4.5 illustrates the perspectives of parents on the consumption of beer by children as one of catalyst of early marriages. Fourteen (14) (70%) respondents out of twenty (20) stated that beer consumption contributed to a lot of child marriages whereas six (6) (30%) respondents were not sure. Overall observation showed that consumption of beer by young children contributed to a lot to child marriages. Like one parent cited that:

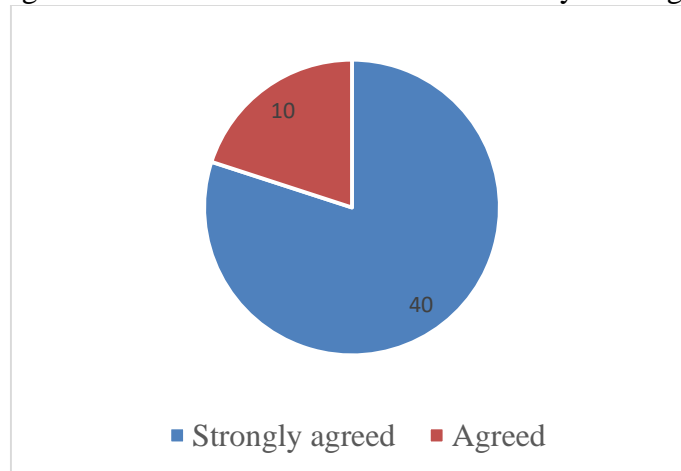
*“In this area, I have noticed that young boys and girls are secretly consuming beer. Some naughty ones are even carrying alcohol to schools. They get drunk and start behaving anyhow. Some indulge in unprotected sex which leads to early pregnancies and early marriages.*

Taking alcohol at a very tender age can result in life problems and bad behavior especially in the ages of twenties, thirties and forties. Drinking alcohol at an early stage can accelerate the likelihood of drug abuse and experimenting unhealthy behaviors such as unprotected sex, it is important to note that alcoholism can affect anyone at any age. One’s perspective towards beer consumption can be influenced by social factors that include culture, religion and work. One’s family can also play a larger part in the person’s probability of being a drunkard. Kenly (2016) argues that young boys and girls who take beer at a tender age are most likely to become alcoholicity.

#### 4.4.3 Peer influence as a driver of early marriages

The researcher interviewed fifty (50) participants on peer influence as a catalyst of early marriages in the study area.

Figure 4.6: Peer influence as a driver of early marriages



n=50

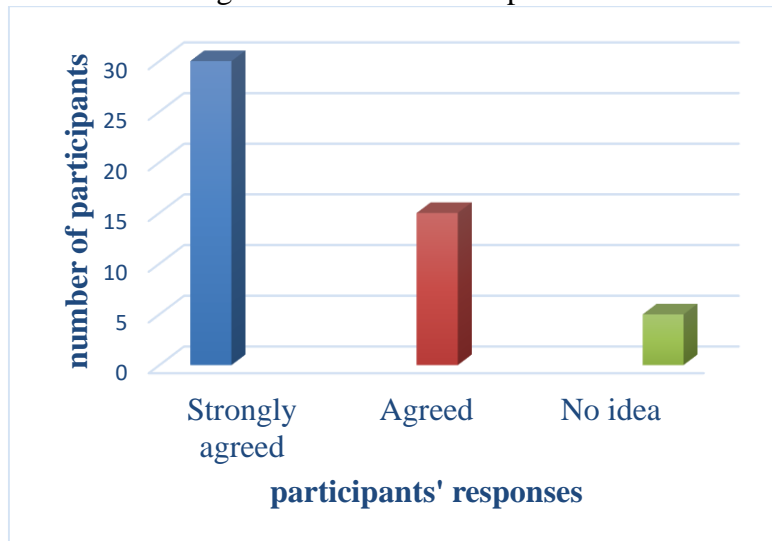
Acquired results shows that out of fifty (50) respondents, forty (40) (80%) reported that peer pressure which is defined as influence from friends or age mates contributed a lot to child marriages while ten (10) (20%) respondents moderately agreed.

Peer pressure has an effect on children and adolescents. On children, their abilities for independent decision making are regarded while on adolescents the relationship of peer pressure with sexual intercourse which leads to child marriages has been well researched. According to Carden et al (2020), peer pressure tends to affect individuals of all ethnicities.

#### 4.4.4 Ignorance towards children's education importance as a catalyst early marriage

Figure 4.7 shows the respondents' views that were interviewed on ignorance towards children's education essentiality

Figure 4.7: Ignorance towards girl child education importance as a lead to early marriages



n =50

Figure 4.7 illustrates what the participants' perceived ignorance towards children's education essentiality as a lead to early marriages. Thirty (30) out of fifty (50) (60%) participants strongly agreed, fifteen (15) out of fifty (50) (30%) moderately agreed and however five (5) out of fifty (50) (10%) had no idea. In conclusion, according to the research findings, it was very clear that

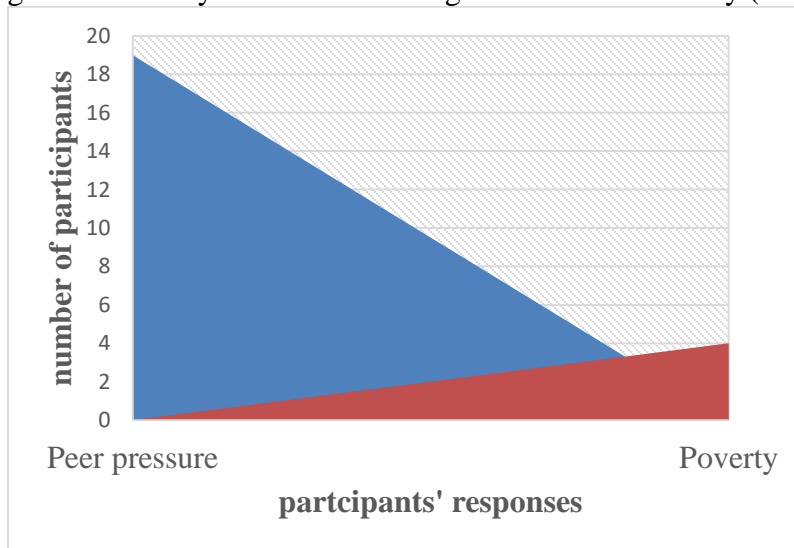
parents lacked knowledge on the importance of sending boys and girls to school and it had highly contributed to child marriages in the district of study. One Primary school teacher indicated that:

*“Several parents in this village are ignorant especially on education importance and that is the reason why the area’s rates of children who are getting married young is increasing each and every year. I have for many times wished that they get adequate information on education essentiality to both young girls and boys”.*

