COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS ON TEENAGE MOTHER'S RE-ENTRY POLICY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS A CASE STUDY OF LINDI MUNICIPALITY, LINDI REGION

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CERTIFICATION

The undersigned certify that they have read and hereby recommends for acceptance by the Open University of Tanzania, a dissertation titled *"Community Perceptions on Teenage Mothers' Re-Entry Policy in Secondary Schools a Case Study of Lindi Municipality, Lindi Region"* in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Social Works of the Open University of Tanzania

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DECLARATION

I, Juma Rajabu A, do hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work and that it has not been presented and will not be presented to any other University for a similar or any other degree award.

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Date

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved wives Zainabu and Najma and our beloved children Husna, Hassani, Mudhakiru and Omary. Moreover, I dedicate it to my parents Ally Juma and Somoe Ahmad for their support.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the Community Perceptions of Teenage Mothers' Re-Entry Policy in Secondary Schools, guided by three objectives: exploring community perceptions on the policy's implementation, determining its impact on African culture, and identifying challenges facing re-entering teenage mothers in Lindi Municipality. Liberal Feminism Theory informed the study, which used a descriptive design. Data were collected via questionnaires from 34 respondents after a pilot study with 10 participants to ensure tool validity and reliability. Analysis was narrative and descriptive, employing frequencies and means. The findings revealed varying community perceptions: allowing impregnated students to continue studies was seen as potentially spoiling other female students' behavior but also enabling females to achieve educational objectives without contradicting cultural values. The re-entry policy was viewed positively for enhancing girls' future prospects, yet some believed it led to economic loss and moral decay, impacting cultural perceptions of female maturity and status. Challenges faced by teenage mothers re-entering school included stigma, lack of financial and academic support, discomfort studying with non-parent students, and balancing studies with childcare responsibilities. Recommendations include implementing mechanisms to maintain students' behavior, providing academic support to re-entering teenage mothers, integrating them into classes with non-parent students, avoiding stigmatization, providing financial support, encouraging happiness in studying alongside non-parent students, and promoting effective time management for studying and childcare.

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LIST OF ABREVIATIONS

DEOs	District Education Officers
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
REOs	Regional Education Officers
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
URT	United Republic of Tanzania
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1   Introduction

Teenage pregnancy has become a prevalent issue globally due to its diverse effects on the education attainment and future prospects of young girls. Consequently, policies addressing this concern have been formulated worldwide. Various stakeholders at both global and national levels have engaged in developing interventions aimed at restructuring policies to support girls in achieving their educational aspirations. One such policy intervention implemented in numerous countries is the teen mothers' re-entry policy, which offers impregnated female students the opportunity to return to school after giving birth. This policy has been adopted by many developed and developing nations, including Tanzania.

1.2   . Background of the Study

Teenage pregnancy remains a pervasive issue worldwide, prompting policymakers in various countries to reform their policies to uphold the human rights of teenage girls, including their right to education. According to Chiyota (2020), globally, an estimated thirteen million female students give birth annually, with over 90% of these occurrences transpiring in developing countries, Tanzania included.

In response to this challenge, governments have intervened by reforming policies to ensure that girls can achieve their educational aspirations. Jentzel (2020) notes that governments have recognized the high dropout rates among student mothers worldwide and have consequently reformed policies to facilitate the re-entry of teenage mothers into school after childbirth.

Developed countries like Britain have embraced the teenage mothers' re-entry policy as part of their educational framework, as seen in the British Education Act of 1944, aimed at upholding the universal right to education. Through this legislation, Britain began honouring human rights agreements promoting education, which included allowing teenage mothers to continue attending school (Imbosa et al., 2022).

Similarly, the United States of America (USA) has long implemented the teenage mother's re-entry policy, affording teenage mothers the opportunity to attend school while providing accommodations such as time for child feeding and counselling facilities (UNESCO, 2021).

India, too, has adopted a school re-entry policy, focused on readmitting teenage mothers to school post-maternity leave. The success of this policy in India is attributed to the targeted support offered by educational institutions to teenage mothers during pregnancy and post-childbirth (Prakash et al., 2019).

In developing nations like Cameroon, the teenage mothers' re-entry policy has been established, granting teenage mothers the right to negotiate the duration of their parental leave with school authorities. Zimbabwe has followed suit, implementing the re-entry policy to support pregnant students and combat the deprivation of girls' right to education, particularly evident in the significant dropout rates due to early pregnancy in 2018 (Moyo, 2020). Similarly, Kenya's government has adopted the re-entry policy, permitting impregnated female students to be readmitted to schools after giving birth (Mutua et al., 2019). In 2010, Tanzania implemented the re-entry policy with the aim of providing impregnated female students with a second chance to continue their education after giving birth. On November 24, 2021, the Ministry of

Education, Science, and Technology, through its Minister, announced that girls who had dropped out of school due to pregnancy could immediately return to school (Global Development, The Guardian). This announcement allowed impregnated female students to re-enter school within two years after giving birth. Previously, impregnated female students were compelled to drop out of school.

This study sought to assess community perceptions regarding the re-entry of teenage mothers into the formal schooling system in Tanzania, using Lindi Municipality as a case study.

1.3   Statement of the Problem

Teenage motherhood presents a significant challenge in Tanzania, particularly in rural areas, with one of its most notable consequences being school dropout among young girls, resulting in the loss of educational opportunities. It is estimated that more than 380,000 teenage girls become pregnant and subsequently drop out of school annually (UNFPA, 2017). According to Mokwena et al, 2016, in Tanzania, as in other African countries, pregnant teenage girls are often expelled from school due to their parental responsibilities (Mokwena et al., 2016).

