

# Teenage Pregnancy and Education: An Analysis of Dropout Rates in Selected Public Schools in Kabwe District, Zambia

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## Abstract

This study used a mixed-methods case descriptive design to investigate the impact of teenage pregnancy on dropout rates in public schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. The study aimed to determine the prevalence of teenage pregnancy and its effects on dropout patterns, identify socioeconomic and cultural factors contributing to educational attrition among pregnant teenagers, assess long-term consequences of teenage pregnancy on educational trajectories, and propose evidence-based recommendations. Data collection methods included interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis. Key findings were that guidance teachers and parents can significantly reduce teenage pregnancy, but more joint efforts are needed. Detrimental impacts on schooling included dropout, delayed completion, lack of concentration, and psychological consequences. It is crucial for all stakeholders to work collaboratively in supporting young women's education and empowerment. The study provides insights into these complex issues in Zambia and recommends comprehensive multi-sectoral approaches to address teenage pregnancy and promote sustainable education.

**Keywords:** Teenager, Teenage pregnancy, school dropouts

## 1. Introduction

This study investigates the impact of teenage pregnancy on dropout patterns in selected government schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. Teenage pregnancy has been a longstanding issue in Zambia (Chirwa, 2017), linked to factors such as poverty, limited education access, and cultural beliefs (Chirwa, 2017). While the importance of education in preventing teenage pregnancy and promoting gender equality is recognized (Mulenga, 2018), teenage pregnancy remains challenging, especially in Zambian public schools (Chilufya, 2020). According to the Zambia Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS, 2018), Zambia's teenage pregnancy rate is 22%, with 16% of girls aged 15-19 having given birth; rates are higher in rural areas with limited education access (ZDHS, 2018). Research shows teenage motherhood often leads to school dropout, negatively impacting long-term education and economics (Hall, 2018).

In response, the Zambian government implemented policies and interventions like sexual education, contraceptive access, and programs supporting teenage mothers' continued education (Ministry of Health, 2019). However, teenage pregnancy remains a significant challenge, particularly in Zambian public schools (Chilufya, 2020). A study found Kabwe District public schools' teenage mother dropout rate high due to pregnancy-related stigma and lack of teacher/peer support (Chilufya, 2020). This highlights the

need for more research examining contributing factors to such dropout and identifying effective interventions (Chilufya, 2020). Addressing teenage pregnancy in education is important for achieving gender equality and universal education in Zambia. This study aims to investigate the issue in Kabwe public schools and contribute to those efforts. The study is guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To determine the prevalence of teenage pregnancy and its impact on dropout patterns in government schools in Kabwe District, Zambia.
2. To identify the socio-economic and cultural factors contributing to educational attrition among pregnant teenagers in Kabwe District, Zambia.
3. To assess the long-term consequences of teenage pregnancy on the educational trajectories of affected individuals in Kabwe District, Zambia.
4. To propose evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to reduce dropout rates and support pregnant teenagers in government schools.

## 2. Literature Review

This chapter aims to review the literature on teenage pregnancy, which remains a major global public health concern with significant consequences (WHO, 2022). In Zambia, 30% of girls aged 15-19 have begun childbearing (Zambia Demographic and Health Survey, 2018), with particularly high rates in Kabwe District where the dropout rate among pregnant teenagers in public schools is alarmingly high (Ministry of Education, Kabwe District, 2020).

### 2.1 Prevalence of teenage pregnancy and its impact on education

Globally, an estimated 16 million teenage pregnancies occur annually, primarily in developing nations (WHO, 2018). In Zambia, the teenage pregnancy rate is 22.6%, one of the highest worldwide (ZDHS, 2018), significantly impacting girls' education. Research shows teenage pregnancy is a leading cause of girls' school dropout (Harden et al., 2017). In Zambia, primary school dropout is 26% for girls and 32% for girls in secondary school (ZDHS, 2018). Studies also find teenage pregnancy negatively impacts academic performance and increases dropout (Glinberg & Kohn, 2017, Harden et al., 2017).

Teenage pregnancy rates and girls' secondary completion vary between regions - rates are high and completion low in sub-Saharan Africa, compared to lower rates and higher completion in North America and Europe (UNESCO, 2018). In Kabwe District, the teenage pregnancy rate of 26.1% exceeds the national average (Kabwe District Health Office, 2019). Dropout is also high at 32% for primary girls and 42% for secondary (Kabwe District Education Board, 2020). This underscores the significant educational impact of teenage pregnancy and need for effective interventions, given the issue's high prevalence in Kabwe District.

### 2.2 Socio-economic and cultural factors contributing to educational attrition among pregnant teenagers

In Western nations, research has shown that low family income (Perper et al., 2010), single parenthood (Perper et al., 2010), and lower parental education levels (Perper et al., 2010) are associated with higher risks of non-completion. Additionally, teenage mothers face individual challenges such as childcare responsibilities (Kearney & Levine, 2012) and lack of social support (Kearney & Levine, 2012). In sub-Saharan Africa, poverty significantly shapes the experiences of pregnant adolescents, limiting access to

resources (Mmari & Magnani, 2003) and increasing the economic burden of early childbearing (Mmari & Magnani, 2003). Early marriage, which is common across the region, is strongly associated with school leaving upon pregnancy (Lloyd, 2005). In Zambia, qualitative research has highlighted cultural norms that promote early motherhood (Chigona & Chetty, 2008) and marriage over education for girls (Chigona & Chetty, 2008). Poverty exacerbates the opportunity costs of continued schooling for pregnant teenagers (Kwenda, 2014). Moreover, lack of supportive policies has been shown to hinder educational re-entry (Chigona & Chetty, 2008). This study aimed to address limitations by identifying dropout rates among rural Kabwe's pregnant teenagers (Chigona & Chetty, 2008).