**4.4.5 Focus Group Discussion: What are the catalysts of early marriages in the district of study?**

The researcher conducted a Focus Group Discussion with twenty-three (23) children aged nine to seventeen (9-17). Among them were five (5) boys and eighteen (18) females. The discussion mainly focused on child marriages causes, impacts and solutions. Moreover, perfect timing for marriage was also discussed. The results of what the children thought were the causes of early marriages in the discussion were as illustrated:

Figure 4.8: Catalysts of child marriages in the area of study (FGD)



n=23

Figure 4.8 illustrates the response of the children in the FGD that was conducted by the researcher. Out of twenty-three children, nineteen (19) (82, 6%) responded that child marriages were mainly



driven by peer pressure among girls and boys while four (4) (17.4%) stated that child marriages were caused by poverty. One boy aged sixteen stated that:

*“In this village, boys who marry young are considered more mature and respected. They are seen as having a head start in life. Some of my friends have already married, and they are often pressuring me to do the same. They tell me that I will be left behind if I don’t. They say ‘Asina mukadzi irombe’-a Shona statement which means, He who does not have a wife is a useless man*

Another girl in Form Four (4) said:

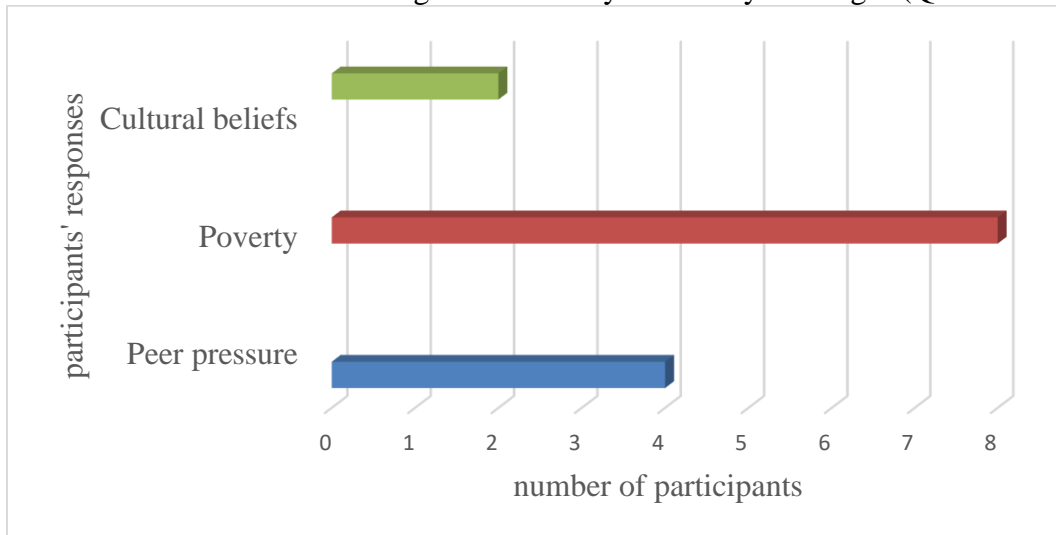
*“Some of my friends have already married, as they say it’s the best thing they have ever done. They tell me that I’ll be happier and more respected if I marry too. I feel like if I don’t marry, I’ll be left out and judged by my friends and community. It’s hard to resist the pressure.”*

There was a discrepancy between what interview participants and focus group participants believed was the cause of child marriages in the village. The researcher needed to investigate this discrepancy further to determine the true cause of child marriages in the study area. It was possible that both poverty and peer pressure played a role in causing child marriages, and that the true cause is more complex than either of these factors alone. This discrepancy could indicate that there were different perspectives on the causes of child marriages, depending on the context and experiences of the participants.

#### **4.4.6 Questionnaire: What are the catalysts of early marriages in the area of study?**

The researcher physically distributed questionnaires to fourteen (14) participants that comprised of ten (10) parents (selected from the fifty participants basing on literacy levels) and four (4) local teachers.

Figure 4.9: Catalysts of early marriages (Questionnaires)



n=14

According to the responses from the questionnaires about the catalysts of early marriages, eight (8) out of ten (14) participants (57, 1%) stated that child marriages in Sohwe Village were mainly caused by poverty, four (2) (28, 6%) responded that peer pressure was the lead to early marriages while other two (2) (14, 3%) stated that cultural beliefs caused child marriages in the village.

#### 4.4.7 Eye observation: What are the catalysts of early marriages in the area of study?

An observational by the researcher revealed that poverty and lack of education led to early marriages in the district of study. The researcher observed that families living in poverty were more likely to marry off their daughters at a young age, in order to receive a dowry or to alleviate their economic burden. She observed so at different homesteads where there could be only one granary and several grandchildren. The grandchildren were said to have been already married off (through Kuroodza practice) waiting for their mensuration stage to occur such that they leave for marriage. Similarly, the researcher observed that families who did not priorities education for their daughters were the ones who practiced to marry them off early, as they did not see the value in educating girls. She observed that several young girls aged ten to fifteen years (10-15) were not going to school in the village. The researcher also observed that girls who were married off young were less likely to have the opportunity to pursue with education.

Study findings revealed several catalysts of child marriages. The main catalysts as indicated by the findings were poverty, peer influence and negativity towards girl child education. Several girls in Sohwe Village were married off against their preference. Parents married them off due to poverty, lack of education on the importance of educating a girl child and fear that they would just get pregnant outside marriage.

As per the research findings, in an interview, thirty-six (36) (72%) strongly agreed that poverty was a major catalyst of child marriages in the area of study, seven (7) (14%) moderately agreed while five (5) (10%) had no idea. The researcher also conducted a FGD with twenty-three (23) children on the causes of child marriages in the study area. Nineteen (19) (82, 6%) stated that poverty was the main cause while four (4) (17, 4%) stated that it was peer pressure. According to the questionnaire which the researcher carried out, poverty was said to be the main driver of child marriages where eight (8) out fourteen (14) participants (57,1%) agreed, other four (4) (28,6%) disagreed supporting that peer pressure was the cause and others two (2) (14,3%) supporting cultural beliefs as a catalyst of early marriages in the area of study.

Yeuchidza (2019) revealed that poverty often created an environment where families struggle to meet their basic needs, leading to a heightened vulnerability to various social issues, including child marriages. In such circumstances, families could view early marriage as a means of reducing the economic burden or securing financial stability, albeit at the cost of the child's well-being and future prospects. This was proven to be a case in Sohwe Village and is leading to accelerating rate of child marriages.

Again, according to the findings, child marriages in the area of study were also caused by peer pressure. This catalyst had been also supported by the literature by Kokerai (2020) discussed in Chapter (two) 2 of the study that peer pressure could exert a significant influence on young individuals, potentially leading them to engage in behaviors such as alcohol consumption, which could further exacerbate the risk of early marriages. The desire to conform to peer norms and expectations, especially in settings where alcohol consumption was prevalent, could contribute to risky decision-making, including entering into early marriages under the influence of peers.