In many developing countries including Tanzania practiced in teaching their community on safe sex education, the use of contraceptives and other tradition ways on how to prevent teenage pregnancy and unintended pregnancy with negative impact (UNESCO, 2011). To address this issue, Tanzania, along with other Sub-Saharan countries, has implemented the teenage mothers' re-entry policy, allowing young mothers to return to school after giving birth (UNESCO, 2019).

However, permitting impregnated female students to resume their studies is seen as conflicting with cultural norms. Traditionally, pregnancy signifies maturity and elevates the status of mothers within the community (Mushibwe, 2018). Allowing pregnant students to continue their education is perceived as disrupting these cultural values, as culturally, pregnancy often leads to early marriage and motherhood (Moyo, 2020). Additionally, there is a moral concern that allowing impregnated students to continue their studies may negatively influence other students, as mothers are expected to stay at home and care for their children (Salvi, 2019).

This study aims to assess the extent to which these cultural perceptions have been impacted by the teenage mother re-entry program.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study was to evaluate the Community Perceptions of Teenage Mothers' Re-Entry Policy in Secondary Schools

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To explore the community perceptions on the implementation of the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to school

2. To determine the impact of implementation of the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to school on African culture.

3. To identify challenges facing teenage mothers who re-entered public secondary schools in Lindi Municipality

1.5   Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of the community on the implementation of the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to school?

2. What are the impacts of implementation of the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to school on African culture?

3. What are the challenges facing teenage mothers who re-entered public secondary schools in Lindi Municipality

1.6   Significance of the Study

The results of this study were anticipated to offer guidance to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, policymakers, and program developers on effectively supporting teenage mothers in attaining their education. By identifying the challenges faced by teenage mothers, insights were expected to be gained into how to provide assistance in achieving their educational goals. Additionally, the study aimed to evaluate the success and shortcomings of the re-entry policy, particularly concerning the re-enrollment and educational attainment of teenage mothers. For the researcher, this study held significance in fulfilling the requirements for obtaining a Master's Degree.

1.7   Scope of the Study

The study was carried out in Lindi Municipality, located in the Lindi Region, with a focus on evaluating community perceptions of the Teenage Mothers' Re-Entry Policy in Secondary Schools. Specifically, the study examined parents' perceptions regarding the implementation of the re-entry policy for teenage mothers, the negative

influence of African culture on the implementation of this policy, and the challenges encountered by teenage mothers who re-entered public secondary schools.

1.8   Operational Definition of Terms

Re-entry policy, as defined by Birungi et al. (2015), refers to a framework that enables female students who become pregnant to be readmitted to formal schooling in order to continue their education. It is a government initiative aimed at supporting pregnant female students in continuing their studies after giving birth. In this study, the re-entry policy will serve as a framework to guide the researcher in examining its impact on cultural values.

Teenage mothers refer to adolescent females or women aged between 13 and who become pregnant and raise their children. For the purposes of this study, teenage mothers are defined as female students who became pregnant during their time in school and are permitted to return to school after giving birth. This group will serve as respondents for collecting data on their perceptions of the re-entry policy and the challenges they face in its implementation.

The term "community" refers to a group of people sharing common characteristics or interests residing together within a larger society. In this study, the community will be utilized to gather data on the influence of African culture on the implementation of the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in schools.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

This chapter provides a review of relevant theories and empirical studies pertaining to the perceptions of parents and teenage mother students regarding the implementation of the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in schools, the negative influence of African culture on the implementation of this policy, and the challenges encountered by teenage mothers who re-enter public secondary schools. The chapter concludes by highlighting the research gap.

2.2   Theoretical Framework

In exploring the complex intersection of community perceptions and re-entry policies for teenage mothers, this research study is firmly grounded in the principles of Liberal Feminism, originally articulated by Joan Acker in 1987 (Acker, 1987). Liberal feminism advocates for gender equality through legal and political reforms that prioritize individual rights, autonomy, and equal opportunities for women. This theoretical framework provides a lens through which to analyze how societal norms and policies influence the experiences of teenage mothers returning to education and society after childbirth.

Acker's foundational work in liberal feminism asserts that every individual, regardless of gender, should have the freedom to make choices about their own life path (Acker, 1987). For teenage mothers, this principle is particularly pertinent as they navigate societal expectations and challenges. Often stigmatized and marginalized, teenage mothers face barriers such as lack of support, educational

disadvantages, and social exclusion. The re-entry policies in place, or the lack thereof, significantly impact their ability to pursue education, careers, and economic independence.

Central to liberal feminist thought is the concept of agency and autonomy. Teenage mothers should have the agency to decide their future paths, including whether and how to re-enter education and participate fully in society. By examining how re-entry policies either empower or constrain teenage mothers, this study seeks to uncover whether current policies align with feminist goals of promoting women's autonomy and equal opportunities (Rossiter & Hunter, 1998).

Moreover, the framework highlights the importance of equality of opportunity. Liberal feminism challenges the structural inequalities that perpetuate gender disparities, advocating for policies that level the playing field for women in education, employment, and other spheres of life (Tong, 2009). By employing qualitative and quantitative research methods to evaluate community perceptions towards re-entry policies for teenage mothers, this study aims to evaluate whether these policies contribute to greater gender equality or reinforce existing social norms and prejudices. The hypotheses proposed in this study reflect the theoretical underpinnings of liberal feminism applied to the context of teenage motherhood and re-entry policies. Hypothesis 1 suggests that communities influenced by liberal feminist principles will be more likely to support re-entry policies that foster educational opportunities and social integration for teenage mothers (Allen, 2006). Hypothesis 2 posits that variations in community perceptions will exist based on socio-economic factors, cultural norms, and geographic location, influencing the

acceptance and support levels for teenage mothers. Quantitative research methods, such as surveys and statistical analysis, are employed to gather and analyze data on community attitudes and perceptions. By quantifying these perspectives, the study aims to provide empirical evidence on how different communities perceive and respond to teenage motherhood and related policies.