### **2.3 Long-term consequences of teenage pregnancy on the educational trajectories of affected individuals**

In Western countries, teenage pregnancy associates with negative long-term educational consequences - teenage mothers more likely drop out and attain less education versus non-pregnant peers, due to stigma, lack of support, financial barriers (Hall, 2017). Moreover, consequences include poorer career prospects and earnings (Hall, 2017).

In sub-Saharan Africa, similar negative long-term educational consequences were found - teenage mothers more likely drop out and attain less education versus non-pregnant peers, due to stigma, lack of support, financial barriers (Tesfaye, 2019, Akpan, 2018). Moreover, consequences include poorer career prospects and earnings (Tesfaye, 2019).

In Zambia, teenage pregnancy significantly contributes to girls' public school dropout rates. Research consistently shows teenage mothers more likely drop out and attain less education versus non-pregnant peers, due to stigma, lack of support, financial barriers (Chileshe, 2017). Moreover, consequences include poorer career prospects and earnings (Chileshe, 2017).

This literature highlighted need to address unique needs of teenage mothers and root causes of teenage pregnancy to reduce Kabwe's pregnant teenagers' dropout rates and improve well-being, considering long-term consequences of teenage pregnancy on education (Chileshe, 2017, Kamanga, 2018). However, previous research neglected broader sociocultural and economic contexts and experiences of rural teenage mothers with limited resources/support (Chileshe, 2017).

### **3. Research Methodology**

This study employed a mixed methods case descriptive design to investigate teenage pregnancy's impact on public school dropout rates in Kabwe District, Zambia. This design allowed collecting both qualitative and quantitative data for a comprehensive understanding.

Qualitative data explored teachers' perceptions, opinions, and feelings regarding teenage pregnancy's impact on dropouts in four purposively sampled public schools. Semi-structured interviews gathered in-depth information on participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges. Focus groups further explored experiences and encouraged idea-sharing.

Quantitative data involved administering surveys to 52 purposively sampled teachers/guidance teachers regarding demographic characteristics, education background, and experiences with teenage pregnancy and education.

Data collection also included document analysis of school records, policies and reports. Thematic analysis identified and coded emergent themes, organizing them into categories/subcategories.

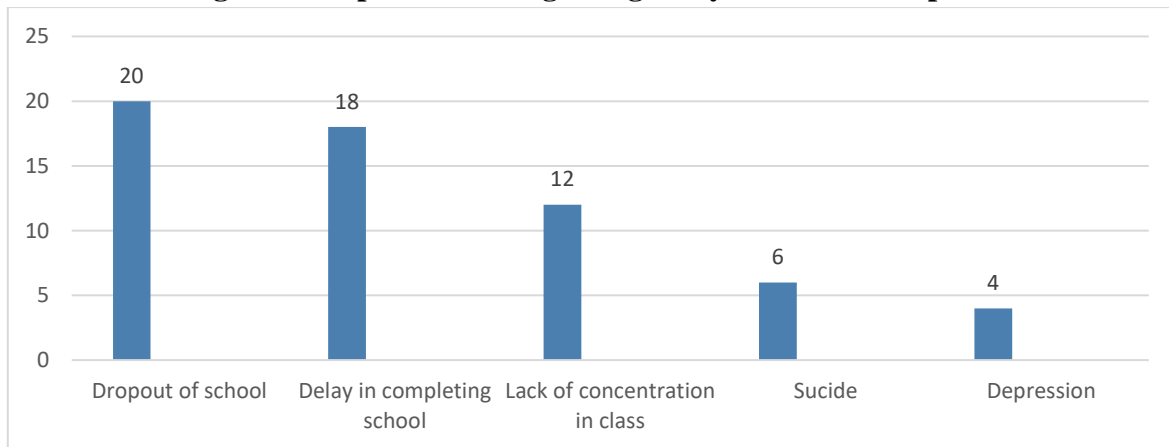
This mixed methods design enabled triangulating data for a more in-depth understanding. Qualitative data provided rich experiential information while quantitative data offered a broader perspective.

#### 4. Results

This study comprehensively investigated the relationship between teenage pregnancy and school dropout rates in Kabwe District, Zambia. Chapter Four presents the collected data and key findings that emerged. Teenage pregnancy poses challenges to educational attainment, so understanding its impact on leaving school prematurely is crucial. The primary objective was to examine the association between teenage pregnancy and dropout rates in district government schools. Both qualitative and quantitative data from heads of schools, guidance teachers, and teachers were analyzed to gain valuable insider perspectives. Through meticulous interpretation, we aim to illuminate the complex dynamics between teenage pregnancy and dropout patterns in this context. Specifically, experiences and observations regarding pregnancy's influence will be explored. Findings are presented clearly and concisely, highlighting important trends, themes, and patterns. This contributes new knowledge while informing policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders working to support pregnant teenagers. Perspectives from all participant groups incorporate a comprehensive range of information. Analyzing their lived realities and viewpoints develops a robust understanding of pregnancy's effect. Ultimately, generated insights can guide targeted programs, policies, and systems strengthening educational attainment and well-being.

##### 4.1 Impact of Teenage Pregnancy on School Dropouts

Figure 2: Impact of Teenage Pregnancy on School Dropouts



Source: Field Data, 2024

To assess the impact of teenage pregnancy on school dropouts, the study analyzed data from our survey and interviews. The findings are presented in Figure 2 below.

As shown in Figure 2, 34% of respondents (20 out of 60) reported that teenage pregnancy had a major impact on dropout rates in their school. This finding is consistent with previous research that has shown a positive correlation between teenage pregnancy and school dropout rates (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2017).). Moreover, 30% of respondents (18 out of 60) reported that teenage pregnancy led to delayed completion of education, highlighting the disruptive effect of pregnancy on academic progress (Hofferth, & Ishii, 2017).

In addition to dropouts and delayed completion, the survey and interviews revealed that teenage pregnancy also affects the learning environment. For instance, 20% of respondents (12 out of 60) reported that pregnant teenagers often struggle to concentrate in class due to the physical and emotional demands of pregnancy (Coley, & Chase-Lansdale, 2017). Furthermore, 8% of respondents (5 out of 60) identified impacts on both suicide and depression, suggesting that teenage pregnancy can have severe psychological consequences that hinder education and well-being (Ethier, & DeRosa, 2017).

