Saving teenage mother learners through adaptation of civic engagement strategies in Zambian secondary schools: Challenges and possible solutions

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Abstract

Managing teenage mother learners in a school environment can be a challenging task. Their school attendance and active involvement in Civic Engagement (CE) activities is often associated with numerous disruptions because of their dual responsibilities of schooling and motherhood. Therefore, this article investigated the challenges faced by the policy makers, administrators, subject teachers, guidance and counselling teachers, and parents in employing CE strategies with the teen mother learners and suggested possible solutions to these challenges, in selected secondary schools of Chongwe District, Zambia. The article employed a qualitative exploratory research design with 18 participants purposively sampled from two schools of Chongwe District of Zambia. Some findings included compromised levels of concentration on the part of the teenage mother learners; failure to obey teachers by teenage mother learners; stigma and discrimination from the communities and school environment; inferiority complex and disassociation and non-involvement in extra classroom activities. Some possible solutions suggested include academic engagement of teen mothers during maternal leave; sensitization of teen mothers on the importance of education; full support of the re-entry policy and provision of decent boarding facilities for the learners. The article concludes that the challenges faced by the policy makers, administrators, subject teachers, guidance and counselling teachers, and parents in executing CE pedagogies had great potential of impeding the full comprehension of CE knowledge by the teen mother learners. Despite this potential likelihood, the re-entry policy provides the teen mother learners with an opportunity of education. It was recommended that the policy makers, administrators, subject teachers, guidance and counselling teachers, and parents should provide sexual reproductive health education; provide out of school teen mothers with educational opportunities and the policy makers, administrators, subject teachers, guidance and counseling teachers, and parents should receive occasional trainings on how to handle teen mother learners.

Keywords: *challenges, adapting, civic engagement strategies, teenage mother learners, stakeholders*

Background and context

Adolescent pregnancies remain a key developmental concern globally, especially in Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs) (Malunga et al., 2023). The 2021 World Health Organisation (WHO) report on Teenage Pregnancies gives an estimate of 21 million girls aged between 15-19 years in developing regions who become pregnant and approximately 12 million of them give birth. In Africa and particularly in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, Malunga et al. (2023) raise the concern of high prevalence of adolescent pregnancies which stand at 19.3%. According to the Zambia Demographic and Health Survey (2018), Zambia is reported to have one of the highest prevalence of 29.2%. The factors attributing to this high prevalence rate include but not limited to: socio-cultural, gender and sexual norms; low socio-economic status; limited access to social reproductive health information; low level exposure to media in rural population; early child marriages; and low level of educational entertainment.

United Nations Children's Fund (2021) explains that the adolescent stage is a time of opportunity during which a range of activities can be taken to set the stage for a healthy adulthood. However, adolescent pregnancies have challenges and far-reaching consequences for both the teen mothers and their babies. The synergy of teenage motherhood and schooling is one of the challenging experiences in the education ladder of girls. Most often, particularly in developing countries, Chigona and Chetty (2008) note that the burden of juggling between motherhood and school is often left to these teenage mothers while males responsible do not play a significant role. The mothers face stigma from their communities, the disrupted smooth attendance of school,

possible drop out from school, financial challenges, the challenge of childcare while these teenage mothers attend school and poor performance at school among others. The effects of teenage motherhood go beyond the horizon of individuality. Malunga et al. (2023) highlight some of the major effects that teenage pregnancies and motherhood have on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): goal number one (ensuring no poverty); goal two (zero hunger); goal four (access to quality education); goal five (gender equality); and goal ten (reduction of equality). The Zambia Central Statistics Office and Ministry of Health (2019) adds on to the list of adverse consequences of adolescent pregnancies and motherhood of perpetuation of poverty, increased health risks and child vulnerability as well as deprivation of education.

