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## FACTORS INFLUENCING GIRL CHILD SCHOOL DROPOUT RATES: A CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF OPTIONAL SCHOOLS IN MASVINGO REGION

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### ABSTRACT

This study conducts a contextual analysis of factors influencing girl child school dropout rates in optional schools within the Masvingo Region of Zimbabwe. Utilizing qualitative research methods, including interviews and focus group discussions, the study explores the multifaceted dynamics contributing to this phenomenon. Findings highlight socio-economic factors, cultural norms, educational policies, and infrastructure challenges as significant determinants of girl child school dropout rates. Moreover, the study identifies community perceptions and attitudes towards girl child education as critical influencers. By delving into the contextual nuances of optional schools in Masvingo Region, this research provides valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and community stakeholders aiming to address girl child school dropout and promote equitable access to education.

### KEYWORDS

Girl child education, school dropout, optional schools, Masvingo Region, Zimbabwe, socio-economic factors, cultural norms, educational policies.

### INTRODUCTION

The pursuit of education stands as a fundamental right and a powerful tool for empowerment, yet millions of

girls around the world continue to face barriers that prevent them from realizing their full academic

potential. In Zimbabwe, like many other countries, girl child school dropout remains a persistent challenge, particularly in optional schools within regions like Masvingo. This phenomenon is shaped by a complex interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and educational factors, which necessitate a contextual analysis to understand its root causes and implications.

The Masvingo Region of Zimbabwe presents a unique setting for examining the factors influencing girl child school dropout rates. Optional schools within this region cater to a diverse population, encompassing rural and urban areas, with varying access to resources and educational opportunities. Understanding the contextual dynamics of girl child school dropout in Masvingo Region is essential for developing targeted interventions to address this issue and promote equitable access to education.

This study conducts a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing girl child school dropout rates in optional schools within the Masvingo Region. By employing qualitative research methods, including interviews and focus group discussions, the study seeks to explore the multifaceted dimensions contributing to this phenomenon. Through the voices and experiences of stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, and community leaders, this research aims to uncover the underlying socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors shaping girl child school dropout in Masvingo Region.

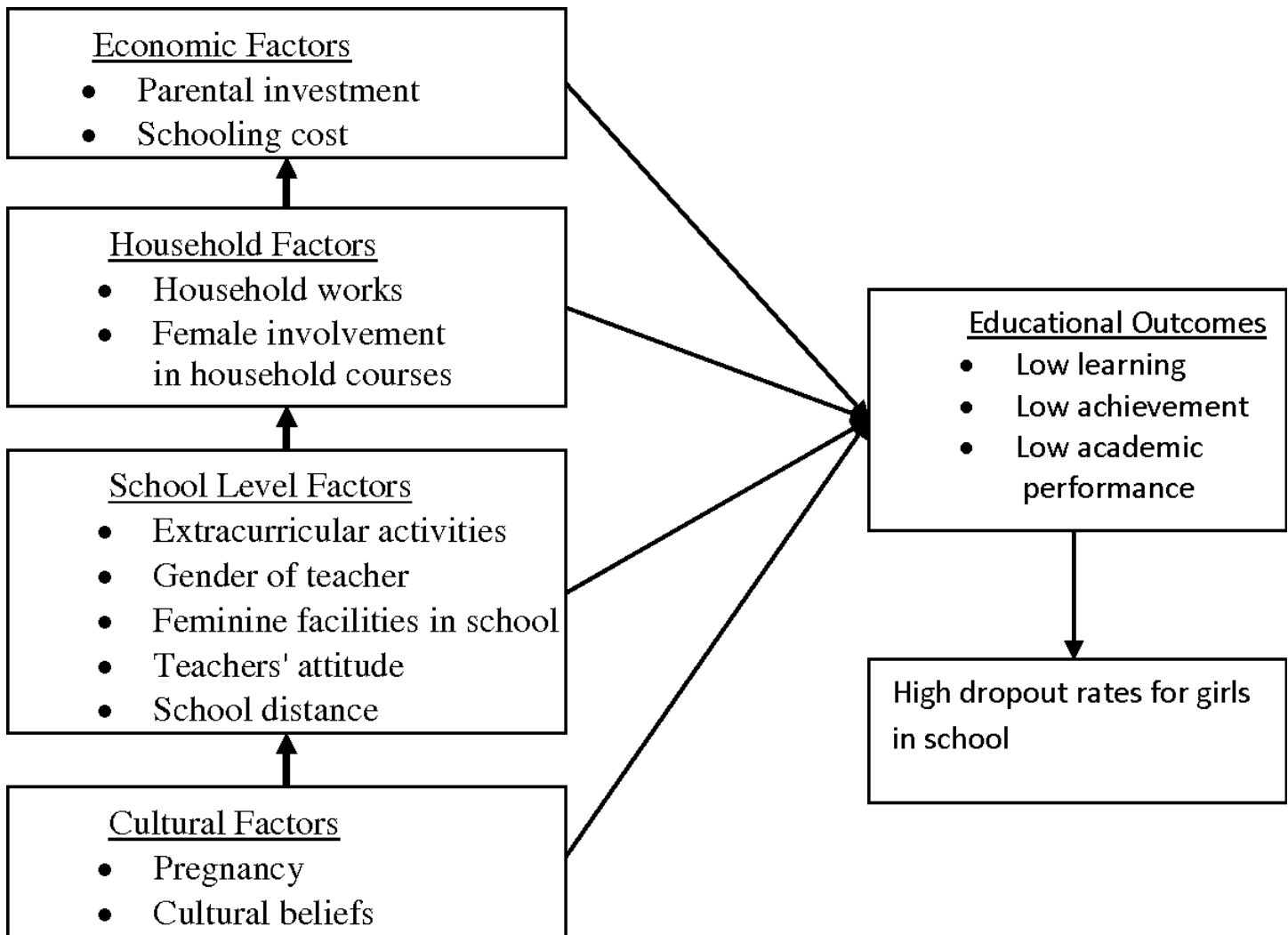
Key factors to be examined include socio-economic disparities, such as poverty and lack of access to basic necessities, which often force girls to prioritize household responsibilities over education. Cultural norms and traditional gender roles may also play a significant role in perpetuating inequalities and limiting