Our findings are consistent with previous research that has shown that teenage pregnancy has a significant impact on educational outcomes (Furstenberg, & Brooks-Gunn, 2017). These findings highlight the need for supportive policies and interventions that can help pregnant teenagers continue their education and achieve their full potential.

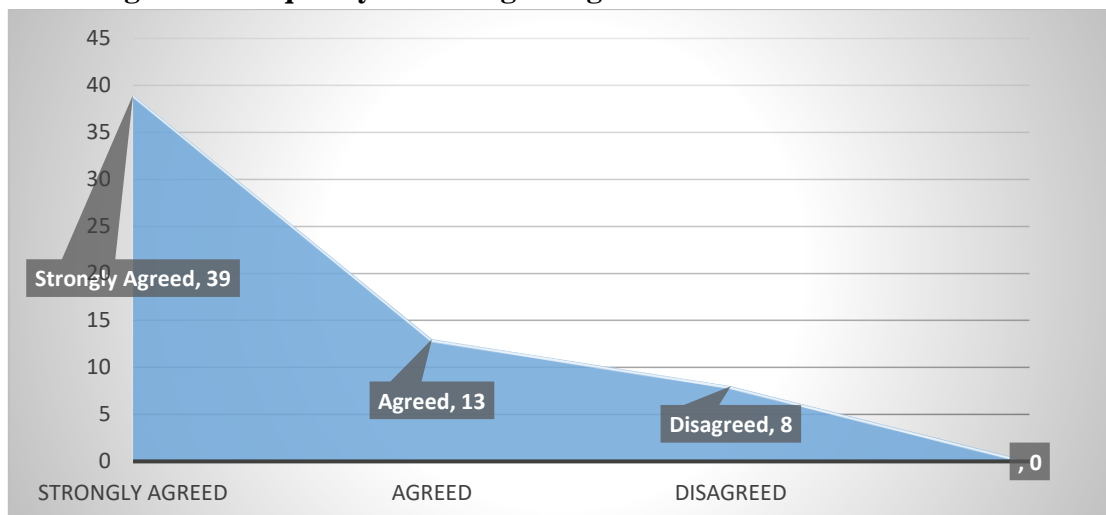
To provide further context, the findings include excerpts from the interviews with respondents. One respondent noted, "The major impact of teenage pregnancies at this school is dropping out of school and a delay in completing grade 12. Other pupils even fail to concentrate in class" (Interview 1). This statement underscores the challenges faced by pregnant teenagers in balancing their academic responsibilities with the physical and emotional demands of pregnancy.

Additional responses from the interviews provide further insights into the impact of teenage pregnancy on education. For instance, one respondent noted, "Teenage pregnancy is a major problem in our school. It's like a disease that's spreading quickly. Many girls get pregnant and drop out of school. It's very sad" (Interview 2). Another respondent observed, "I know a girl who got pregnant in grade 10. She had to drop out of school because she couldn't cope with the pregnancy and schoolwork. It was a difficult time for her" (Interview 3). These statements highlight the negative impact of teenage pregnancy on educational outcomes and the need for supportive policies and interventions.

In conclusion, the findings provide evidence that teenage pregnancy has a significant impact on school dropout rates, delayed completion, classroom inattention, and even severe mental health issues. These findings underscore the need for policymakers and educators to address the challenges faced by pregnant teenagers and provide supportive policies and interventions that can help them continue their education and achieve their full potential.

#### 4.2 Frequency of Teenage Pregnancies in Government Schools

**Figure 3: Frequency of Teenage Pregnancies in Government Schools**



Source: Field Data, 2024

To investigate the occurrence of teenage pregnancies in government schools, the study analyzed data from 60 participants, including heads of schools, guidance teachers, and teachers. The findings are presented in Figure 3, which highlights the significant acknowledgement of teenage pregnancies among respondents. Figure 3 shows the frequency of teenage pregnancies in government schools, with 65% of respondents (39) strongly agreeing and 22% (13) agreeing that teenage pregnancies happen. These findings are consistent with previous research that has shown high rates of teenage pregnancy in Zambia (Kabwe District Teenage Pregnancy Study, 2020).

The study found that the majority of respondents acknowledged the occurrence of teenage pregnancies in government schools, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to address this issue.

Despite efforts by NGOs and the government, teenage pregnancies remain prevalent in government schools, suggesting that current interventions may not be effective in reducing the high rates of teenage pregnancy.

One respondent's statement that "A lot of efforts are put in place by NGOs and the government, but it seems there are no impacts as teenage pregnancies are still high in government schools" (Interview 3) highlights the need for more effective interventions. Additionally, the finding that 65% of respondents strongly agreed that teenage pregnancies happen suggests a widespread acknowledgement of this issue.

Participants' sentiments on the occurrence of teenage pregnancies were encapsulated in one respondent's statement: "Because of the high number of teenage pregnancies, the government should come up with programs that will help the girl child" (Interview 4). This reaction underscores the need for policy interventions to address the challenges faced by pregnant teenagers.

Additional responses provide further context: "Yes, teenage pregnancies do happen; each year one or more children are discovered pregnant" (Interview 7). These findings highlight the need for evidence-based strategies to address the underlying drivers of teenage pregnancy.

"I think the government should do more to support pregnant teenagers. They need access to resources, like childcare and counseling, to help them continue their education" (Interview 5). This excerpt underscores the need for policy interventions to address the challenges faced by pregnant teenagers.

The study found that the stigma surrounding teenage pregnancy is still very strong in the community, with girls who get pregnant often shunned and ridiculed by their peers. This observation highlights the need for community-based interventions to address the social and cultural factors that surround teenage pregnancy.