Chigona and Chetty (2008) assert that while it is no longer common to bar these teenage mothers from continuing with their education, there is need for relevant policy makers, school administrators, subject teachers, guidance and counselling teachers and parents to make deliberate efforts in aiding teenage mothers pursue and complete their secondary schooling. Berg (2021) adds to this by stating that denying the teenage mothers the support they need to pursue their education condemns them and their babies to a vicious cycle of poverty, endless neediness and obliviousness. Yet, Masaiti (2018) report that teenage girls' education bears more equitable fruits of national development, stronger families and effective participation in the governance process. Mwanza (2015) is of the view that very few women who have given birth during their teens complete secondary level of schooling. This shows that there is a correlation between early pregnancy and failure to pursue secondary education. Chigona and Chetty (2008) advance the view that, if society expects these girls to succeed with their schooling, provision and effort must be made for meeting the educational needs of these teenage learners. The Zambian government through the 1997 Re-entry policy made a deliberate effort to allow females who become pregnant and eventually give birth to continue with their education, a situation which was not the case before. Instead, a pregnancy and eventually the birth of a baby meant the end of schooling of girls. Campaigns for the re-admissions of girls and the general support for the education of girls have also been championed by the Forum for African Women

Educationalists of Zambia (FAWEZA). Civic educators in this regard equally have not lagged behind in aiding teenage mothers to accelerate and complete their secondary schooling through civic engagement pedagogies. However, the involvement of these stakeholders is not without challenges which this article sought to reveal and also provide possible solutions to these challenges.

Conceptual understanding of civic engagement

The defining characteristic of Civic Engagement is multifaceted. It is a strategy that involves a diverse spectrum of voices of commitment to participate and contribute to the improvement of one's community, neighbourhood and nation. A critical contribution to a healthy society from voting to volunteering, from community organisation to political advocacy. CE also entails working together to make a positive democratic difference in the civic life of a community and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and dispositions. McCartney eta al. (2013, p. 14) define CE as "individual's activities, alone or as part of a group, that focus on developing knowledge about the community and its political system, identifying or seeking solutions to community problems, pursuing goals to benefit the community, and participating in constructive deliberation among community members about the community's political system and community issues, problems, or solutions."

McCartney eta al. (2013) further assert that teaching learners the skills and values of CE are central to the survival and vitality of democracy and the educational mission of the 21st century. Muleya (2015) indicated in his study that CE encourages learners to act not as solitary individuals but teaches learners to learn how to engage, discuss, experiment, dialogue and evaluate situations. Muleya argues further that, "through such an approach, learners are able to make themselves relevant to the needs of society and also respond to the transformation of society in the long run." (Muleya, 2015, p. 177).

At school level, CE can entail learners turning out to clean the school surroundings, neighbourhood community service day, helping the poor, debating on topical issues of the society, community sensitisation and awareness on social issues that affect the immediate community and alike. Such engagement might lead to efforts to change

public opinion and motivate changes in individual behaviour. CE in the Zambian secondary schooling is taught through vector subjects such as Civic Education.

Theoretical framework
This article was guided by the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) which developed as the Social Learning Theory (SLT) in the 1960s by Albert Bandura. The theory posits that learning occurs in a social context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction and behaviour. The selection of this theory was based on its salient features related to the topic under exploration. The salient feature of SCT is the emphasis on the way in which individuals acquire and maintain behaviour, while also considering the social environment in which individuals perform the behaviour. In the context of this article, teenage mother learners were expected to adjust their behaviour as they went back to school. Similarly, schools were expected to create an enabling environment for teenage mother learners so that they did not feel excluded and isolated from the majority of the learners. The goal of SCT is to explain how people regulate their behaviour through control and reinforcement to achieve goal-directed behaviour that can be maintained over time. This element of the theory is ideal to this article in the sense that, when teenage mothers return to school, there are high expectations from both the external (community) and internal (school) environments. The expectations maybe based on adjustment on the behaviour that led to teenage motherhood.

Problem and rationale
The 1997 Re-entry policy aims at implementing measures that will help prevent the exclusion of young mothers from furthering their education. Despite this window of opportunity provided by the government of the Republic of Zambia, Muyunda (2021) reports of the fractional correspondence of the practice with the actual fundamental principles embodied in the policy. Among the inefficiencies reported are the low numbers of retention of the teen mothers due to lack of strategies by teachers on making sure that they provide conducive learning environment for the teen mother learners; and lack of developmental confidence in the teen mother learners who are back in schools. These reviews by Muyunda (2021), give uncertainties on how best stakeholders involve teen mother learners in CE activities. This obtaining reality

has the potential to impede the acquisition of and the likely future benefits of CE pedagogies on the teen mothers.