girls' educational opportunities. Moreover, educational policies and infrastructure challenges within optional schools may contribute to dropout rates by failing to provide adequate support and resources for girls to thrive academically.

By conducting a contextual analysis of optional schools in Masvingo Region, this research endeavors to provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and community stakeholders seeking to address girl child school dropout and promote gender equity in education. By understanding the unique challenges faced by girls in this region and identifying opportunities for intervention, this study aims to contribute to the development of effective strategies to ensure that all girls have the opportunity to access and complete their education.

### METHOD

The study was a case study on Zimbabwe's Masvingo Province. The primary objective of the qualitative method was to gain an understanding of teachers', parents', and girl students' perceptions and feelings regarding the matters of school back outs in girls. The purpose of qualitative research is to acquire a comprehensive understanding of human behavior and the component that influence it. Hossain asserts that qualitative researchers study individuals in their natural settings to determine how the social, economic, cultural, and physical contexts of their lives influence their experiences and behaviors. Qualitative methods only provide data on the specific cases studied. The prevalence and frequency of the sampled's opinions and perceptions regarding girl child school back outs were also limitedly determined using the quantitative method.



The case study research design was used in the study's qualitative approach. According to Punch, a case study is a type of research that examines a particular topic in order to gain access to the real-world context where the issue is readily apparent. It is a comprehensive and in-depth examination of a specific person, organization, or setting in a particular setting. The researchers decided to use the case study method because they wanted to know exactly how and why

girls drop out of school. The study's participants were female students, their parents, and teachers. Four secondary schools from the district were chosen through the use of purposeful sampling. The sample size was 40 people, which included 20 teachers, 12 students, and 8 parents. Purposive sampling looks for people and places that can best provide the relevant information needed to answer the research questions that were asked.

The questionnaire and the interview were the two primary methods used to collect data. According to Yin (2003), a study of the same phenomenon that employs a combination of multiple sources of evidence lessens the likelihood of research results being misinterpreted by compensating for the strengths of one method against the weaknesses of another. Bematter it allowed respondents ample time to respond at their own pace without interfering with their work, the use of questionnaires was successful. The interviews were conducted with the intention of enhancing and substantiating the responses to the questionnaires.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The fundamental motivation behind the review was researching the variables adding to young lady kid school back out. It arose out of the review that many variables impact the young lady's powerlessness to go on with training. This section presents and discusses this component.

All of the people who took part were asked if they agreed or disagreed that more girls than boys drop out of school. The main findings of a Chadzoka study on school back outs in Mutare, Zimbabwe, were that female back outs had a higher percentage of 59%, while male back outs had a lower percentage of 41%.