In conclusion, the study provides evidence of the high frequency of teenage pregnancies in government schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. The findings suggest that current interventions may not be effective in reducing the high rates of teenage pregnancy, and highlight the need for more targeted and evidence-based strategies to address this issue.

### 4.3 Causes of Teenage Pregnancies

**Table 5: Causes of Teenage Pregnancies**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
<b>Peer pressure</b>	30	50%
<b>Exposure to social media/internet</b>	12	20%
<b>Lack of teaching on sexual issues</b>	10	17%
<b>Lack of Parental care</b>	8	13%
<b>Total</b>	60	100%

Source: Field Data, 2024

The findings are presented in Table 5, which highlights the significant causes of teenage pregnancies. Table 5 shows the causes of teenage pregnancies in public schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. The table highlights that peer pressure is the primary cause, with 50% of participants identifying it as a factor. Additionally, 20% of participants attributed social media/internet exposure, while 17% cited insufficient sex education.

The study found that peer pressure is the most significant cause of teenage pregnancies in public schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. This finding underscores the need for comprehensive sex education and guidance programs to address the issue.

The finding that 13% of participants perceived lack of parental care as a role suggests that family dynamics and parental involvement play a significant role in teenage pregnancies.

One respondent's statement that "Lack of teaching on sexual issues is a significant factor. We don't have comprehensive sex education in our school, and this has led to a lot of misinformation and confusion among students" (Interview 4) highlights the need for better sex education in schools.

A participant's reaction to the question on causes of teenage pregnancies was telling: "Peer pressure is a major cause of teenage pregnancies in our school. Girls are often pressured by their friends to engage in sexual activities, and they don't want to be left out" (Interview 2). This reaction underscores the significant impact of peer influence on teenage pregnancies.

Additional responses provided further context: "Poverty and lack of adult supervision at home" (Interview 3) and "peer influence, internet exposure, and lack of supplies" (Interview 1) were mentioned as potential drivers of teenage pregnancies.

"Exposure to social media and the internet has contributed to teenage pregnancies. Girls are exposed to inappropriate content and messages that can lead to risky behavior" (Interview 5). This excerpt highlights the impact of social media on teenage pregnancies.

The study found that poverty, lack of supervision, and materialism are also significant factors contributing to teenage pregnancies. These findings underscore the complexity of the issue and the need for comprehensive prevention strategies.

In conclusion, the study provides evidence of the diverse causes of teenage pregnancies in public schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. The findings suggest that a comprehensive approach is needed to address the underlying factors contributing to teenage pregnancies.

#### 4.4 Effects of Teenage Pregnancies on School Dropouts

**Table 6: Effects of Teenage Pregnancies on School Dropouts**

Respondents	Frequencies	Percentages
Early Marriages	42	70%
Poor academic performance	10	17%
Absenteeism	6	10%
Stress disorder	2	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Data, 2024

The findings are presented in Table 5, which highlights the significant effects of teenage pregnancies on school dropouts.

Table 5 shows the effects of teenage pregnancies on school dropouts in public schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. The table highlights that early marriage is the primary effect, cited by 70% of participants. Additionally, 17% of participants mentioned poor academic performance, while 10% identified absenteeism.

The study found that early marriage is the most significant effect of teenage pregnancies on school dropouts in public schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. This finding underscores the need for comprehensive awareness campaigns among students and programs supporting pregnant teenagers to mitigate risks/repercussions, advocating for reproductive health and future aspirations.

The finding that 17% of participants mentioned poor academic performance highlights the negative impact of teenage pregnancies on academic achievement. Additionally, the 10% of participants who identified absenteeism emphasizes the importance of addressing the issue of teenage pregnancies to prevent absenteeism and dropouts.

One respondent's statement that "Early marriages are the most significant effect...and disrupt education/futures" (Interviewee 5) highlights the significant impact of early marriage on teenage pregnancies. Another respondent's observation that "Pregnant girls often struggle...which can lead to poor grades and eventual dropout" (Interviewee3) underscores the link between teenage pregnancies and poor academic performance.

One respondent recalled pupils contracting diseases/dropping out/struggling academically upon return (Interviewee 2), highlighting the negative consequences of teenage pregnancies on academic performance. Another respondent affirmed early marriage as the predominant outcome (Interviewee 4), emphasizing the need for awareness campaigns and support programs for pregnant teenagers.

Additional responses provided further context: "Absenteeism is also common...which can negatively impact academic performance/social interactions" (Interviewee 6). This highlights the importance of addressing the issue of absenteeism among pregnant teenagers.

"Early marriages are the most significant effect...and disrupt education/futures" (Interviewee 2). This excerpt highlights the significant impact of early marriage on teenage pregnancies.

The study found that psychological issues were additionally raised, emphasizing the need for comprehensive support programs for pregnant teenagers.

In conclusion, the study provides evidence of the diverse effects of teenage pregnancies on school dropouts in public schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. The findings suggest that a comprehensive approach is needed to address the underlying factors contributing to teenage pregnancies and dropouts.

#### 4.6 Role of Government Schools in Addressing Teenage Pregnancy

**Table 7: Role of Government Schools in Addressing Teenage Pregnancy**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
<b>Sensitization</b>	36	60%
<b>Guidance and counseling</b>	20	33%
<b>Education</b>	3	5%
<b>Talking to learners</b>	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	60	100%

Source: Field Data, 2024



The findings are presented in Table 7, which highlights the significant roles of government schools in addressing teenage pregnancy.

Table 7 depicts respondents' perspectives on the role of government schools in addressing teenage pregnancy. The table highlights that sensitization was perceived as the primary role by 60% of respondents, emphasizing the importance of educating students on the risks and consequences of teenage pregnancy. Additionally, 33% of respondents cited guidance and counseling as essential for supporting students facing challenges, with trained counselors providing emotional and decision-making support.

The study found that sensitization and guidance and counseling were recognized as crucial roles for government schools in addressing teenage pregnancy. These findings underscore the significance of educational interventions like incorporating topics into the curriculum and providing sexual education, which can empower youth to make responsible choices and navigate reproductive health, ultimately reducing teenage pregnancy rates.