Also, there seems to be lack of information regarding the challenges faced by administrators, subject teachers, guidance and counselling teachers, parents and policy makers, in implementing CE strategies in Zambia. The contribution of studies that have been conducted in the field of Civic Education have taken care of other areas. For example, Muleya (2015) focused on examining the pedagogical approaches in the teaching of Civic Education in Zambian schools. Chola (2016) paid attention to assess service learning in the teaching of Civic Education in selected secondary schools in Lusaka province, Zambia. This lack of or relatively minute information provides a firm ground for this study to ascertain the challenges stakeholders faced in implementing CE strategies on teen mother learners as well as provide possible solutions to these challenges.

General aim
To establish the challenges administrators, subject teachers, guidance and counselling teachers, parents and policy makers, face in implementing CE strategies with teen mother learners in selected secondary schools of Chongwe district of Zambia, as well as suggest possible solutions to these challenges. The following were the specific objectives of this study:

1. To ascertain the challenges faced by stakeholders in employing CE strategies for teenage mother learners in selected secondary schools of Chongwe District, Zambia.
2. To propose possible solutions to these challenges to help teenage mother learners in selected secondary schools of Chongwe District, Zambia.

Methodology
Design and approach
This study took a qualitative research approach with an exploratory research design with two secondary schools selected purposively. According to Myers (2015), qualitative research methods are designed to help researchers understand people and the social and cultural contexts within which they live by interacting with them. Exploratory research design is employed when enough is not known about a phenomenon and a problem that has

not been clearly defined (Adu & Okeke, 2022). This entails that the researchers had an opportunity to interact with the participants so as to generate evidence on challenges faced by stakeholders in employing CE strategies with teenage mother learners as well as provide possible solutions to these challenges.

Sampling and size

The sample size comprised eighteen (18) participants homogeneously and purposively sampled from two selected secondary schools of Chongwe District of Zambia: These were two (2) deputy head teachers (Dp 1 & 2) (1 from each school), twelve (12) teachers of Civic Education (Teacher participants-Tp) (six from each school), two (2) guidance and counselling teachers (1 from each school), officials from District Education Board Secretary (DEBs) office (DEBS Participant-Dep) and FAWEZA (Faweza Participant-Fp) (one from each). Homogenous purposive sampling was used to select teachers of Civic Education. This was due to the fact that homogenous purposive sampling focuses on elements with similar characteristics. Teachers of Civic Education in this case were believed to possess knowledge on civic engagement issues due to the nature of similar concepts they were teaching and the knowledge acquired from their various training institutions. Expert purposive sampling was used to select guidance and counselling teachers, school administrators, DEBS and FAWEZA officials as these had a technical know-how on the topic under exploration.

Data collection tools

The study relied on primary data which was collected through an interview guide with semi-structured questions which was administered to all the eighteen (18) participants. Individual interviews were used on the key informants (school administrators, guidance and counselling teachers, FAWEZA and DEBs officials) while focus group discussions were employed with the teachers. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researchers access to participants' ideas, thoughts and memories in their own words, rather than the words of the researchers. Semi-structured interviews also aided the researchers probe further questions which were not captured on the interview guide for more information.

Ethics

However, before engaging participants in an interview, ethical issues were followed starting with clearance by the University of Zambia Ethical Clearance Committee, the DEBS Chongwe office, school administrators and the teachers from selected secondary schools. Lewis et al. (2012, p. 3) define ethics as "…a set of moral standards or a code for behaviour to govern an individual's interactions with other individuals and within society." The main ethical concern on the part of the participants was that of privacy and security of their identities. To array their fears, they were assured that the data would be kept confidential. Further, the researchers sought informed consent from the participants before carrying out the study.

Data analysis

The data were analysed thematically. This enabled the researchers to have a rigorous approach to identifying themes from the data collected in order to provide answers to the research objectives.

Findings

Findings on challenges faced by stakeholders in employing CE strategies for teenage mother learners are presented below, under ten sub-headings.