### Poverty and gendered social practices

It rose up out of the review that destitution lays at the core of a significant number of the difficulties that prevent young ladies' admittance to instruction. According to the interviews and questionnaires, girls' low socioeconomic status makes it difficult for them to continue their education. It was reported that parents were unable to pay for the fees and other school supplies, such as uniforms. In a similar vein, a study on

school back outs conducted by Alika and Egbochuku found that poverty ranked highest, with 53% of respondents indicating that poverty was the reason they dropped out of school.

According to the findings of this study, parents who are experiencing financial difficulties make the decision to withdraw their daughter from school and pursue further education for their son. One parent shared the following in support of this viewpoint:

Bematter they will marry, girls are ostracized from school when families are struggling financially. This is wasteful bematter the husband's family will benefit.

As a result, it was agreed that girls will not attend school when the economy is bad, giving boys priority. Society's gendered attitudes encourage parents to support boys. It became clear that not all girls have access to sufficient sanitation bematter of poverty. Teen girls who menstruate may miss a week of school. Also, Magwa in his 2006 review figured out that young ladies miss school as they attempt to wrestle with issues emerging from absence of defensive apparel and clean towels or cushions. In a poor environment where a girl is menstruating, she may decide to skip school and eventually drop out.

### Early Marriage

The study's findings revealed that girl child back out from secondary school is influenced by early marriage. According to the study, poor socioeconomic background and certain religious practices contributed to early marriage. A social and cultural factor that prevents a girl child from attending school is early marriage, as Alika and Egbochuku (2009) also point out. Participants noted that, for instance, poor parents give daughters to wealthy individuals in Zimbabwe.

This practice is referred to as Kuzvarira. According to Zombwe et al. (2010), there are cultural norms that require a dowry to be paid while a girl is still a child. This finding is consistent with these norms. When a girl reaches puberty, she is compelled to stop going to school so that she can marry. Moyo and Muvezwa also discovered that girls' school persistence is also influenced by religious beliefs. Moyo and Movezwa and the study agree that, for instance, the majority of apostolic faith children in Zimbabwe marry when they reach puberty. The church holds the belief that women's role is to marry, have children, and care for those children with their husbands. They hold the belief that girls should only attend elementary school and marry at puberty.

Ten million young ladies a year experience early or constrained marriage which is one young lady in like clockwork. One in three girls in developing nations marries before the age of 18, and one in seven girls in the world's poorest nations marry before the age of fifteen. Early and forced marriages account for 60% of marriages in Guinea, Niger, Chad, Mali, Bangladesh, and other nations. Children should not be allowed to marry before they are 18 years old because they lack full maturity and decision-making capacity.

### Teenage Pregnancy

Pregnant teens frequently drop out of school because they are seen as a social problem. According to the study, many girl children drop out of school due to pregnancy. These discoveries are likewise noted by the Service of Essential and Auxiliary Training in Zimbabwe. The Ministry reports that 122 Beitbridge girls dropped out of school due to pregnancy, with 65% of them under the age of 16. In this way teen pregnancy as likewise communicated by Sabates et al (2010) is a

component that could make sense of the greater gamble for school back out for young ladies.

Asked what they credited to as reasons for adolescent pregnancy. The reasons given were: Sexual abuse from family, teachers, and strangers. One student lamented the rising rates of sexual activity among high school students. Still, one learner had this to say about this:

Modern technology and peer pressure encourage girls to have sexual relationships.

Neediness was additionally said to add to sex. To get support for their tutoring, young ladies were said to participate in sex with friendly benefactor and thus get pregnant. Teen pregnancy is matterd by poverty.

According to Zombwe, poverty can lead girls to engage in transactional sex. Zombwe et al. also point out that girls who live far from school are less likely to attend because they are afraid of rapists. In Tanzania, Arnsworth's research, which is cited in Seka (2012), shows that back out rates rise in areas where it is farther to get to school. Girls who have to travel a long distance may be at risk for sexual abuse, which could lead to pregnancy.

### CONCLUSION

According to the study, girls are not given the same support as boys and are forced to grow up differently than boys. Sabotaging young ladies' education isn't astute. Education should be a right. Any nation can grow thanks to education. It is imperative that all evils that violate the educational rights of girls be eradicated. Girls have a right to education because they are human.

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