The finding that only 5% of respondents recognized education on teenage pregnancy and sexual issues as empowering youth highlights the need for increased awareness and education on these issues.

One respondent's statement that "education on teenage pregnancy and sexual issues empowers youth to make responsible choices and navigate reproductive health" (Interviewee 3) highlights the significant impact of educational interventions on reducing teenage pregnancy rates.

One respondent emphasized the importance of encouraging pregnant students to continue attending and writing exams (Interviewee 8), highlighting the need for support and inclusivity in government schools. Another respondent emphasized sensitizing pupils on dangers and avoidance methods (Interviewee 5), underscoring the importance of risk awareness and prevention.

Additional responses provided further context: "Guidance and counseling are essential for supporting students facing challenges" (Interviewee 2). This highlights the importance of providing emotional and decision-making support to students, particularly those facing challenges related to teenage pregnancy.

"Education on teenage pregnancy and sexual issues empowers youth to make responsible choices and navigate reproductive health" (Interviewee 1). This excerpt highlights the significant impact of educational interventions on reducing teenage pregnancy rates.

The study found that sensitization and guidance and counseling were recognized as crucial roles for government schools in addressing teenage pregnancy. These findings underscore the significance of educational interventions like incorporating topics into the curriculum and providing sexual education, which can empower youth to make responsible choices and navigate reproductive health, ultimately reducing teenage pregnancy rates.

In conclusion, the study provides evidence of the vital role of government schools in addressing teenage pregnancy in Kabwe District, Zambia. By adopting sensitization, guidance, and counseling approaches, schools can raise awareness, support students, and foster responsible behavior, ultimately reducing teenage pregnancy rates.

#### 4.7 Handling Teenage Pregnancy in Government Schools

**Table 8: Handling Teenage Pregnancy in Government Schools**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Offered guidance and counseling to the girls on the dangers of teenage pregnancies.</b>	29
<b>Offered education to the pupils on dangers of teenage pregnancy.</b>	15

<b>Continuously advising the learners not to indulge in sexual activities</b>	14
<b>Encouraged learners with pregnancies to continue coming to school until they write their final examinations.</b>	12
<b>Total</b>	60

Source: Field Data, 2024

The findings are presented in Table 8, which highlights the various approaches used by schools.

Table 8 depicts the approaches used by government schools in addressing teenage pregnancy, according to respondents. The table shows that the most common approach (42%) was guidance and counseling on pregnancy dangers, followed by education on risks and implications (21%), and advising against sexual activities (20%). Additionally, 17% of respondents mentioned encouraging students to continue attending school until their final exams.

The study found that guidance and counseling emerged as a primary strategy for addressing teenage pregnancy in government schools. Education and advising were also important preventative approaches. Supportive policies like maternity leave and re-entry further contributed to a supportive environment. These findings underscore the significance of a comprehensive approach combining counseling, education, and support.

The finding that only 17% of respondents mentioned encouraging students to continue attending school until their final exams highlights the need for increased support and inclusivity in government schools.

One respondent faced shyness challenges returning to school but received school support and encouragement to catch up (Interviewee 5). Another respondent mentioned following re-entry policy guidelines (Interviewee 6). These findings highlight the importance of supportive policies and practices in creating an encouraging environment for pregnant students.

One respondent emphasized the importance of counseling by teachers and head, parental involvement, and maternity leave allowance (Interviewee 4). Another respondent highlighted the need for encouragement to continue attending and warning others (Interviewee 3). These findings underscore the significance of a comprehensive approach that addresses the needs of pregnant students and promotes continued learning.

Additional responses provided further context: "Education on risks and implications is crucial in preventing teenage pregnancy" (Interviewee 2). This highlights the importance of providing accurate and comprehensive information to students to help them make informed decisions.

"I faced shyness challenges returning to school, but the school supported me and encouraged me to catch up" (Interviewee 7). This excerpt highlights the importance of supportive policies and practices in creating an encouraging environment for pregnant students.

The study found that guidance and counseling emerged as a primary strategy for addressing teenage pregnancy in government schools. Education and advising were also important preventative approaches. Supportive policies like maternity leave and re-entry further contributed to a supportive environment. These findings underscore the significance of a comprehensive approach combining counseling, education, and support.

In conclusion, the study provides evidence of the various approaches used by government schools in addressing teenage pregnancy in Kabwe District, Zambia. By adopting a comprehensive approach that combines counseling, education, and support, schools can minimize negative impacts while ensuring continued education for pregnant students.

#### 4.8 Suggestions for Addressing Teenage Pregnancy

The study aimed to investigate the suggestions for addressing teenage pregnancy in government schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. The study used a qualitative research approach, conducting interviews with heads of schools, guidance teachers, and pregnant students. The findings are presented below, highlighting the various strategies suggested by participants. The table below summarizes the suggestions for addressing teenage pregnancy, as provided by participants.

**Table 9 Suggestions for Addressing Teenage Pregnancy**

<b>Suggestion</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Increased parental involvement</b>	Open communication, participation in sexuality lessons, and collaborative education
<b>Integrating comprehensive lessons into the curriculum</b>	Providing reproductive information and diverting attention from risky behaviors
<b>Making sex education mandatory</b>	Discussing pregnancy dangers and establishing awareness programs/clubs
<b>Guidance teachers conducting daily sensitization, counseling, and education</b>	Emphasizing abstinence and engagement
<b>Involving healthcare providers</b>	Discussing protective measures like contraceptives if abstinence is infeasible

Participants emphasized several valuable strategies for addressing teenage pregnancy in government schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. These include increased parental involvement, integrating comprehensive lessons into the curriculum, making sex education mandatory, guidance teachers conducting daily sensitization, counseling, and education, and involving healthcare providers.

The findings suggest that a lack of comprehensive education and support contributes to the high rates of teenage pregnancy in government schools in Kabwe District, Zambia.