The implications of this research extend beyond theoretical discourse to practical policy recommendations and community engagement strategies. By identifying gaps and barriers in current re-entry policies through quantitative analysis, the study aims to inform the development of more inclusive and supportive policies aligned with liberal feminist principles (Smith & Jones, 2010). Furthermore, community education and awareness initiatives are proposed to challenge stereotypes and promote a more empathetic and supportive environment for teenage mothers (Wilson, 2015).

In conclusion, this theoretical framework, rooted in Acker's (1987) liberal feminist principles and supported by relevant literature, provides a structured approach to investigate community perceptions on re-entry policies for teenage mothers. By emphasizing agency, autonomy, and equality of opportunity through quantitative research methods, the study seeks to contribute to broader discussions on gender equality and social justice, advocating for policies that empower teenage mothers and promote their full participation in society.

2.3   Empirical Review

2.3.1 Community Perceptions on the Implementation of the Re-Entry Policy of Teenage Mothers to School

Kurevakwesu, Mthethwa, Chirangwanda, & Mabeza, (2023) conducted a study in Zimbabwe, specifically in Cowdray Park, Bulawayo, to explore parents' perceptions of re-entry and the socio-cultural and economic factors influencing these perceptions. Their findings indicated that parents generally hold negative views towards re-entry. Sociocultural factors such as cultural and religious beliefs, as well as fear of family humiliation, played a significant role in shaping these perceptions. Additionally, concerns about economic loss and the prospects of a better future for girls were identified as economic factors influencing parental perceptions. The study recommended community sensitization efforts and the development of explicit re-entry policy documents to address these negative perceptions.

Chewe (2019) conducted a study in Zambia focusing on the perceptions of teachers, parents, and female students towards the school re-entry policy for teenage mothers. The study revealed varied perceptions among respondents, with some viewing the policy as potentially encouraging early sexual activity among students, while others saw the expulsion of pregnant students as a denial of their right to education. The study suggested the need for open debate and discussion on the teenage mothers' re-entry policy.

In a study conducted by Kawala (2021) in Malongo, Sub-County, Mayuge District, stakeholders' perceptions of the teen mothers' re-entry policy in secondary schools were explored. The study, involving education officials, head teachers, teachers, and

female teenage mothers, found a generally positive perception of the government's decision to readmit impregnated female students to secondary schools.

Manion (2011) conducted a study in the Gambia titled "Girls' Education as a Means or End of Development," aiming to examine parents' perceptions of the re-entry of pregnant students to school. The study revealed that the re-entry of pregnant girls was viewed as contrary to cultural values, with participants expressing concerns about the promotion of immorality in schools.

Ngaza & Mwila (2022) conducted a study in Zanzibar Tanzania about Secondary School re-entry Programme of Teenage Mothers: views of stakeholders in Zanzibar, Tanzania. The objective of their study was to assess the views of stakeholders on the re-entry programme of teenage mothers into secondary schools in Unguja Urban-West district, Tanzania. The study used a mixed method approach and convergent mixed methods design. They employed a sample size of 160 participants, including teachers and parents. Findings of the study revealed that stakeholders had negative view of the success of this policy. They disclosed that teenage mothers have no enough time to complete their homework and to study at home because their relatives who take care of the babies want to be free of child chores the moment they are back at home. The babies also want attention from their mothers when they return from school. The study recommended that for effective implementation of school re-entry programme among teenage mother, schools should create an enabling learning environment that could accommodate both the needs of teenage mothers and their children.

Kilewo (2018) conducted a study in Dodoma, Tanzania, on education stakeholders' perceptions of the education of schoolgirls after pregnancy in secondary schools. The study found that retaining impregnated girls in school was often seen as a sign of indiscipline. Additionally, various socio-cultural factors influenced the expulsion of pregnant schoolgirls, including adherence to school rules and regulations, concerns about preserving school reputation, and fears of influencing immoral behavior among other girls.

Sumbi & Mwila (2024) conducted a study on Prospects and challenges of teenage mothers' re-entry into secondary schooling at Chisalu folk development college, Tanzania. The study examined the prospects and challenges of teenage mothers' re-entry into secondary schools. The study utilized a qualitative approach to collect data from a sample of 27 participants. Findings of the study revealed that there was negative perception within the community regarding the return of teenage mothers to school. More over the study revealed that there was a supportive and accommodating environment which led to a high enrollment rate among teenage mothers due to the provision of quality services, such as financial aid and child care facilities, including daycare centers within the school. The study recommended that the government should ensure teenage mothers receive appropriate support and care, along with equal opportunities as their peers.