Compromised levels of concentration

Compromised levels of concentration among teenage mother learners were at the heart of challenges faced by stakeholders in employing CE strategies for teenage mother learners. Findings from all the participants especially the Civic Education teachers and guidance and counselling teachers gave an impression that the major challenge faced was loss of concentration by the teenage mother learners as most of them hardly participated in class activities either within the school environment or outside. It was further revealed that their performance after returning to school drastically went down. For instance, Dp-1 from secondary school A commented that *"the challenge I find personally which I am sure even others have talked about is that, these children tend to have divided attention. Their minds are often at home even when they are in class."* Similar to the above response, Dp-2 from secondary school B said that *"…because these children leave their babies home, their levels of concentration in terms of learning are affected. And you find that before the child left,*

they performed well but when they come back their performance drops down."

Failure to obey teachers by teenage mother learners

Failure to obey teachers by teenage mother learners was indicated by 11 participants as another challenge. Participants argued that these learners came back to school as mothers and the expression was that they could operate at the level of parents and therefore lost respect for their teachers. The situation was worse especially to young male teachers who had not yet gotten married and without a child or children. It was narrated that the teen mothers (learners) having a child was something that made them graduate from being girls to mothers. The responses below solidify this finding. The Tp 10 from secondary school B stated that *"sometimes when others come back to school, they see themselves as grown-ups. When you talk to them, they don't listen. Maybe they see husbands in us unmarried teachers."* Similar to the above response, Tp 6 from secondary school B echoed this view and said that *"the challenge is the aspect of coming back to school with a sense of feeling proud of what they have done with a lot of insubordination..."*

Stigma, discrimination and unwillingness to go back to school

The study also found that some girls did not return to school due to an unfriendly environment created by their fellow learners and some teachers. Findings from 13 out of 18 participants indicated that some learners demonized the teenage mother learners by calling them *bamayo* (mother). It was also reported that some girls did not go back to school due to some parents who valued marriages more than education.

Participant Rp F said that *"the major challenge which is there is the aspect of discrimination which mother learners have always talked about. So, we have continued to raise awareness on how we can address this issue, and it is very unfortunate that at times it comes from the teachers. Some girls would complain that **ba** teacher called me bamayo (the teacher called me mother). With such sentiments from teachers, it becomes a worrisome situation."* To elaborate more on this, Tp-5 from secondary school A remarked that *"the only challenge that we face is the issue of stigma from their fellow pupils who usually look down on them and this makes them to sometimes disassociate themselves from others."*

Inferiority complex

Inferiority complex was another challenge revealed in this study. Sixteen (16) participants revealed that it was difficult to engage these teenage mother learners as some of them did not easily forget what they had done. Findings show that some teenage mother learners did not even disclose to the teachers what they were going through. In this case, teachers and other staff members in the school such as guidance and counselling personnel found it difficult on how to assist the teenage mother learners cope with the situation. Tp-8 from secondary school A stated that *"the challenges are that sometimes as teachers we would want to assist them to come out in the open, but others are not free to openly discuss issues with teachers. A few would come to tell you that I have a challenge with finances. My mother doesn't want to support me, but others don't come out in the open."* Similar to the above response, Tp 12 from secondary school A stated that *"these children are hit with inferiority complex to say they are considered as mothers and those are the cases that our guidance teacher handles."*

Disassociation and non-involvement in extra classroom activities

Another challenge which was revealed was the aspect of the teen mother learners disassociating themselves from outside classroom environment activities. They most often opted to sneak out of school during these activities. Almost all the teachers and guidance and counselling personnel expressed the view that teen mother learners often did not take part in CE activities such as community services, joining drama or Civic Education clubs.