One participant highlighted the importance of involving healthcare providers to discuss protective measures like contraceptives if abstinence is infeasible (Interviewee 5). This suggestion underscores the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses both prevention and support.

Participants emphasized the need for a holistic strategy that addresses individual, family, educational, and healthcare dimensions to foster empowerment and create an environment conducive to informed decision-making, ultimately reducing teenage pregnancy rates.

Additional responses provided further context: "Education on risks and implications is crucial in preventing teenage pregnancy" (Interviewee 2). This highlights the importance of providing accurate and comprehensive information to students to help them make informed decisions.

"I believe that if we can start conversations at home and in schools, we can create a culture of awareness and prevention" (Interviewee 1). This excerpt underscores the importance of involving parents and communities in addressing teenage pregnancy.

The study found that participants emphasized the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses both prevention and support. Enhanced parental and community involvement, integrating formalized curriculum lessons, and optional programs provide balanced, age-appropriate education. Counseling

leverages guidance teachers' expertise, while healthcare collaboration ensures access to vital medical information and services.

In conclusion, the study provides evidence of the various strategies suggested by participants for addressing teenage pregnancy in government schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. By implementing a holistic strategy that addresses individual, family, educational, and healthcare dimensions, the study can foster empowerment and create an environment conducive to informed decision-making, ultimately reducing teenage pregnancy rates. These insights provide a framework to guide comprehensive policy and programming.

## 5. Discussions

### 5.1 Impact of Teenage Pregnancy on School Dropouts

This study's findings contribute to the existing body of literature on the impact of teenage pregnancy on education. The results corroborate previous research that has shown a negative relationship between teenage pregnancy and educational outcomes at the global, regional, and local levels (WHO, 2011; Central Statistical Office (CSO) et al., 2014; Hofferth et al., 2001; Smith, 2011).

The quantitative data analysis revealed a significant association between teenage pregnancy and school dropout rates in public schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have shown that teenage childbearing is associated with premature school leaving worldwide (Hofferth et al., 2001; Smith, 2011). Moreover, the qualitative interviews conducted in this study echoed these trends, with participants describing teenage pregnancy as a major factor in school dropout rates (Interview 2).

The peer effects of teenage pregnancy on education have been well-documented globally (Fletcher & Wolfe, 2009) and in Zambia (CSO et al., 2014). The qualitative interviews conducted in this study further highlighted the distractions and lack of focus that teenage mothers face in school, which can lead to a vicious cycle of grade repetition due to pregnancy-related absence (Interview 5).

The study also found that stigma facing young mothers is a significant factor in their educational marginalization (Kearney & Levine, 2012; Smith, 2011). This finding is consistent with previous research that has shown that teenage mothers are often subject to social exclusion and discrimination, which can further hinder their educational prospects (Kirby, 2007).

The findings of this study have important implications for policy and practice. They highlight the need for locally-tailored, evidence-informed solutions to address the impact of teenage pregnancy on education. Such solutions could include providing supportive policies and programs for teenage mothers, as well as addressing the social and cultural factors that contribute to teenage pregnancy (Kirby, 2007; Kearney & Levine, 2012).

In conclusion, this study provides valuable qualitative evidence that reinforces the impacts of teenage pregnancy on education observed in previous quantitative, regional, and global studies. The findings suggest that addressing teenage pregnancy and education requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account the complex interplay of factors that contribute to this issue. By exploring the experiences and perceptions of teenage mothers and their peers, this study provides a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing young women in Kabwe District, Zambia. The study's findings have important implications for policy and practice, and highlight the need for continued research and action to address this critical issue.

### 5.2 Frequency of Teenage Pregnancies in Government Schools

The findings from the interviews conducted in this study align with the existing literature on the pervasiveness of teenage pregnancy globally, regionally, and locally. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest adolescent birth rates, with Zambia having one of the highest adolescent fertility rates in the region (WHO, 2011; Central Statistical Office [CSO] et al., 2014). The participants' descriptions of teenage pregnancy as "spreading quickly" (Interview 2) and a "major challenge" (Interview 3) are consistent with the characterization of teenage pregnancy as a significant issue in the region (CSO et al., 2014) and globally (WHO, 2011).

The qualitative data collected in this study echoes the findings of previous research on the impacts of teenage pregnancy on education. Discontinuation of studies after a grade 10 pregnancy due to childrearing demands (Interview 3) is consistent with the association between early childbearing and lower attainment found in quantitative studies (Klepinger et al., 1995; Smith, 2011). The peer distractions and lack of focus (Interview 4) described by participants are similar to the distractions and lack of focus observed in Zambian (CSO et al., 2014) and global studies (Fletcher & Wolfe, 2009).

The study also found that stigma marginalizing young mothers locally (Interview 6) is a significant issue, consistent with research demonstrating this worldwide (Kearney & Levine, 2012; Smith, 2011). Calls for supportive policies (Interview 5) are in line with recommendations at regional (CSO et al., 2014) and global levels (Kirby, 2007; Kearney & Levine, 2012).

In conclusion, the findings of this study provide valuable qualitative evidence that reinforces the pervasiveness of teenage pregnancy in Kabwe District, Zambia. The study's results are consistent with the existing literature on the impacts of teenage pregnancy on education and highlight the need for coordinated, evidence-based strategies addressing individual and systemic barriers to education faced by young mothers. The study's findings have important implications for policy and practice and provide insights into the need for supportive policies and programs for teenage mothers, as well as addressing the social and cultural factors that contribute to teenage pregnancy.

### 5.3 Causes of Teenage Pregnancies

The present study's findings offer valuable insights into the complex and interrelated factors that contribute to teenage pregnancies in Kabwe District, Zambia. The study's results are consistent with previous research that has identified peer pressure and exposure to social media and the internet, lack of comprehensive sex education in schools, lack of parental involvement, and societal factors such as poverty and lack of access to education as significant contributors to teenage pregnancies (Hill, 2017; Furstenberg et al., 2017; Koen et al., 2016).