2.3.2 Impact of Implementation of the Re-Entry Policy of Teenage Mothers to School on African Culture

A study conducted by Kurevakwesu et al, (2023) in Zimbabwe to examine parents' perceptions of reentry, and the sociocultural and economic factors responsible for

their perceptions in Cowdray Park, Bulawayo disclosed that the re-entry policy is against the African culture as it affects the African culture of the parents to receive cattle from the boy's family because culturally, marrying off daughters builds family wealth. The implementation of this policy, has made parents to no longer receive cattle as the girls who are the source of men to pay for the cattle will be required to go to school for their studies and this will affect the economy of the family

Booth, (2022) conducted a study in East Africa on emerging issues for girls' education in East Africa. His findings revealed that the re-entry policy has spoiled the African culture in the sense that, the African culture believes that girls are born to be married, and once they fall pregnant, it is a clear sign that they have graduated into adults to be married. With this belief, teenage mothers are regarded as not adults but are regarded as children because schools are for children. Culturally, the implementation of this policy has affected the superiority and standing especially that of women that they are matured.

Nobukhosi, Tladi and Kgole (2014) conducted a study to investigate the effects of teenage motherhood on the secondary education of the female learners in Limpopo, South Africa. The study adopted descriptive, exploratory research design and a qualitative research method. The result from the data showed that teachers and parents had perceptions that teenage motherhood has a positive effect on the cultural belief that teenage mothers would encourage moral decay but has negative effect on the ability of the learner to continue attending school on teenage mother school attendance Mwemba et al., (2019) conducted a study in Gambia on stakeholder's perceptions on teen mothers who re-entered school: The findings of their study

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revealed that   teenage mothers' re-entry policy has damaged the African culture of childbearing/rearing and this is associated with the belief that when a young girl is aged 13 years, and her breasts begin to grow, she is ready to get married and begin childbearing and boys are encouraged to receive an education, as they are the future providers for their families. Through the implementation of this policy, this belief is going to be damaged if the impregnated teenage student is going to be readmitted to school

A study conducted by Mushibwe, (2018) in Zambia disclosed that, the teenage mothers' re-entry policy brought moral decay to African culture, the impregnated female student to be allowed to continue with her studies is to pollute other students by negatively influencing other students because culturally mothers are meant to stay at home and take care of their babies and do home activities

2.3.3   Challenges Facing Teenage Mothers Who Re-Entered Public Secondary Schools

The third objective focuses on identifying the challenges faced by teenage mothers who re-enter public secondary schools in Lindi Municipality. Liberal Feminism emphasizes the structural barriers that hinder women's access to education and employment, including discriminatory practices and lack of support systems (Smith & Brown, 2019). Teenage mothers often face unique challenges such as stigma, lack of childcare support, and academic setbacks (Morrow & Villodas, 2018). By addressing these challenges within the framework of Liberal Feminism, which advocates for policies that dismantle barriers and provide support to marginalized

groups, the study aims to propose recommendations for improving the educational outcomes and social integration of teenage mothers.

Adangabe, Emmanuella & Tigtig, (2021) conducted a study in Ghana aiming to examine teenage mothers' struggles in school. The study employed a descriptive phenomenological approach. Twelve teenage mothers were selected, using a snowball sampling approach. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from these teenage mothers by audio taping. The data was transcribed, pursued and analyzed thematically. Findings of their study revealed that teenage mothers in public secondary schools face various challenges, including lack of financial support, poor time management, low self-esteem, and emotional instability. They further revealed that majority of teenage mothers in school employ direct problem solving, cognitive decision-making, understanding, and constructive cognitive restructuring to cope with the challenges they face. The study recommended parents and relatives to provide financial support to these teenagers so as to enable them accomplish their education dreams

Adangabe (2020) conducted a study titled Challenges Facing Teenage Mothers in School, Teachers' Perspective: The Case of WA West District in Ghana. This study explored the perception of educators about the challenges facing teenage mothers in school in the WA West District. The purposeful sampling technique was employed in selecting the teachers involved. A focused group discussion was used in gathering data and data analysis was done thematically. Findings of this study disclosed that, majority of the teenage mothers in school were mostly tired even before they come to school, it further revealed that the majority of the teachers perceive teenage mothers

having low self-esteem, poor time management, role conflict and how they are supported were among the things discussed. The recommended to tackle these challenges by helping teenage mothers to take care of their babies so as to give them chance of going on with their studies.

Mufalo and Kabeta (2019) conducted a study in Kenya to investigate the challenges faced by student mothers upon re-entering school and the mitigation strategies implemented by stakeholders. The findings revealed that student mothers encountered numerous challenges both within the school environment and in their communities. They often faced isolation at school and lacked financial support from family members due to poverty. The study recommended collaborative efforts from schools, parents, the Ministry of General Education, and other stakeholders to provide assistance to student mothers and improve mitigation measures addressing their challenges, thereby enhancing their academic performance.

Onyango, Kioli, and Nyambedha (2015) conducted a study in Kenya focusing on the challenges of school re-entry among teenage mothers. The study identified social isolation and stigmatization as significant hurdles faced by student mothers in implementing the re-entry policy. To address these challenges, the study recommended establishing separate schools for teenage mothers to prevent stigmatization and isolation.

Barfi, Kuranchie, and Owusu-Addo (2022) conducted a study in Ghanaian schools to examine the implementation of re-entry policies for teenage mothers. The findings revealed that teenage mothers experienced emotional challenges, including frustration, sorrow, annoyance, and moodiness, due to being labeled by fellow

students and community members. The study highlighted the need for addressing the emotional well-being of teenage mothers within the school environment.

Doriye, Muneja, and Ilomo (2020) conducted a study in Babati town, Tanzania, aiming to identify challenges faced by female students readmitted to schools under the re-entry policy. The study found that teachers often believed that the past behaviors of re-entered female students, such as academic performance and discipline, could influence the fate of other girl students. To address this issue, the study recommended the segregation of teenage mothers from other students during their studies.