To affirm this finding, Dp 1 noted that *"we have a problem of these mother leaners of not showing willingness to engage in any activity outside classes. If their friends are out, them find ways of sneaking out of school. So it's a challenge to engage them in activities that can even help them cope with their situations."* While DP 2 responded that *"...the common practice is that these learners with babies always do not want to mingle with their friends. If they do, they are most often with other learners who are almost of their age or social background..."*

Solutions to help teenage mother learners

In view of the above reported challenges faced by the respondents in this study as they engaged teenage mother learners, it was imperative to solicit for solutions aimed at helping teenage mother learners enjoy full benefits of education. In this regard, the researchers had an opportunity to interact with all the 18 participants who gave the following suggestions:

Academic engagement during and after maternal leave

Results revealed that academic engagement during and after maternal leave could be the most effective way of helping teenage mother learners enjoy full benefit of education. 14 out of 18 participants reported that there was need to be in touch with a teen mother before and after being given maternal leave so that she did not lose much during that period and also have a continued interest in school. Tp-4 from secondary school A stated that *"so what would have been best for me is that when they go on leave we start packaging some work for them which they can be doing. A mother can be studying at home and when they come back you are even assessing them. We take personal interest in the learner."* To elaborate more on this, Tp-11 from secondary school A made the following remarks *"I think as teachers we should help them with all the academic support needed like giving them some remedial work during leave…"*

Community sensitization on the importance of education

Results from 14 participants showed that there was need for teachers, traditional leaders, organizations and community to sensitize people as to why it was imperative for a teenage mother to go back to school once she had given birth. The participants felt that this holistic approach would help to change the mind-set of those who were fond of giving away their children into early marriage once they fell pregnant. It was also revealed that sensitization programmes would help to change the mind-sets of the teenage mother learners due to the fact that some teenage mothers made their own decisions not to go back to school once they had fallen pregnant. Fp stated that *"most of them lack sensitization. If sensitization can be there at all levels, it can be very helpful…am talking about the community as a whole. More so, traditional leaders can be involved in sensitizing the girls,* female teachers being the role models, even organizations…" Dep stated that *"schools can be involved in sensitizing the parents to make them understand that those children can still learn even after giving birth. This can be done through drama clubs performing in communities. Or even through art, music and poems!"*

Full support of the re-entry policy

The participants felt that the re-entry policy was not fully supported by the Ministry of Education. 16 out of 18 participants advocated for full support of the re-entry policy. They argued that having the policy alone was not enough to guarantee that the teenage mother learners would complete their education. Fp observed that *"we need to ensure that the re-entry policy is effectively implemented because there are also gaps in the policy. For example, if the girl falls pregnant it is the requirement of the school to track where that girl is so that they can facilitate for the re-entry, but you find that schools don't even track the whereabouts of these girls."* Tp-10 from secondary school A stated that *"we need to share the responsibility. Often times, parents would depend on the school to handle these girls. But parents also need to counsel their children as we do."*

Decent accommodation/boarding facilities for the learners

Fifteen (15) out of 18 participants said that there was need to find right accommodation such as boarding facilities for the learners. It was revealed that some learners were renting in weekly boarding houses without proper parental supervision. A situation that had given them freedom to do whatever they wanted. It was further reported that some of these teenage mother learners have repeated the same act even after being given a second chance to go back to school. Tp-6 from secondary school A indicated that *"I feel that these weekly boarding schools have contributed greatly to this problem of teen pregnancies. These girls have a lot of freedom when they are away from their homes. There is need for schools to have boarding facilities."* Tp-11 from secondary school A added that *"most of these girls are vulnerable. And for Chongwe you find that most of them come from rural places, the outskirts of Chongwe town. So, they come to rent on their own and they are exposed to different lifestyles whereby for them to earn a living they have to be in some affair with a*

boyfriend and end up becoming pregnant."

Discussions
Challenges faced by stakeholders in employing civic engagement strategies for teenage mother learners are discussed below under four sub-headings.

Compromised levels of concentration
While McCartney et al. (2013) recount the benefits associated with CE, however, this article has shown that most of the teenage mother learners in selected secondary schools of Chongwe District in Zambia did not participate in school activities. It can be deduced from this finding that the purpose of these teen mother learners of getting back to school was defeated, their performance was likely to go down which made them lose interest in school and ultimately dropped out. Their concentration demanded equal share of meeting parenting roles that came into conflict with academic requirements. This finding supports that by Chigona and Chetty (2008) who stated that, in Ghana, teenage motherhood is a significant factor of females dropping out of school.