The investigator too observed that poverty-stricken families were mostly involved in child marriages in the form of “Kuroodza “system. The United Nations (2020) stated that families marry off their daughters early as means to economic survival. The study reported sensitive and authentic

information about poverty as an effect of child marriages in the community. In the study district, early marriages were established to be brought back to zero by the work of the chief together with organizations including the CAMFED, UNICEF and the Higherlife Foundation and other community stakeholders.

Moreover, findings of the study revealed that parents' ignorance on the importance of educating a young girls acted as catalysts to child marriages. In an interview, thirty (30) (60%) out of fifty (50) respondents strongly agreed, fifteen (15) (30%) moderately agreed while the rest five (5) (10%) were not sure. Investing in a girl's education could be a good decision family, communities or a country could make. Parents and guardians needed to be educated on how essential it is to educate both girls and boys. Education nullifies child marriages. According to PSAF (2019), providing access to information can be crucial in educating children, as it can help them learn to mitigate the risks they may face. Lack of access to such information could exacerbate the dangers faced by girls and their families, limiting their ability to protect themselves and make informed decisions.

Furthermore, findings of the study revealed that beer and substance among peers contributed to early marriages in the district of study. The researcher further did another interview with parents in the village on how they perceived beer consumption among young children as a catalyst of child marriages in Sohwe Village to see the extent to which beer consumption led to child marriages in the area of study. Fourteen (14) out of twenty (20) participants making it 70% agreed that substance abuse and beer drinking contributed to child marriages. Six (6) out of twenty (20) making (30%) of the respondents were not sure. Teenagers abuse substances such as Marijuana, Mutoriro, Dombo, excess Bronchleer and beer in the name of "experiments of new things. "Children normally do this out of the influence of peers. This therefore deducts teens' capability to impulsion regulation. (Kelly, 2021). The ways they behave after abusing drugs can directly or indirectly lead in early marriages. These incidents have been ascertained in the area of study.

In summary, the combination of poverty, peer pressure, lack of education, and alcohol consumption could create a challenging environment for young individuals, potentially increasing their susceptibility to early marriages. Addressing these interconnected factors could require a multifaceted approach that could encompass economic empowerment, targeted interventions to counter peer pressure, and education on the risks associated with alcohol consumption, particularly in the context of child marriages.

#### 4.5 RESEARCH QUESTION THREE (3): WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF EARLY MARRIAGES IN THE DISTRICT OF STUDY?

In line with the question three (3) of the research, the researcher presented data in a table form according to the responses of the participants in an interview.

Table 4.8: Impacts of early marriages on young girls in the area of study

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Frequency distribution</b>	<b>Percentage (%) rate</b>
Health put at risk	27	54
Difficulties in delivering babies	13	26
Domestic violence	7	14
Unexperienced in motherhood	3	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

n=50

Table 4.8 illustrates what respondents in the area of study believed it was the impacts of early marriages on young boys and girls in the area of study. Twenty-seven (27) out of fifty (50) (54%) responded early marriages put health at risk, while thirteen (13) out of fifty (50) (26%) indicated that it resulted in increased challenges during delivering babies, seven (7) out of fifty (50) (14%) said that early marriages resulted in domestic violence and only three (3) out of fifty (50) (6%) respondents reported that early marriage victims were unexperienced in motherhood. In overall, according to the finding of the research girls married at a tender age are at the risks of having health problems. Lady Y who looked miserable in her interview with the researcher stated that:

*“My husband was manipulated by her friend to marry off our daughter to a rich gold miner who was based in Bindura Town. Our cheerful and intelligent daughter was in Grade Six at that moment. She was always number one in her class and she was good at ex-curricular activities too. My husband without my consent married her off to the gold miner and he squandered all the money with his mistress. Sadly, my daughter passed away during child birth at Karanda Mission hospital”*

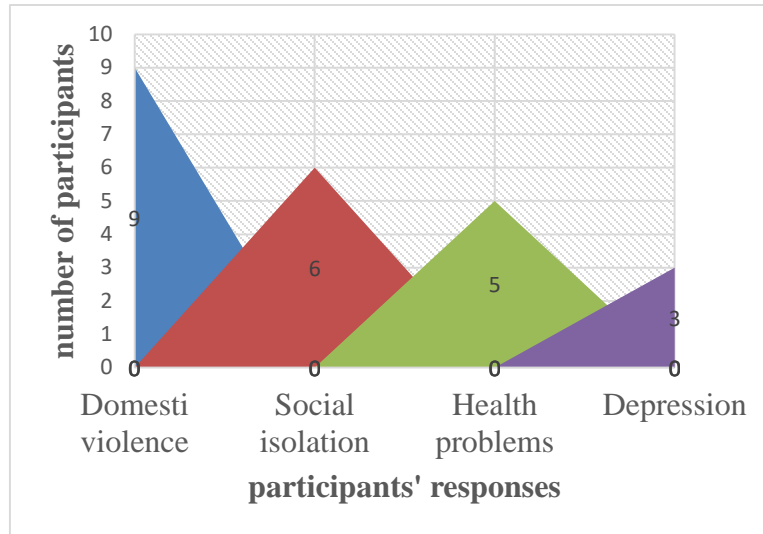
The researcher had an interview with a healthcare provider who worked as a sister in Charge at Karanda hospital who said that:

*Karanda Mission Hospital from the year 2000, has recorded high rates of maternal mortality. It is sad to note that the most affected are mothers that were impregnated below the age of 18 years. Because child marriages are posing harmful effects to the girl child, it would be much better for the government to take action on the issue”.*

#### **4.5.1 Focus Group Discussion: What are the impacts of early marriages in the area of study?**

The researcher conducted FGD with twenty-three (23) children aged nine to seventeen years (9-17) on the impacts of early marriages on young boys and girls in the area of study. The figure shows the children’s’ responses.

Figure 4.10: Impacts of early marriages on children (FGD)



n=23

Out of twenty-three (23) respondents, nine (9) (39, 1%) stated that girls who marry early are likely to experience domestic violence. Six (6) (26, 1%) believed that child marriages have an effect of social isolation on girls as the girls are often separated from their family members and friends after marriage. Five (5) (21, 7%) stated that child brides are likely to face health problems such as complications during pregnancy and childbirth and sexually transmitted diseases. Three (3) respondents ((13, 1%) stated that girls who marry before the age of eighteen (18) years are at higher risk of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorders. Boy X from the group stated that:

*“I have my cousin who was married off when she was only Eleven years of age. She often came to my parents with tears streaming heavily down her cheeks. She would say that her husband beats her daily because he said she did no behave like a full-grown woman. I myself could see my cousin with other village girls playing ‘pada’ which indicated that she had a childish behavior”*

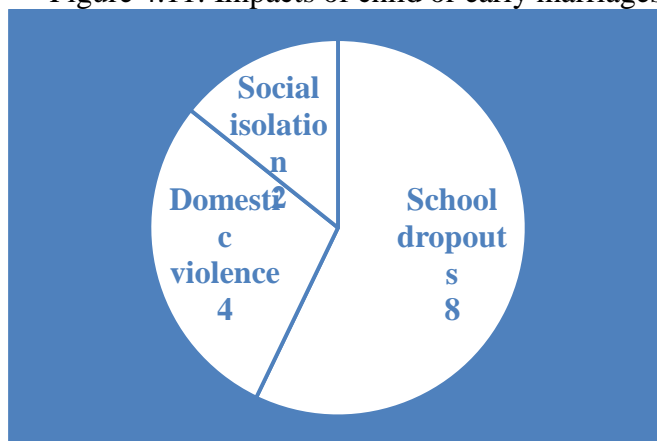
The researcher picked another girl with a hand up and she said something about her friend. Girl Y said that:

*My friend was married off by her parents when she was thirteen years old. We ran away from her when she attempted to join us for fetching firewood”*

**4.5.2 Questionnaire: What are the impacts of early marriages on children in area of study?**

The researcher distributed questionnaires to fourteen (14) participants in the study.