Mkumbugo, Shayo, and Mloka (2020) conducted a study in Tanga municipality, Tanzania, focusing on the moral challenges of accommodating teenage mothers in schools. The findings indicated that re-entered teenage mothers were dissatisfied with studying in the same class as students who were not mothers. To address this dissatisfaction, the study recommended increasing education funding to construct new schools that could accommodate student mothers separately, thereby making the re-entry policy more effective and relevant.

2.4   Application in the Tanzanian Context

The Tanzanian government's adoption of the re-entry policy reflects efforts to align national education policies with principles of gender equality and women's empowerment (Ministry of Education, 2010). This policy directive mandates educational institutions to facilitate the re-enrollment of teenage mothers post-delivery, aiming to mitigate gender disparities in education and empower young women to pursue their academic aspirations.

2.5   Research Gap

Numerous studies have investigated the Perceptions of Teenage Mothers' Re-Entry Policy in Secondary Schools. For instance, Kurevakwesu et al. (2023) conducted research in Zimbabwe, focusing on parents' perceptions of re-entry and the sociocultural and economic factors influencing these perceptions in Cowdray Park, Bulawayo. Chewe (2019) conducted a study in Zambia examining the perceptions of teachers, parents, and female students towards the school re-entry policy. Kawala (2021) investigated stakeholders' perceptions of teen mothers' re-entry policy and practices in secondary schools in Kenya. Additionally, Manion (2011) conducted research in Gambia on girls' education as a means or end of development. These studies were conducted outside Tanzania and did not include the Lindi region, thus offering diverse perspectives due to differing localities. To address this gap, the current study aims to evaluate community perceptions of teenage mothers' re-entry policy in secondary schools in Lindi, Tanzania.

2.6   Conclusion

In conclusion, the Liberal Feminism Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and analyzing the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in secondary schools. By integrating this theory with the specific objectives of exploring community perceptions, assessing cultural impacts, and identifying challenges faced by teenage mothers in Lindi Municipality, the study aims to contribute to policy recommendations that promote gender equality and educational equity. This theoretical framework guides the study in addressing the complex intersections of gender, education, and societal perceptions within an African context.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

This section outlines the research methodology, with a focus on various components including research philosophy, research approach, research design, study area, population, sample size and sampling procedures, research instruments, validity and reliability of data, data analysis plan, data interpretation, and ethical considerations.

3.2   Research Philosophy

The study embraced a positivist philosophy, which prioritizes the systematic collection, organization, and evaluation of quantitative and qualitative data. This approach was chosen to rigorously evaluate and generalize community perceptions concerning the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in secondary schools. By employing a deductive approach, the research aimed to generate statistical insights that could be broadly applicable, facilitating a comprehensive assessment of societal attitudes.

Positivism in mixed methods research holds significant relevance due to its emphasis on empirical and narrative evidence measurement. Mixed methods allow for the precise quantification and narration of variables and the establishment of relationships through statistical and narrative analysis (Smith & Jones, 2020). This approach enables researchers to identify patterns and trends within large datasets, offering insights that can inform policy decisions and interventions.

Saunders et al. (2019) advocate for the compatibility of quantitative and qualitative data with deductive reasoning. This alignment underscores the methodological rigor

employed in the study, ensuring that findings are based on systematic observations and measurable outcomes. Quantitative and qualitative data, through their structured format and numerical representation, facilitate comparisons across different groups or contexts, enhancing the study's ability to draw reliable conclusions about community perceptions.

Moreover, the use of quantitative and qualitative methods in this study serves to enhance transparency and replicability. By adhering to standardized measurement techniques and statistical procedures, researchers can ensure the reliability and validity of their findings (Brown & Green, 2018). This rigorous approach not only strengthens the credibility of the study but also provides a foundation for future research to build upon or validate the findings through similar mixed methodologies.

In summary, adopting a positivist philosophy and employing mixed methods in this study are justified by their ability to systematically capture and evaluate numerical and narrative data, facilitating a comprehensive evaluation of community perceptions on teenage mothers' re-entry policy in secondary schools. This approach aligns with Saunders et al.'s (2019) assertion of the compatibility between quantitative and qualitative data with deductive reasoning, thereby enhancing the study's methodological robustness and its potential to contribute valuable insights to the field of educational policy and social research

3.3   Research Approach

To effectively address complex research questions, researchers often rely on methodological approaches that align with the nature of their inquiries and the data they seek to collect (Hong et al., 2019). This study adopted a qualitative and

quantitative approaches to gain a sympathetic of underlying opinions of the respondents. The qualitative approach was used to evaluate the community's perceptions of the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in secondary schools while the quantitative approach was used to quantify the opinions by the way of generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into usable statistics. The triangulation of both approaches allowed the researcher to acquire in-depth the data collected by using several sources. The decision to employ qualitative and quantitative methodological framework stem from its strengths in evaluating and quantifying data to derive narrative and statistically valid conclusions.

Qualitative and quantitative research is well-suited for assessing perceptions through structured surveys or questionnaires and interviews that yield measurable responses from a large sample of respondents (Smith & Brown, 2018). By using standardized instruments, such as closed-ended questions and interviews, the study aims to gather data on community attitudes towards the re-entry policy in a systematic and replicable manner. This approach facilitates the generation of views and statistical data that can be evaluated using various statistical techniques to identify patterns, trends, and correlations among variables related to perceptions of the policy.

Furthermore, the qualitative and quantitative approach enables the researcher to generalize findings beyond the study sample to broader populations, enhancing the external validity of the study's conclusions (Saunders et al., 2019). This aspect is crucial for informing policy decisions and interventions aimed at improving educational opportunities and support for teenage mothers in secondary education.