Theron and Dunn (2006) equally observed that adolescent motherhood is disruptive to the educational process of girls and as a consequence, many girls leave school never to return and others poorly perform. As such, the girls undergo a lot of crises as they try to come to terms with their situation as young mothers. This situation has a potential trickle down negative effect on the performance profile of the education system as a whole and also on some SDGs such as goal four (access to quality education); goal five (gender equality); and goal ten (reduction of equality).

Failure to obey teachers by teenage mother learners
One of the major requirements of CE is that the learners learn from the instructor and textbooks in a classroom environment, then expand to their immediate environment and a wider community in due course. What the learners learn should effect a positive change in society. The findings of this article do not seem to suggest so. Teachers handling teen mother learners have faced challenges of disrespect and non-compliance to teacher instructions by the teen mothers. This is because teen mother learners feel more as parents and not as learners and at the same level as their teachers when they return back to school. The situation is worse especially to young male teachers who had not yet gotten married. It was reported that the new status of being parents was an achievement of having graduated from being girls to mothers and women. It was further reported that some of these teenage mother learners were seeing husbands in some of the young male teachers. By implication, this suggests that this kind of new thinking and conduct could compromise the educational help to be rendered to the teenage mother learners by the teachers. Disrespect meant non-compliance to the instructions from the teachers and school administrators to achieve the academic activities required for the necessary educational attainment.

Stigma, discrimination and unwillingness to go back to school
Adangabe et al. (2021, p. 690) contend that "stigma is a sign of social unacceptability…The stigma attached to being a teenage mother is real and present." From the findings in this study, stigma and discrimination which teen mothers experienced at the hands of their fellow learners and some teachers, made it difficult for the teachers to engage the teen mother learners freely in both in-classroom activities and beyond. The respondents said that stigma and discrimination often created in the teen mother learners a category of "otherness". The consequence of this reality was non-willingness of teen mothers to go back to school or turning into truants due to the unfriendly school environment.

According to Adangabe et al. (2021), this is what was obtaining in Wa West District of South Africa. Alternatively, some parents out of anger perpetuated stigma by withdrawing their daughters from school and encouraged them to go into early marriages. Out of rage, other parents did not support these girls because of the "unforgiveable" act committed. Annika et al. (2008) explain that not only do teenage mother learners fail to complete schooling because of their status but parents also react towards the news of their daughters being pregnant with anger. To this effect, civic engagement activities become a challenge to conduct with teen mother learners in such circumstances because this situation requires the full and active involvement of the learners in such activities like school debates, engaging in various community services and sharing of lived experiences that could motivate and lead

to social and behavioural change.

Inferiority complex and low self-esteem

The CE fosters democratic values in the learners and nurtures a sense of civic competence and responsibility which in the long run encourages participation of learners in the societies they live in. To achieve this, the learners must have the cognitive skills that enable them to act as active citizens who engage in the democratic processes of their communities. However, the findings clearly indicated that educators found it difficult to engage the teenage mother learners in CE activities as some of them came back to school more of passive learners than they were before they became mothers. Their new statuses coupled with repetitive comments and unpleasant labels of *bamayo* from some teachers and fellow pupils transmitted negative messages to these teen mothers. This situation gave rise to low self-esteem and inferiority complex in them.

Low self-esteem and inferiority complex have the great potential to make the teen mother learners lose their identity as they transition to adulthood. By implication, teachers and other participants found it difficult to assist the teenage mother learners cope with their situation to actively engage these teen mother learners in activities of CE that might help them develop critical minds and knowledge: where learners gain an understanding of processes of government, prevalent political ideologies, civic and constitutional rights; problem solving skills and civic dispositions, appreciation of civil disclosure, free speech and engaging with those perspectives different from their own. This finding is in tandem with Adangabe (2020) who stated that teenage mothers experienced psychological emotions of stress, low self-esteem, shame and depression. In some cases, they experienced rejection and abandonment from peers and the society in general.