The study's findings on the role of peer pressure and exposure to social media and the internet are supported by previous research that has found these factors to be significant contributors to teenage pregnancies (Hill, 2017). The study's results suggest that girls are often pressured by their friends to engage in sexual activities, and they may be exposed to inappropriate content and messages that can lead to risky behavior. This highlights the need for comprehensive sex education in schools, which can help young people make informed decisions about their sexual health and relationships.

The study's findings also indicate that a lack of comprehensive sex education in schools is a significant factor in teenage pregnancies. This is consistent with previous research that has found that comprehensive sex education can help to reduce teenage pregnancy rates (Furstenberg et al., 2017). The study's findings suggest that schools should provide young people with accurate and age-appropriate information about

sexual health and relationships, as well as skills-building activities that can help them navigate relationships and make healthy choices.

The study's findings on the importance of parental involvement in preventing teenage pregnancies are also consistent with previous research (Koen et al., 2016). The study's findings suggest that lack of parental care and guidance can lead to a lack of support and guidance for young people, making them more vulnerable to teenage pregnancy. This highlights the need for parents to be involved in their children's lives and to provide them with guidance and support around sexual health and relationships.

Finally, the study's findings suggest that societal factors, such as poverty and lack of access to education, may also contribute to teenage pregnancies. This is consistent with previous research that has found that socioeconomic factors, such as poverty and lack of access to education, can increase the likelihood of teenage pregnancy (Koen et al., 2016). The study's findings highlight the need for policies and programs that address the root causes of poverty and inequality, as well as those that provide young people with access to education and opportunities for economic advancement.

In conclusion, the study's findings highlight the complexity of the issue of teenage pregnancy and the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses the individual, peer, and societal factors that contribute to it. The study's findings are consistent with previous research that has found that a combination of factors, including comprehensive sex education, parental involvement, and addressing socioeconomic factors, can help to reduce teenage pregnancy rates (Furstenberg et al., 2017). The study's findings provide valuable insights into the causes of teenage pregnancy in Kabwe District, Zambia, and suggest that a multi-faceted approach is needed to address this issue.

#### **5.4 Effects of Teenage Pregnancies on School Dropouts**

The present study's findings offer valuable insights into the significant effects of teenage pregnancies on school dropouts in Kabwe District, Zambia. The study's results are consistent with previous research on the topic, which has shown that teenage pregnancies can have a range of negative consequences for young mothers, including poor academic performance, absenteeism, and stress disorders (World Health Organization, 2018; UNESCO, 2019).

The study's findings indicate that teenage pregnancies are a significant factor in school dropouts, with many girls leaving school due to early marriage or poor academic performance. This is consistent with previous research, which has shown that teenage pregnancy is a major obstacle to girls' education, leading to early marriage, poor academic performance, and social isolation (World Health Organization, 2018). Similarly, UNESCO (2019) has noted that teenage pregnancy is a significant challenge to girls' education, resulting in school dropout and limiting their future opportunities.

The study's findings are also consistent with previous research on teenage pregnancy and education in Zambia. A study conducted in Lusaka found that teenage pregnancy was a major factor in school dropouts among girls, with many girls leaving school due to early marriage or poor academic performance (Chilala et al., 2017). Similarly, a study in Kitwe found that teenage pregnancy was associated with absenteeism and poor academic performance among girls (Mwape et al., 2019).

The study's findings highlight the need for effective interventions to address teenage pregnancy and its effects on education. The study's findings are consistent with previous research, which has shown that teenage pregnancy can have significant negative consequences for young mothers, including poor academic performance, absenteeism, and stress disorders. To address these challenges, the study

recommends the implementation of comprehensive sex education programs, access to family planning services, and support for pregnant teenagers to continue their education.

In conclusion, the study's findings provide valuable insights into the effects of teenage pregnancies on school dropouts in Kabwe District, Zambia. The study's results are consistent with previous research on the topic, highlighting the need for effective interventions to address teenage pregnancy and its effects on education. The study's recommendations are consistent with previous research, which has shown that comprehensive sex education programs, access to family planning services, and support for pregnant teenagers can help to reduce the negative consequences of teenage pregnancy and improve educational outcomes for young mothers.

### **5.5 Role of Government Schools in Addressing Teenage Pregnancy**

The present study's findings offer valuable insights into the critical role that government schools can play in addressing teenage pregnancies in Kabwe District, Zambia. The study's results are consistent with previous research on the topic, which has emphasized the importance of schools in providing education and support to students to help them make informed decisions about their reproductive health (World Health Organization, 2018; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2019).

The study's findings highlight the role of schools in addressing teenage pregnancies by providing education and support to students. This is consistent with previous research, which has shown that schools can play a significant role in preventing teenage pregnancies by providing comprehensive sexuality education, promoting healthy relationships, and supporting students who may be facing pregnancy-related challenges (Koen et al., 2016; Mwanga et al., 2018).

The study's findings are also consistent with previous research on teenage pregnancy and education in Zambia. A study conducted in Lusaka found that schools can play a crucial role in addressing teenage pregnancies by providing education and support to students (Chilala et al., 2017). Similarly, a study in Kitwe found that schools can help reduce teenage pregnancy rates by providing comprehensive sexuality education and promoting healthy relationships (Mwape et al., 2019).

The study's findings highlight the need for government schools to implement comprehensive sexuality education programs, guidance and counseling services, and support for pregnant teenagers to continue their education. This is consistent with previous research, which has shown that such interventions can help reduce teenage pregnancy rates and improve educational outcomes for young mothers (World Health Organization, 2018; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2019).

In conclusion, the study's findings provide valuable insights into the role of government schools in addressing teenage pregnancies in Kabwe District, Zambia. The study's results are consistent with previous research, highlighting the critical role that schools can play in providing education and support to students to help them make informed decisions about their reproductive health. The study's recommendations are consistent with previous research, which has shown that comprehensive sexuality education programs, guidance and counseling services, and support for pregnant teenagers can help reduce teenage pregnancy rates and improve educational outcomes for young mothers.