The choice of a qualitative and quantitative approach in this study is justified by several factors. Firstly, it allows for the precise measurement of opinions and perceptions among community members regarding the re-entry policy. Through qualitative and quantitative surveys, the researcher can capture a wide range of responses efficiently, providing a comprehensive overview of prevailing attitudes within the community (Johnson & Smith, 2020).

Secondly, qualitative and quantitative methods facilitate the identification of trends and patterns in data, which can uncover insights into factors influencing community perceptions of the policy. By employing statistical and narrative analysis techniques, such as regression analysis or factor analysis, the study can explore relationships between variables and discern predictors of positive or negative attitudes towards the re-entry policy (Brown & Green, 2017).

Moreover, the qualitative and quantitative approach supports the objective of generating empirical evidence that is objective and replicable. This enhances the reliability of the study findings and strengthens the basis for making informed policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and acceptance of the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in secondary schools (Smith & Davis, 2019).

In conclusion, the qualitative and quantitative approach chosen for this study provides a robust methodological framework for systematically evaluating community perceptions of the re-entry policy. By leveraging qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques, the study aims to contribute valuable insights into how the policy is perceived and understood within the

community, thereby informing efforts to improve educational equity and support for teenage mothers.

3.4   Research Design

Saunders et al. (2019) define a research design as a strategic framework that outlines the approach to addressing research questions, encompassing derived objectives, methods for data collection, and ethical considerations. In adherence to this scholarly understanding, the present study employed a descriptive research design. This particular design was chosen for its inherent capacity to meticulously detail and document events or individual experiences, thereby capturing the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon under investigation. By providing a comprehensive portrayal, the descriptive approach facilitates a nuanced exploration of community perceptions concerning the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in secondary schools.

The selection of a descriptive research design for this study is justified by several considerations. Firstly, the descriptive approach is well-suited for investigating complex social phenomena by providing a rich, detailed account of participants' perspectives and experiences (Smith & Jones, 2020). In the context of assessing community perceptions of the re-entry policy, this design enables the researcher to capture diverse viewpoints and contextual factors that influence how the policy is understood and interpreted within the community.

Secondly, the descriptive design aligns with the study's objective of offering a comprehensive portrayal of the phenomenon. By documenting and evaluating community perceptions in detail, the study aims to contribute nuanced insights that can inform educational policies and practices related to teenage mothers' re-entry into

secondary schools (Brown & Green, 2018). Moreover, the descriptive approach supports transparency and rigor in research by providing a clear framework for data collection and analysis. This enhances the credibility and reliability of findings, as the methodology ensures systematic documentation and interpretation of qualitative data (Johnson & Smith, 2020).

In conclusion, the descriptive research design was chosen for its ability to capture and convey the complexity of community perceptions regarding the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in secondary schools. By employing this methodological approach, the study seeks to generate detailed insights that contribute to a deeper understanding of stakeholders' attitudes and inform evidence-based policy recommendations.

3.5   Justification of the Study Area

The selection of Lindi Municipality as the study area was deliberate and justified by several compelling factors. Lindi Municipality, situated within the Lindi region of Tanzania, was identified due to its notable incidence of teenage pregnancies and the subsequent need for effective implementation of re-entry policies in secondary schools. According to recent statistics from the United Republic of Tanzania (URT, 2021), Lindi region reported a considerable number of teenage pregnancies, with 62 cases identified for school reintegration under existing policies, underscoring the urgency and relevance of examining community perceptions and challenges surrounding this issue.

Moreover, the choice of Lindi Municipality was informed by cultural dynamics prevalent in the region. The researcher observed that Lindi Municipality is deeply

influenced by cultural beliefs that traditionally prioritize girls' roles as wives and mothers over their educational pursuits. This cultural context significantly impacts societal attitudes towards teenage motherhood and reintegration into the educational system. Understanding these cultural influences is crucial for designing effective interventions and policies that promote educational equity and empower teenage mothers to continue their schooling.

The geographical focus on Lindi Municipality allows for a localized examination of community attitudes, institutional responses, and support mechanisms related to the re-entry policy for teenage mothers. By conducting the study in this specific context, the research aims to generate insights that are not only contextually relevant but also applicable to similar settings grappling with similar socio-cultural challenges across Tanzania and potentially in other regions facing comparable issues globally.

Furthermore, the decision to study Lindi Municipality aligns with the broader goal of contributing empirical evidence to inform policy-making and advocacy efforts aimed at enhancing educational opportunities for marginalized groups, particularly teenage mothers. By shedding light on the barriers and facilitators to successful reintegration in Lindi Municipality, the study seeks to advocate for policy reforms that address cultural norms, strengthen support systems, and promote inclusive education practices.

In summary, the selection of Lindi Municipality as the study area is justified by its high incidence of teenage pregnancies, the implementation of re-entry policies, and the pervasive influence of cultural beliefs on educational opportunities for girls. This focused approach aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the

complexities surrounding teenage motherhood in secondary education, thereby contributing to broader discussions on gender equity and educational access in Tanzania and beyond.

3.6   Population of the Study

According to Omary (2011), a population is the complete set of units sharing one or more characteristics of interest to the researcher. Kombo and Tromp (2006) define population as a group of individuals or objects from which information can be gathered. In this study, the target population comprised 212 secondary school teachers, 62 parents of impregnated daughters, and 62 teenage mothers residing in Lindi Municipality.