Figure 4.11: Impacts of child or early marriages (Questionnaires)



n=14

Out of fourteen participants, eight (8) (57%) stated that child marriages had effects of school dropouts on children, four (4) (29%) stated that child marriages led to domestic violence while others two (2) responded that it led to social isolation.

**4.5.3 Impacts of early marriages upon governmental functioning**

Table 4.9 shows the response of the interviewees on the impacts of early marriages upon governmental functioning

Table 4.9: Impacts of early marriages on the functioning of the government

Responses	Frequency	Percentage %
Too much expenses on medications	27	54



Negatively affects economic development as there will be accelerating population growth leading to poverty and inequality	15	30
Negatively affects economic development as there is lack of women emancipation as women could be seen as child bearing objects	8	16
Total	50	100

n=50

Table 4.9 illustrates results that were got from respondents on their perspectives on to what extent early marriages affected the governmental operations. The results showed that twenty-seven (27) (54%) participants believed that early marriages led to government spending too much expenses on medication in hospitals. Fifteen (15) out of fifty (50) (30%) participants stated that early marriages affected economic development in that there would be excessive population growth that could lead to poverty and inequality. Eight (8) (16%) out of fifty (50) reported that early marriages negated social development as there would be less women emancipation. The conclusion was that early marriages led to government spending more expenditure on health and medications in hospitals and clinics. If the issue of early marriages could be dealt with, it would enable the government to evenly spend finances on sectors that need support for example, health, education, infrastructure development among other sectors.

Lady X commented remarked that:

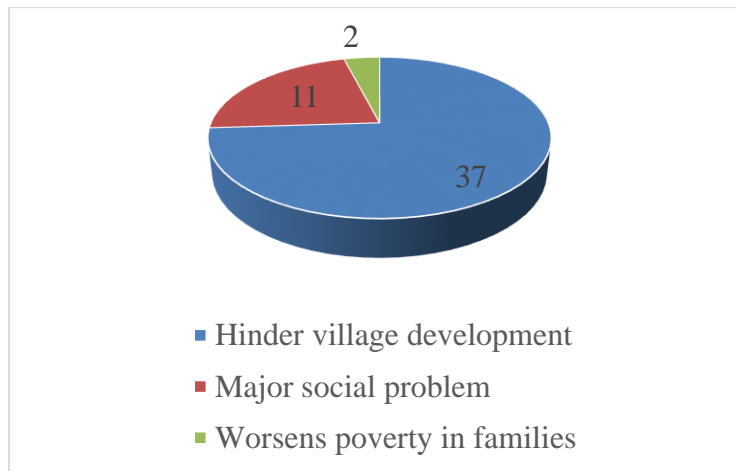
*“Young girls need to be protected and educated because they are part and parcel of socio and economic development. Females who successfully complete high school and tertiary level have got a tendency of being independent, much healthier, emancipated, participating in formal labor,*

*earning better, delay marriage and deliver not many children which they can easily provide with good education and healthcare”*

#### 4.5.4 Impacts of early marriages on community operations

Figure 4.12 shows the results of interviews on the impacts of early marriages to the community

Figure 4.12: Impacts of early marriages on community operation



n=50

Figure 4.12 shows that thirty-seven (37) (74%) out of fifty (50) respondents believed that early marriages affected negatively the development of the village. Out of fifty (50) respondents, eleven (11) (22%) responded that early marriage was a major social issue while two (2) (4%) respondents believed that early marriages in the area of study affected the village by worsening poverty rates in families. The researcher interviewed Father Y who said:

*“This village infrastructure development is moving at a slow pace. This is being caused by lack of self-control of young people where they are engaged in sexual activities that leads to unwanted pregnancies and immature marriages. Youths today tend to focus in family responsibilities abandoning the development of the village.”*

#### 4.5.5 Impacts of early marriages on school going children

Table 4.10 shows the interviewees’ perspectives on effects of child marriages on pupils

Table 4.10: Impacts of early marriages in school going children

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
School dropouts	26	52
Contribute to the development of an unfavorable attitude to schooling	17	34
Depression especially the girl child	7	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

n=50

Table 4.10 illustrated what the village participants thought were the impacts of early marriages on school going children. Twenty-six (26) (52%) out of fifty (50) participants shared with the researcher that child marriages led to school dropouts, eighteen (18) (36%) stated that early marriages led to children developing an unpleasant attitude towards schooling while seven (7) (14%) responded said that child marriages led to depression especially to the girl child. The researcher however drew conclusion from the provided responses that early marriages to a larger extent led to school dropouts.

Nevertheless, one local teacher supported that early marriages made children to dislike school. She said that:

*“Children who are related to victims of early marriages do not participate very well in school. Most of them do not pay attention during lessons and some boycott lessons frequently. One girl shared with me that she wanted to be in a marriage just like her cousin and stop bothering herself with books. It is sad that even parents tend to give school an unfavorable attitude. I came across a mother who shared with me that her girl should not go to school because it is a waste of resources and time. She said she wanted to have grandchildren like all of her friends.”*

According to the findings of the study on the impacts of child marriages in the district of study, in an interview, twenty-seven (27) (54%) participants responded that child marriages put health of children at risk, thirteen (13) (26%) stated that child marriages caused children to have difficulties in child delivering, seven (7) (14%) stated that child marriages led to domestic violence and three (3) (6%) responded that child brides were unexperienced in taking care of children. The researcher carried out a Focus Group Discussion with twenty-three children who responded that child marriages had negative impacts on children generally. Nine (39, 1%) stated that they led to domestic violence, six (26, 1%) stated that child marriages led to social isolation, five (21, 7%) stated that they lead to health problems while three (13, 1%) responded that child marriages led to depression.