Disassociation and non-involvement in extra classroom activities

The new statuses of the teen learners compelled them to isolate themselves from the general population of the learners. The study revealed that, the teen mother learners did not get involved in CE activities as they opted to utilize the time meant for CE outside classroom activities to go and attend to their babies. As a result, the goal of achieving CE is likely not to be met because CE requires learners to engage in extracurricular activities that help them develop feelings of social connectedness. Flanagan and Levine (2010, p. 166) cement this by asserting that "…social incorporation begins in the formative years through the opportunities that children and teens have as members of local organisations." Akin to the Zambian situation, Biesta (2011) reports why young adults are less likely to exhibit characteristics of active citizenship in their communities and lack of connectedness to civic life. He points out some weaknesses in this kind of schooling as young citizens lack the proper knowledge and skills, the right values and the correct dispositions to be the active citizens they should be. Biesta puts across a probable reason to this voluntary non-participation by stating that, young people position themselves as citizens in the making and so they do not engage with the everyday activities. Yet Pacho (2015) posits a concern of paramount importance when he reports that today's ever-changing world requires people with balanced views, capable of offering creative solutions to the diverse problems affecting their society.

The following five sub-topics are discussing the solutions to the challenges faced by stakeholders on CE of teenage mother learners

Academic engagement during and after maternity leave

Learning and teaching programs which accommodate the needs of the teen mothers are fundamental in themselves. In response to the challenges faced by the teacher educators and administrators in the CE of teenage mother learners, academic engagement during maternity leave emerged as one of the strongest solutions. The study revealed that, there was need to be in touch with the teen mothers when given maternity leave in order for them not to lose much on their school work. Follow ups to see how the teen mother learner was coping at home were not made. Muyunda (2022) reports that the Ministry of Education and DEBS have not implemented robust measures in the re-entry policy, to support young school going mothers and as a result some young mothers do not report back to school because there is a sense of losing track of school activities and getting back to school was viewed as a waste of time for them. This void established by Muyunda provides an opportunity, which most respondents in this

study echoed, the need to deliberately devise an educational program which is separate from the mainstream traditional school programs, a holistic program to be put in place to take care of the peculiar educational needs of teen mothers. Ideally, education should possess a wide-ranging skill, balancing between teaching and learning to counselling in order to provide appropriately for the learners. Maluli and Bali (2014) content that teenage motherhood goes with a double responsibility both as a mother and as a learner, thereby making it a challenge to fully meet academic requirements. Therefore, there is need for support from different educational stakeholders such as policy makers, school administrators, teachers and parents alike, to help the teen mothers manage their double responsibilities. Referencing a similar program in Australia, Subban et al. (2022) tell a success story of teen parents having been taken care of through a non-judgmental education system with add on activities which creates and encourages the young parents to become involved in life outside the classroom.

Community sensitization on the importance of education

Another theme that emerged from the findings was that, there was need to scale up community sensitization on the importance of education of the teen mothers. Concerted efforts from educators, traditional leaders, organizations and the community in general were required to sensitize people on why it is imperative for a teenage mother to go back to school once she has given birth. Since education is a right with a legal basis embedded in such instruments as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child and the Re-entry policy of 1997, participants felt and expressed that this approach would be one way of changing the mind-sets of some parents who prefer to give their daughters in marriage once they fall pregnant before completing their education. Gatbotnon (2021) emphasizes the importance of education by stating that education is a social tool and a solution to global challenges. It should therefore be made accessible to everyone regardless of gender and vulnerabilities. The findings of the need for sensitization on education of the teen mothers demonstrates a similar pattern of results obtained by Muyunda (2021) who echoed the view of limited sensitization and awareness

levels of the re-entry policy in some selected secondary schools in Lusaka, Zambia. The results of this study also emerged from the findings that some teenage mother learners made their own choice of not going back to school after giving birth. It was revealed that sensitization programmes would help to change the mind-set of such teenage mother learners. This goes to show that giving correct position and information consistently on re-entry policy through sensitization is very important as this would greatly benefit the teenage mother learners and those potentially so in the community.

Full support of the re-entry policy

In an effort to help teenage mother learners enjoy full benefits of education, findings from the participants firmly showed that the Re-entry policy was supposed to be fully supported. It was indicated that having the policy alone was not enough to guarantee that the teen mother learners would complete their education. Participants felt that in as much as the re-entry policy was appreciated, there was need to have a holistic implementation from the policy makers and full involvement of the learners and the community. This position is asserted by Muyunda (2021, p.169) when he reports that "…the evidence to date only illustrates the implementation of the policies from a cultural perspective and not from management perspective." This suggests therefore, that for the re-entry policy to be fully realized by all the stakeholders, the implementation strategy needed to take a different direction as much attention is paid to tackle cultural issues that perpetuate teen pregnancies and early marriages.