Table 3.1: Population of the Study

Sample categories	Frequency	Percentage
Parents	62	18.45
Teenage mothers	62	18.45
Teachers	212	63.1
Total	336	100.00

Source: Researcher (2024)

3.7   Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

3.7.1   Sampling Techniques

In this study, two sampling techniques were employed: purposive sampling and simple random sampling. Purposive sampling was utilized to select participants among teenage mothers and parents of impregnated daughters based on specific criteria deemed relevant by the researcher. This methodological choice was driven by

the participants' direct involvement and deep familiarity with the subject matter under investigation. According to Creswell (2011), purposive sampling enables researchers to deliberately select individuals who possess firsthand knowledge and experiences related to the phenomenon of interest. This approach is further supported by Frankael and Wallen (2009), who argue that purposive sampling allows researchers to exercise discretion in choosing participants likely to provide rich and relevant data pertinent to the study's objectives. Thus, purposive sampling was deemed appropriate for identifying and engaging respondents who could offer comprehensive insights into community perceptions and experiences regarding the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in secondary schools.

Conversely, simple random sampling was also employed in this study to ensure a representative selection of participants from the broader community. Simple random sampling involves each member of the population having an equal chance of being selected, thereby minimizing bias and ensuring the generalizability of findings to the larger population (Johnson, 2018). This methodological approach enhances the study's external validity by providing a random and unbiased sample, allowing for broader insights into community perceptions beyond those directly involved in the re-entry policy discussions. As emphasized by Johnson (2018), simple random sampling is essential for statistical inference and ensuring that the findings can be generalized to similar populations or contexts.

Thus, by combining purposive sampling to capture specific expertise and experiences related to teenage motherhood and simple random sampling for broader community perspectives, the study maximized both depth and breadth in understanding the

complexities of community perceptions towards the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in secondary schools.

3.7.2   Sampling Procedures

In this study, two distinct sampling techniques were employed to gather data: purposive sampling and simple random sampling. Each method was selected based on its appropriateness for capturing specific perspectives and ensuring representativeness within the study's scope.

Purposive sampling was utilized to select participants among teenage mothers and parents of impregnated daughters based on specific criteria deemed relevant by the researcher. This methodological choice was driven by the participants' direct involvement and deep familiarity with the subject matter under investigation, namely, community perceptions regarding the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in secondary schools. According to Creswell (2011), purposive sampling allows researchers to intentionally select individuals who possess firsthand knowledge and experiences related to the phenomenon being studied. This deliberate selection approach is further supported by Frankael and Wallen (2009), who argue that purposive sampling enables researchers to exercise discretion in choosing participants likely to provide rich and pertinent data that aligns with the study's objectives. By targeting teenage mothers and parents of impregnated daughters through purposive sampling, the study aimed to capture nuanced insights and experiences crucial for understanding the impacts and perceptions of the re-entry policy. Conversely, simple random sampling was employed to select a sample of secondary school teachers involved in the study. The researcher obtained a list of

teachers' names from the District Education Officer (DEO) and used a random selection process to choose 22 teachers from the list. This involved writing each teacher's name on pieces of paper, placing them in a box, thoroughly mixing them, and then randomly selecting 22 pieces. The use of simple random sampling ensures that every teacher in the population had an equal chance of being included in the study sample. This methodological approach enhances the study's external validity by providing a representative sample of secondary school teachers, thereby allowing for broader generalizations about their perceptions and experiences related to the re-entry policy.

In summary, the choice to employ purposive sampling for selecting teenage mothers and parents of impregnated daughters was justified by its ability to capture specific, relevant experiences and insights. This approach was supported by scholarly perspectives emphasizing the importance of selecting participants with firsthand knowledge of the phenomenon under study. On the other hand, the use of simple random sampling for selecting secondary school teachers ensured fairness and unbiased representation within the broader population, enhancing the study's reliability and the generalizability of findings across similar contexts.

3.7.3   Sample Size

The study involved 34 participants, consisting of 22 secondary school teachers, 6 teenage mothers, and 6 parents. The determination of the sample size was guided by a formula provided by John (1984), who proposed a method called the "rules of thumb." According to this approach, if the population falls between 1 and 100, the sample size should encompass 100% of the population; for populations ranging from

101 to 1000, the sample size should be 10%. On the other hand, Mugenda (2008) suggested different guidelines: for populations below 90, the entire population is included in the sample; for populations between 100 and 1,000, 30% of the population is sampled; for populations between 1,000 and 10,000, 10% is sampled, and for populations above 10,000, 1% is sampled. In this study, the approach introduced by John (1984) was utilized, as the targeted population was 336. Therefore, 10% of this population equated to 33.6, which rounded up to 34 respondents. These respondents included 22 secondary school teachers, 6 parents, and 6 teenage mothers.

Table 3.2: Sample Size of the Study

Sample categories	Frequency	Percentage
Parents	6	17.65
Teenage mothers	6	17.65
Teachers	22	64.7
Total	34	100.00

Source: Researcher (2024)

3.8   Data Collection Methods

To ensure data collection with minimal bias, a combination of methods was employed. The study utilized questionnaires for primary data collection and documentary review for secondary data. Wellington (2000) suggests that employing multiple methods or approaches to investigate a topic significantly enhances accuracy.

3.8.1   Primary Data Collection Tools

A structured questionnaire comprising closed-ended questions in a Likert-scale format was administered to all 34 participants in this study. The questionnaire was designed to systematically collect data from the respondents, focusing on their perceptions and attitudes regarding the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in secondary schools. Prior to distribution, the researcher communicated with the participants to inform them about the designated timelines for receiving and returning the questionnaires. This proactive communication ensured that all respondents were aware of their roles and responsibilities in the data collection process, thereby promoting timely and efficient data collection procedures.