Findings of the research showed that child marriages led to maternal mortality and domestic violence. The impacts of child marriages on maternal mortality and domestic violence are deeply concerning and demand urgent attention. These consequences not only affect the individual girls but also have ripple effects on their families and communities. It is imperative to address the root causes of child marriages and provide support to those at risk. By empowering young girls, providing access to education and healthcare, and challenging harmful traditional practices, we can work towards preventing the devastating impacts of child marriages on maternal mortality and domestic violence, creating a safer and healthier future for young girls around the world.

The findings of the study complimented what scholar Heber (2016) in Chapter two (2) of the study indicated about child marriages. He stated that child marriages caused maternal mortality. According to the findings, several respondents (54%) were sure that child marriages led to maternal mortality on the girls in the village. The scholar indicated that when young girls marry early, they often face significant health risks, particularly related to maternal mortality. Due to their bodies not being fully developed, they could be at a much higher risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth, leading to tragic consequences. The lack of access to proper healthcare and the physical toll of early pregnancy could result in maternal mortality, robbing these young girls of their lives

Furthermore, the findings revealed that child marriages often led to a cycle of domestic violence. These young brides were more likely to experience abuse at the hands of their much older spouses. The power dynamics in such marriages could be skewed, leaving the young girls vulnerable to

physical, emotional, and psychological abuse. They could often be deprived of their rights and freedoms, trapped in a cycle of violence and oppression.

Moreover, the findings of the study revealed the effects of early marriages on community operation. In an interview, thirty-seven (74%) stated that child marriages hampered village development, eleven (22%) responded that child marriages were a social problem while two (4) stated that child marriages worsen poverty in families. UNICEF (2021) report supported the respondents' view that child or early marriages could limit young women potential give positive changes to the community and the country. This was because usually when young girls get into marriages, they could usually get denied rights to carry on with education.

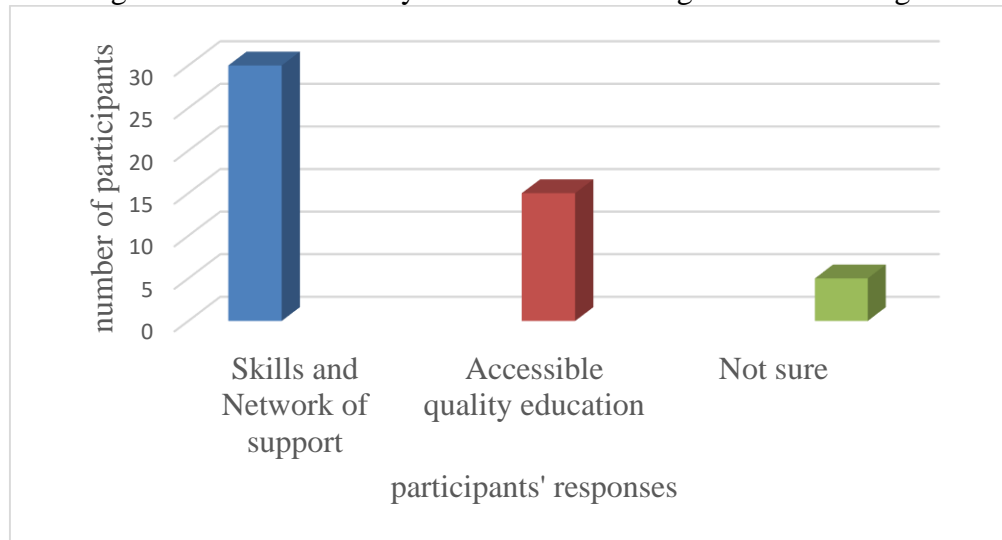
Furthermore, as shown by the study findings, early marriages had also impacted negatively on girls in schools. The total number of respondents in the interview carried out by the researcher were fifty (50). Twenty-six (26) (52%) responded that child marriages led to school dropouts, seventeen (17) (34%) stated that they contributed to the development of an unfavorable attitude towards schooling while seven (7) (14%) responded that they led to depression. According to questionnaires, distributed to fourteen (14) participants, eight (8) (57, 1%) responded that child marriages led to school dropouts, four (4) (28, 6%) responded that they led to domestic violence while the remaining two (2) (14, 3%) stated that they led to social isolation. Child marriages is a string negative impact to girls in still in school. Children who get married still in school tend to give education a negative attitude. The findings of the study complemented literature by Tsava (2019) discussed earlier in Chapter two (2) where he emphasized on negative attitude towards schooling as an impact of child marriages.

UNICEF (2020) revealed that once a woman is educated, the whole nation is educated. This was a common motto among African girls to encourage one another to get educated. Rugh (2018) stated that educating a woman improve her economic status.

#### **4.6 RESEARCH QUESTION FOUR (4): WHAT ARE THE STRATEGIES TO ERADICATE CHILD MARRIAGES AND ENHANCE GIRL CHILD EMPOWEWERMEN IN THE DISTRICT OF STUDY?**

Figure 4.12 shows the results acquired from the interviews on possible ways to eradicate early marriages in the study area.

Figure 4.12: Possible ways to eradicate marriages and enhance girl



n=50

According to the findings, fifty (50) respondents were available and among them were parents, guidance, teachers, children and community stakeholders. Thirty (30) (60%) out of fifty (50) respondents indicated that child marriages can be mitigated through girl child empowerment with information, skills and networks of support. Fifteen (15) (30%) out of fifty (50) respondents indicated that the sure way to stop child marriages was through promoting the accessibility and quality education for girls. Five (5) (10%) out of fifty (50) respondents were not sure of good ways to eradicate of child marriages.

UNICEF (2007) revealed that girls should marry later after completion of tertiary or high school level so as to promote female emancipation. In schools, they are given life skills, health and sex education. Victims of early marriages usually are those without education.

The researcher interviewed Lady X who said:

*“I think offering girls life skills such as tailoring, baking, knitting and so on can be a sure way to child marriages. This can be due to the fact that they have been empowered. Girl child empowerment an enable a girl child to think outside the box, earn more and be independent.”*

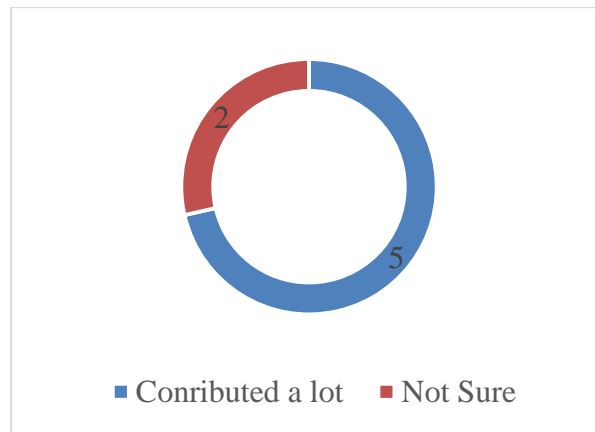
Another local teacher who was part of the interviewees shared with the researcher that:

*“I think Secondary school girls should engage themselves in clubs for knowledge and skills acquisition. I have seen at the school which I was transferred from”*