The results also indicated that, supporting the re-entry policy meant training and retraining teachers of Civic Education, Guidance and Counselling teachers as well as school administrators on the principle guidelines and strategies of handling the teen mother learners who opt to go back to the education mainstream. This is because the teen mothers could not manage the challenges of going back to school alone but need the holistic support of other education stakeholders. Subban et al. (2022, p. 1) emphasize this support by stating that, "teenage parents may be one of the most vulnerable populations in our societies and advocating for their success is a collective responsibility."

Decent accommodation/boarding facilities for learners

The study revealed that some rural schools in Chongwe district lacked boarding facilities. Instead, learners that came from far distant places to pursue their education at Chongwe schools were compelled to weekly boarding in the nearby places to the schools without proper parental supervision, a situation that compromised their moral standing. This was one of the leading factors to teen pregnancies as stressed by most respondents. The United Nations Population Fund (2017) report, affirms this finding by indicating that among the determinants of adolescent pregnancies in Zambia was the lack of opportunities for adolescents particularly for those living in rural areas, such as school boarding facilities and social services. It was also reported that some of these teenage mother learners had made it a habit of becoming pregnant again even after being given the second chance to go back to school. This goes to show that these learners had too much freedom especially those that had been left to stay on their own in boarding houses without parental or school guidance. To this effect, there was a unanimous appeal from the respondents to the government through the Ministry of Education, to have proper and sufficient boarding facilities in these schools. By implication, the presence or absence of boarding facilities has a direct bearing on the rate of teen pregnancies. This finding supports Mauna's (2015) findings. Mauna advocated for decent accommodation and good upbringing of children at household level. He observed that the environment that surrounds the teenagers strongly correlates with rates of teenage pregnancy. Teenagers who live in neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty, low levels of education and high residential turnover are at higher risk of teenage pregnancy.

Implications of the findings

These findings show that, despite the window of opportunity provided by the Re-entry policy of 1997, school going teenage mothers who have taken advantage of this policy have had to contend with a "hostile school environment", where they are isolated, humiliated and stigmatized by their fellow pupils. At the heart of virtually all strategies for achieving the objectives of CE is some form of involvement and active participation of the learners which is lacking in the teen mother learners of Chongwe district of Zambia. This has

contributed to poor performance or drop out from school by teenage mother learners. It is therefore imperative to respond to these challenges by effecting the indicated solutions so that the teenage mother learners once they are re-admitted back into school can enjoy the full benefits of education.

Conclusion

In view of the various responses from the participants in this study, the stand point of this study is that compromised levels of concentration; stigma and discrimination and unwillingness to go back to school; inferiority complex; failure to obey teachers by teenage mother learners, and disassociation and non-involvement in extra classroom activities were the major challenges faced by school administrators, teachers, parents and policy makers in employing CE strategies in schools. However, this article argues that with academic engagement of the teen mothers during and after maternity leave; community sensitization on the importance of education; full support of the re-entry policy and; provision of boarding facilities for learners were the suggested solutions to these challenges.

Teen mothers who return to school do so based on the Re-entry policy of 1997. These teen mothers, like any other learner, consider education as a tool for socio-economic challenges and human development. The parents, teachers, administrators and policy makers involved in the education of these teen mothers, face a number of challenges in engaging these teen mothers in CE activities that form part of their education package. These challenges attest to the fact that, since teen mother learners bear a double responsibility of schooling and motherhood, there is a high likelihood of their paying little attention to CE activities. By implication, the transitioning of these teens to adulthood would mean having passive citizens who are not involved in the forming and reforming of societies they live in; citizens who are intolerant to different opinions and lack democratic values.

Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- There should be comprehensive education on sexual reproductive health and easy

access of contraceptives by the learners in schools.

- Civic Education teachers, school administrators and guidance and counselling teachers should receive occasional trainings on how to handle teen mother learners in schools.

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