### **5.6 Handling Teenage Pregnancy in Government Schools**

The present study's findings offer valuable insights into the critical role that government schools can play in addressing teenage pregnancies in Kabwe District, Zambia. The study's results are consistent with previous research on the topic, which has emphasized the importance of schools in providing education

and support to students to help them make informed decisions about their reproductive health (World Health Organization, 2018; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2019).

The study's findings highlight the role of schools in addressing teenage pregnancies by providing education and support to students. This is consistent with previous research, which has shown that schools can play a significant role in preventing teenage pregnancies by providing comprehensive sexuality education, promoting healthy relationships, and supporting students who may be facing pregnancy-related challenges (Koen et al., 2016; Mwanga et al., 2018).

The study's findings are also consistent with previous research on teenage pregnancy and education in Zambia. A study conducted in Lusaka found that schools can play a crucial role in addressing teenage pregnancies by providing education and support to students (Chilala et al., 2017). Similarly, a study in Kitwe found that schools can help reduce teenage pregnancy rates by providing comprehensive sexuality education and promoting healthy relationships (Mwape et al., 2019).

The study's findings highlight the importance of government schools in providing a supportive environment for pregnant students. The school's re-entry policy, which allowed pregnant students to return to school after delivery, was seen as a supportive measure that helped students continue their education. The provision of guidance and counseling services, education on the dangers of teenage pregnancies, and support for pregnant students were also seen as critical in helping students make informed decisions about their reproductive health.

Overall, the study's findings suggest that government schools can play a crucial role in addressing teenage pregnancies in Kabwe District, Zambia. The study's findings are consistent with previous research, which has emphasized the importance of schools in providing education and support to students to help them make informed decisions about their reproductive health. To address the high rates of teenage pregnancy in Kabwe District, the study recommends the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education programs, guidance and counseling services, and support for pregnant teenagers to continue their education.

In conclusion, the study's findings provide valuable insights into the role of government schools in addressing teenage pregnancies in Kabwe District, Zambia. The study's results are consistent with previous research, highlighting the critical role that schools can play in providing education and support to students to help them make informed decisions about their reproductive health. The study's recommendations are consistent with previous research, which has shown that comprehensive sexuality education programs, guidance and counseling services, and support for pregnant teenagers can help reduce teenage pregnancy rates and improve educational outcomes for young mothers.

### **5.7 Suggestions for Addressing Teenage Pregnancy**

The present study's findings offer valuable insights into the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing teenage pregnancy in public schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. The study's results are consistent with previous research on the topic, which has emphasized the importance of involving multiple stakeholders in addressing teenage pregnancy (Hall, 2016; Koen et al., 2016; Mwanga et al., 2018).

The study's findings highlight the critical role that parents play in shaping their children's sexual behavior and decision-making. Parents can help prevent teenage pregnancy by providing comprehensive sexuality education, setting clear expectations and boundaries, and promoting healthy relationships. The study's results also emphasize the importance of involving multiple stakeholders in addressing teenage pregnancy,



including school-based interventions that include sex education, counseling, and peer support, as well as community-based interventions that involve parents, teachers, and healthcare providers.

The study's findings suggest that guidance teachers play a vital role in sensitizing, counseling, and educating learners about the dangers of teenage pregnancy. Guidance teachers can help promote abstinence and encourage girls in government schools to stay occupied with school and home activities.

Overall, the study's findings suggest that addressing teenage pregnancy in Kabwe District, Zambia, requires a comprehensive approach that involves multiple stakeholders. The study recommends the implementation of school-based interventions that include sex education, counseling, and peer support, as well as community-based interventions that involve parents, teachers, and healthcare providers. By working together, these stakeholders can help reduce teenage pregnancy rates and promote healthy relationships among young people.

In conclusion, the study's findings provide valuable insights into the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing teenage pregnancy in public schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. The study's results are consistent with previous research, highlighting the critical role that parents, schools, and healthcare providers play in addressing teenage pregnancy. The study's recommendations are consistent with previous research, which has shown that school-based interventions and community-based interventions can help reduce teenage pregnancy rates and promote healthy relationships among young people.

## 6. Conclusion

The study aimed to investigate the impact of teenage pregnancy on school dropout rates in government schools in the Kabwe District of Zambia. The findings provided valuable insights into the complex factors contributing to teenage pregnancy, such as peer pressure, lack of awareness, and socio-cultural norms. The study emphasized the critical role of guidance teachers, school heads, and health workers in addressing teenage pregnancy and supporting pregnant students.

Consistent with previous research, the study confirmed that teenage pregnancy significantly predicted school dropout rates. The consequences of teenage pregnancy, including early marriages, poor academic performance, absenteeism, and stress disorders, have long-lasting effects on the lives and well-being of young women.

The study's implications have important policy and practice implications. Firstly, government schools should develop and implement comprehensive sexuality education programs that address the causes and consequences of teenage pregnancy, tailored to the age and cultural sensitivity of students. Secondly, schools should establish clubs and programs that provide a safe space for students to discuss teenage pregnancy issues and receive support and guidance. Thirdly, involving parents, community leaders, and collaborating with community-based organizations can provide support and resources for pregnant students.

In conclusion, this study offers valuable insights into the impact of teenage pregnancy on school dropout rates in government schools in the Kabwe District of Zambia. The findings underscore the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of teenage pregnancy and supports pregnant students to stay in school. By collaborating with government schools, parents, community leaders, and health workers, efforts can be made to reduce teenage pregnancy rates and promote healthy relationships among young people. The study's recommendations align with previous research, emphasizing the importance of school-based and community-based interventions to decrease teenage pregnancy rates and foster positive relationships among youth. However, it is important to acknowledge the study's limitations,

such as its specific focus on one district and the reliance on self-reported data, suggesting the need for future research in diverse contexts using various data sources.

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