### 4.6.1 Support networks

The below figure illustrates what the key informants perceived on giving young girls skills and support networks as a possible way to eradicate early marriages in the study area

Figure 4.14: Support networks and life skills



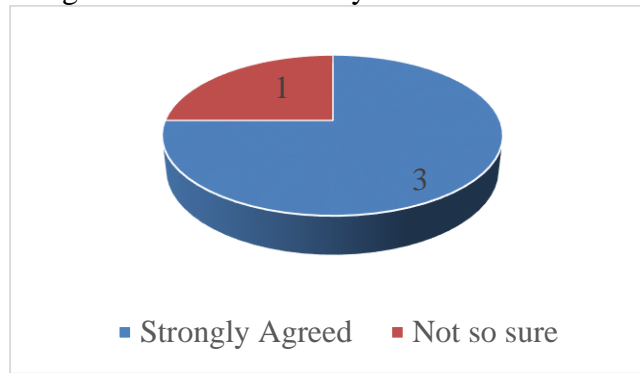
n=7

As shown by the above results, there were key informant interviews which were conducted with only seven (7) participants that included four (4) teachers, one (1) healthcare provider, two (2) community stakeholders namely the village councilor and the village head. The interview was on their thoughts on whether providing girls with social support and network going to eradicate child marriages. Of all the participants, five (5) (71, 4%) were believed that it contributed a lot, while two (2) (28, 6%) were not sure. The overall finding was that there is need for girls to be taught about the social skills and network of support in order to lessen early marriages. The Zimbabwean government needs to bring the issue to the limelight.

### 4.6.2 Accessibility of formal education

Below in figure 4.15 shows the illustration of how key informants perceive the point of making formal education accessible to girl a solution to end early marriages. The researcher interviewed four (4) teachers as the other key informants in the study.

Figure 4.15: Accessibility of formal education



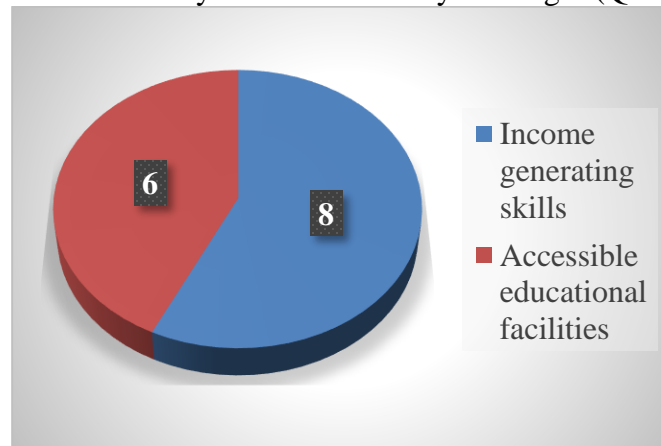
n=4

Out of four (4) respondents, three (3) (75%) strongly agreed that giving girls formal education can be a solution to eradicate child marriages whereas only one (1) (25%) individual was not so sure whether it contributed or not. UNICEF (2021) stated that girls' education can be promoted by delayed marriage. Girls are encouraged to attend school so as to avoid marrying early. In schools, they are given life skills, health education and also mental and emotional assistance. UNICEF (2021) further explains that girls with little or no education are more likely to experience child marriages.

#### 4.6.3 Questionnaire: What are the strategies to eradicate early marriages and enhance the empowerment of girls in the area of study?

The researcher distributed questionnaires to fourteen (14) participants. According to the responses, there were different perspectives on what emerged as the potential ways to eradicate early marriages and enhance girl child empowerment.

Figure 4.16: Possible ways to eradicate early marriages (Questionnaires)





n=14

Out of fourteen (14) participants, eight (8) (57%) stated that early marriages could be eradicated by giving girls money making skills and ideas while six (6) (43%) stated that access to education facilities could promote girl child empowerment and limit child marriages in the study area.

According to the findings of the study, in an interview, thirty (30) out of fifty (50) (60%) respondents indicated that child marriages could be mitigated through girl child empowerment with information, skills and networks of support, fifteen (15) (30%) responded that girls need accessible and quality education to be emancipated while five (5) (10%) were not sure. The researcher interviewed seven (7) key informants in the study (four teachers, one healthcare worker, one village head and one village councilor) on whether giving girls skills and network of support enhanced their empowerment. Out of seven (7) key informants, five (5) (71, 4%) responded that it contributed a lot while two (2) (28, 6%) were not sure of the good ways to eradicate child marriages. According to the questionnaires distributed physically to fourteen (14) participants, eight (8) (57, 1%) strongly agreed that giving girls income generating skills was a sure way to eradicate child marriages and enhance girl child empowerment while six (6) (42.9%) responded that accessible educational facilities eradicated child marriages and enhanced girl child marriages.

Support networks provide a vital safety net for at-risk children. By establishing community-based support systems, young girls could access resources and guidance, enabling them to make informed choices about their futures. These networks could offer counseling, mentorship, and protection, ensuring that vulnerable children have the support they need to resist early marriage and pursue their education. Earlier in the research in Chapter two (2), Malia (2019) cited that child marriages could be eradicated through offering support networks to girls. The scholar piece of research was proven useful as evidenced by the respondents who raised that as a point of eradicating child marriages.

Again, findings of the research complimented literature by Changale (2019) discussed earlier in Chapter two (2) who stated that child marriages could be eradicated through making education accessible for girls. According to the findings, quiet a number of respondents stated that education accessibility was a sure to child marriages eradication in the area of study. Education accessibility was fundamental in addressing the root causes of child marriages in the area of study. By providing quality education to all children, especially girls, they could be equipped with the knowledge and

skills necessary to assert their rights and make autonomous decisions. Access to education empowers young girls, broadens their horizons, and offer alternatives to early marriage, breaking the cycle of poverty and gender inequality.

Moreover, literature review in Chapter two (2) revealed that parents and community engagement could be a solution to child marriages. However, this was contrary to the views of the participants who never raised that point as a strategy to eradicate child marriages during interviews, questionnaires or FDGs. According to Swamo (2018) parents and community engagement could be pivotal in eradicating child marriages. Through community outreach and awareness programs, parents could be educated about the harmful impacts of early marriage on their children's well-being and future prospects. By engaging community leaders and influencers, the country could challenge harmful traditional practices and foster a supportive environment for young girls to thrive.

In summary, these solutions were interconnected and mutually reinforcing, offering a comprehensive approach to addressing child marriages. By strengthening support networks, improving education accessibility, and fostering parents and community engagement, there could be a creation of a more inclusive and protective environment for young girls, empowering them to realize their full potential and lead self-determined lives free from the harm of early marriage.

Several programs have been involved in girl child empowerment through giving them skills and information. CAMFED, Higher life Foundation, Joshua Nkomo among other scholarships offer free education to both girls and boys from primary up to tertiary level. Girls' education can be promoted by delayed marriage. Girls with little or no education are more likely to experience child marriages (UNICEF, 2021).

#### **4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In summary, Chapter Four (4) presented the results that were obtained from all the respondents who participated in the study and the discussions. Participants shared their views on child marriages nature, the catalysts, impacts and possible strategies of eradicating child marriages in Muzarabani District. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, thematic analysis and chai-square test in school. According to the collected results, the researcher noticed that most of the villagers were not happy with the child marriages occurrence while some families were okay with the practice for it lessened their financial burdens through receiving bride price. Organizations

that act bravely in ending child marriages for example, CAMFED (Campaign for Female Education), UNICEF, Girls Not Brides only to mention a few were acknowledged in the research and more organizations were urged to participate in order to achieve a country that is free from child marriages.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Chapter five (5) revealed conclusion, recommendations to the study and as well attempts to finish observations on the problem under investigations. This was the final chapter of the study which puts in summary the main findings of the study.

#### **5.1 CONCLUSION**

After thorough research into the nature of child marriages, catalysts of child marriages, their impacts, and strategies for eradicating child marriages in Muzarabani District, it was evident that child marriages were deeply entrenched in social, cultural, and economic factors. The practice often stemmed from poverty, lack of education, gender inequality, and traditional beliefs. These catalysts perpetuated the cycle of child marriages, leading to detrimental impacts on the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of the children involved. Furthermore, child marriages contributed to the perpetuation of poverty and hinder the overall development of the community.

However, the research also highlighted promising strategies for eradicating child marriages in Muzarabani District. These strategies included comprehensive education and awareness programs targeting parents, community leaders, and young individuals. Empowering girls through access to education, skills training, and economic opportunities is crucial in breaking the cycle of child marriages. Additionally, engaging with local leaders and traditional authorities to challenge harmful cultural practices and promote gender equality is an essential step in addressing the root causes of child marriages.

The research underscored the urgent need for a multi-faceted approach to address the complex nature of child marriages in Muzarabani District. Efforts to eradicate child marriages should involve collaboration between government agencies, non-governmental organizations, community leaders, and local residents. By addressing the catalysts of child marriages and implementing effective strategies, Muzarabani District could work towards creating a safer and more prosperous environment for its children, free from the harmful impacts of child marriages.

#### **5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

These sections revealed some actions which the government of Zimbabwe, NGOs and community stakeholders were encouraged to do in dealing with early marriages in the study area. The recommendations were constructed from the responses that were gathered from the participants

through interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussions and eye observation. Recommendations called for serious attention of the Zimbabwean government, Non-Governmental Organizations, village stakeholders, teachers, parents and children. The following recommendations emerged from the study:

1. The government of Zimbabwe should increase raising awareness about the harmful effects of child marriage
2. The government should strengthen policies and laws that protect girls from child marriage, including those that promote girls' education and economic empowerment.
3. There is need to develop community-based interventions that address the root causes of child marriage, such as poverty, gender inequality, and limited access to education and healthcare.
4. There is need for engagement of traditional leaders and community members in dialogues and educational campaigns about the negative consequences of child marriage, emphasizing its impact on girls' health, education, and future prospects.
5. There is need for the consideration of the development of alternative livelihoods for families that rely on child marriage for economic stability, such as skills training, access to credit, or support for income-generating activities.
6. The government should emphasize its impact on girls' health, education, and future prospects.

### **5.3 FURTHER RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS**

There is scope for further developments of the study. The current study was limited to the geographical areas as it was studied in Sohwe Village in Muzarabani District in Mashonaland Central in Zimbabwe. The extent people in the area could be affected by child marriages might differ from the extent child marriages impacts in Gutu District in Masvingo Province. Therefore, there is need for more studies to be done in other Provinces such that the findings can be comparable.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX ONE (1): Informed Consent Form

### DEPARTMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



P Bag 1020  
BINDURA, Zimbabwe  
Tel: 071 – 7531-6, 7621-4  
Fax: 263 – 71 – 7534/6316

### BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

7 April 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

#### ASSISTANCE TO THE STUDENT WHO IS SEEKING INFORMATION FOR RESEARCH PROJECT

This is to confirm that PERSISTANCE CHITORD in Development Studies in the Sustainable Development Department at Bindura University of Science Education and is required to do a Research Project as part of her Degree programme. The student is expected to gather data for his/her project from various sources including your Institution.

This letter therefore serves to kindly ask you to assist the above-mentioned student with information relating to his/her project entitled:

CHILD MARRIAGES IN ZIMBABWE: A STUDY OF CATALYSTS, IMPACTS AND STRATEGIES FOR ERADICATING CHILD MARRIAGES AND ENFANCE GIRL CHILD EMPOWERMENT, CASE OF SOHWI VILLAGE UNDER CHIEF KASEKETE, MUZARABANI DISTRICT, MASHONALAND CENTRAL IN ZIMBABWE.

Thank you.

.....  
DR. J. BOWORA  
CHAIRMAN

CHAIRMAN  
GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT  
FACULTY OF SCIENCE

Dear respondent

My name is Persistence Chitoro, an undergraduate student at Bindura University of Science Education studying Development Studies. I am carrying out a research on child marriages in Sohwe Village, Muzarabani District, and Mashonaland Province in Zimbabwe. I am glad to inform you that you have been selected as one of the participants in this research. Your responses are going to be strictly confidential and will be used only for academic purposes.

\*Kindly give your honesty answers\*

### **Purpose**

The study seeks to research the nature of child marriages, causal factors of child marriages, effects of child marriages and the ways to enhance girl child empowerment in Sohwe Village in Muzarabani District, Zimbabwe.

### **Consent**

Voluntary participation is encouraged. You are free to decline taking part in this research.

### **Rights of Respondents**

With all effort, the right of the participants will be protected and respected. All measures will be taken to ensure that participants will not be harmed in any way. All participants are free to appeal for further clarification during the research at any point of the exercise. They are also free to inform the researcher if they are not comfortable about any procedure in the exercise.

## **APPENDIX TWO (2): English Interview Guide**

**Interview schedule for fifty (50) participants-Twenty (20) parents, Twenty-three (23) children, four (4) teachers, one (1) village headman, one (1) healthcare worker and one (1) village councilor. (English Schedule)**

I am a student at Bindura University of Science Education by name Persistence Chitoro, studying Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in Development Studies carrying out research on child marriages in Sohwe Village in Muzarabani District, Mashonaland Central, Zimbabwe. The information will be used only for academic purposes. Sources of information and the responses are going to be treated with maximum confidentiality

**Kindly answer the following questions:**

1. How old are you?
2. How long have you been in this area?
3. What is your own understanding about the term child marriages?
4. When do you think is the right time to marry a girl?
5. State the nature of child marriages which is common in this area
6. What nature of families are affected most by child marriages in this area?
7. What could be the causes of child marriages in this area?
8. What could be the effects of child marriages in this area?
9. What are the effects of child marriages to children?
10. What are the effects of child marriages on the operation of?
  - a. The Government
  - b. The Village
  - c. The Pupils
11. What could be the potential solutions to child marriages in this area?
12. State the cases of child marriages recorded in this village from 2023
13. Why does child marriages common among girls than boys
14. What are some of the laws on child marriages in Zimbabwe?
15. What measures has Chief Kasekete put in trying to reduce child marriages?

**\*Thank you for your cooperation\***

### **APPENDIX THREE (3): Shona Interview Guide**

**Interview schedule for fifty (50) participants-Twenty (20) parents, Twenty-three (23) children, four (4) teachers, one (1) village headman, one (1) healthcare worker and one (1) village councilor. (Shona Schedule)**

Zita rangu ndinonzi Persistence Chitoro. Ndinodzidza kuBindura University of Science Education ndichiita Dhigirii reDevelopment Studies. Donzvo rangu nderekuita tsvakurudzo pamusoro pekuroorwa kwevana vari pasi pemakore gumi nemasere (18) mudunhu rino. Mhinduro dzenyu dzakachengetedzwa uye dzichashanda pakubatsira zvidzidzo chete.

Pindurai mibvunzo inotevera:

1. Mune makore mangani?
2. Mave nenguva yakadii muchigara mudunhu rino?
3. Mafungiro akadii amunawo nezvekuroorwa kwevana vari pasi pemakore gumi nemasere?
4. Ndeapi makore amunofunga akakodzera kuti mwanasikana aroorwe kana amasvika?
5. Mudunhu rino, imhando ipi yekuroorwa kwevana vari pasi pemakore gumi nemasere iri kuitika?
6. Mudunhu rino, ndedzipi mhando dzemhuri dziri kunyanya kuwirwa nedambudziko revana vari kurrorwa vasati vasvika makore makumi nemasere?
7. Chii chamungati chiri kukonzera kuti vana varoorwe vasati vasvika makore gumi nemasere?
8. Ndedzipi nhamo dzingauya kuburikidza nekuroorwa kwevana vari pasi pemakore gumi nemasere?
9. Zvine njodzi dzipi kuvana zvekuti varoorwe vasati vasvika makore gumi nemasere?
10. Zvinopa njodzi dzipi zvekuti vana varoorwe vasati vasvika makore gumi nemasere:
  - a) Pamafambiro ehurumemde?
  - b) Mudunhu rino?
  - c) Kuvana vechikoro
11. Ndezvipi zvamunofunga kuti zvingaitwa kuderedza manhamba evana vari kuroorwa vasati vasvitsa makore gumi nemasere?

12. Ingani nyaya dzevana vari kuroorwa vari pasi pemakore gumi nemasere dziri mudunhu rino kubva mugore ra2023
13. Nemhaka yei vasikana vanoorwa vasati vasvika gumi nemasere vakawanda kudarika vakomana vanoroora vasati vasvika gumi nemasere?
14. Pane here mitemo pamusoro pekudzivisa kuroorwa kwemwana asati asvika gumi nemasere muZimbabwe
15. Ivo Mambo Kasekete vakamboisa here mitemo ipi inorambidza kuroorwa kwevana vari pasi pemakore gumi nemasere?

\*Ndinokutendai nerutsigiro rwenyu\*

## **APPENDIX FOUR (4): Focus Group Discussion Guide**

**Focus Group Discussion for twenty-three (23) children in the village (eighteen (18) girls and five (5) boys).**

### **Purpose**

Issues related to child marriages will be discussed

### **Ground rules for discussions:**

- This is a simple discussion and your wills are respected.
- Our discussion is going to last for forty-five (45) minutes.
- All pupils are required to be free and relaxed. I am going to allow one person at a time to speak.

1. What is your understanding on child marriages?
2. What do think is the perfect time to marry off a girl?
3. What are the causal factors of child marriage?
4. Do you know any cases of child marriages in this area?
5. What kind of child marriages in common in this area?
6. Do you think it's important to send a girl child to school?
7. What do you think are the benefits of educating a girl child?
8. Do you know any law of child marriages in Zimbabwe?
9. What are the effects of child marriages on pupils?
10. What could be the solution to child marriages?

**\*Thank You\***



**APPENDIX FIVE (5): Questionnaire Guide**  
**Questionnaire for fourteen participants-ten parents and four teachers**

My name is Persistence Chitoro, an undergraduate student at Bindura University of Science Education doing Bachelor of Science Education in Development Studies. I am carrying out a research project about child marriages in Sohwe Village, Muzarabani District, and Mashonaland Central, Zimbabwe. The information will be used only for academic purposes. The information sources and responses will be treated with confidentiality.

- **Kindly answer these questions honestly by filling in the spaces provided**
- **Your answers will be confidential**
- **Please, you are not allowed to write your name on the questionnaire**

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

- The questionnaire has two (3) Sections that is A, B and C. Where there is appropriate tick or provide brief answers.

**SECTION A**

**PERSONAL DETAILS**

Gender (a) Male [  ] (b) Female [  ]

Age (a) 18-25 [  ] (b) 25-45 [  ] (c) 46-64 [  ]

**Tick in the box where appropriate**

1. What causes child marriages in Sohwe Village

[  ] Poverty

[  ] Peer Pressure

[  ] Cultural beliefs

2. What are the effects of child marriages to the children in Sohwe Village?

[  ] School dropouts

Domestic Violence

Social Isolation

3. What is the best strategy to eradicate child marriages?

Income generating skills

Accessible educational facilities

Parents and Community Engagement

## **SECTION B**

**Tick in the correct box where appropriate**

1) Child marriages are more dominant in rural areas than in urban areas

Strongly agree    Agree    Disagree

2) Girls are mostly affected by child marriages than boys in Zimbabwe

Strongly agree    Agree    Disagree

3) Should the practice of child marriages stop or continue in Zimbabwe

Strongly agree    Agree    Disagree

## **SECTION C**

**Honestly give brief explanations on the questions below**

1. How old are you?

.....

2. What is your highest qualification?

.....

3. What do you think are causal factors of child marriages in this village?

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

4. What do you think are the effects of child marriages on children in this village?

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

5. What do you think are ways to eradicate child marriages and enhance girl child empowerment in this village?

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

**APPENDIX SIX (6): Observation Guide**

**(An observation guide designed to gather information on research question two which was,**

**What are the catalyst of child marriages in the district of study”)**

1. From what you see in the study area, what might be the potential factors driving child marriages in the area of study?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Why do you say that?

.....

.....

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.....

.....

## APPENDIX SEVEN (7): Turnitin Report

**final**

**ORIGINALITY REPORT**

<b>8%</b> SIMILARITY INDEX	<b>7%</b> INTERNET SOURCES	<b>1%</b> PUBLICATIONS	<b>1%</b> STUDENT PAPERS
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<b>4</b>	<b>elibrary.buse.ac.zw:8080</b> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1%</b>
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