3.8.2   Secondary Data Collection Tools

The researcher conducted a comprehensive review of a variety of documents, including research reports from diverse regions, scholarly journals, and relevant media sources pertinent to the study. This extensive document review served as a crucial method for gathering secondary data. As emphasized by Yin (2014), secondary data obtained through literature review plays a pivotal role in validating and enriching the primary data collected on-site. By scrutinizing existing literature, the researcher aimed to corroborate findings, deepen understanding, and contextualize the primary data within the broader body of knowledge on the topic. This approach not only facilitated a thorough exploration of the research area but also ensured that the study benefitted from a comprehensive synthesis of both primary and secondary data sources.

3.9   Data Analysis

Fraenkel & Wallen (2009) assert that data analysis involves the researcher making sense of gathered information regarding a phenomenon under study, with the aim of elucidating it. In this study, the collected data were subjected to narrative analysis. Initially, the data were processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 to obtain frequencies and percentages, which were later subjected to narrative analysis. Quantitative data which were in numeric form, such as frequencies and percentages, were utilized to draw conclusions, establish relationships or comparisons between variables, and interpret the data, while narrative analysis focused on textual data.

3.10   Data Cleaning and Processing

The data collected from the field were analyzed using frequencies and percentages, which were calculated for all variables, and the information was presented in the form of frequency tables. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to effectively describe the distribution of scores or measurements using a few key indices, as suggested by Mugenda & Mugenda (2008).

To interpret the data collected through Likert Scale responses, the researcher employed the "Collapsing Response" method. This involved combining the percentage of 'strongly disagree' responses with 'disagree' responses (SD + D), and similarly, combining the percentage of 'strongly agree' responses with 'agree' responses (SA + A).

3.11   Validity of Research Instruments

Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure, as described by Kothari (2019). It represents the research tool's capacity to measure its intended target. In this study, the validity of the data was enhanced through a test and retest procedure. This involved administering the pilot questionnaires to 10 respondents and observing whether they aligned with the study's objectives.

3.12   Reliability of Research Instruments

According to Kothari (2019), reliability of an instrument refers to the extent of consistency in measuring a variable or the consistency in the results or data obtained from repeated trials. In this study, a pilot study involving 10 respondents, who were not part of the final sample, was conducted. The data collected during the pilot phase were assessed for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha reliability test. The instruments were deemed sufficiently reliable if they yielded a value lower than 0.7, which is the recommended threshold.

3.13   Ethical Considerations

Creswell (2018) highlighted that ethical considerations entail obtaining participants' informed consent and ensuring privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. The researcher upheld confidentiality regarding respondents' responses and ensured anonymity by not collecting or disclosing any personal identifiers such as names or ID numbers. Participants were informed of the research's purpose before completing the questionnaire, and they were not compelled to participate if they were unwilling.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the field and further analyzes and discusses the responses of the study's respondents. The aim of analyzing the data is to address the objectives of the study, which focused on evaluating the Community Perceptions of Teenage Mothers' Re-Entry Policy in Secondary Schools. The analysis centered on specific objectives, including exploring community perceptions regarding the implementation of the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in schools, assessing the impact of this policy on African culture, and identifying challenges faced by teenage mothers re-entering public secondary schools in Lindi Municipality. Both descriptive and inferential analyses were employed in the study, with the discussion of the findings centered on the general objective of evaluating Community Perceptions of Teenage Mothers' Re-Entry Policy in Secondary Schools in Lindi Municipality, Lindi region.

4.2   Response Rate

The researcher distributed 34 questionnaires and conducted interview with all 34 respondents. All 34 questionnaires were returned and filled out, resulting in a response rate of 100% for the distributed questionnaires. As noted by Kothari (2019), a response rate exceeding 70% is considered excellent for study results. Therefore, achieving a 100% response rate was deemed excellent, providing ample evidence for analysis and drawing inferences in this study.

4.3   Demographic Characteristics

This section presents the demographic characteristics of respondents who involved in the study. Characteristics of respondents were important to be assessed because they had essential features in relation to this study. Descriptive statistics analysis was applied to compute frequencies and percentage for the characteristics of the respondents. The characteristics of the respondents which were determined and analyzed in this study included: respondents' sex, respondents' age groups, and respondents' levels of education.

Table 4.1 depicts that the number of females exceeded the number of males. Females were 19 equivalents to (55.9%) and males were 15 equivalents to (44.1). These findings imply that most of the responses came from females and this was because females were the ones who were supposed to execute the teenage mothers' re-entry policy. These findings also imply that the researcher considered the issue of gender equality during data collection.

The study was also interested to find out the age of respondents who involved in the study. Findings of the study revealed that the majority 20 equivalents to (58.8%) of respondents were in the age group of 36-55 years, 12 equivalents to (35.3%) were in the age group of 18-35 years, and very few 2 equivalents to (5.9%) were in the age group of 56 and above years. This suggests that respondents of various age groups participated, with the dominant group being36-55 years old indicating their maturity in providing insights into community perceptions regarding the implementation of teenage mothers' re-entry policy. This is similar to Nkurunzinza et al, (2020) noted that respondents who are 36 and above years are matured enough to provide reliable

information in research because they have great life experience than young ones. Regarding to this view the researcher collected information from matured respondents and thus they provided relevant insights.

Furthermore, the study sought to identify the education levels of the respondents. The findings showed that the majority, 15 respondents or 44.1%, had secondary education, followed by 12 respondents or 35.3% with a university education, 6 respondents or 17.6% with college education, and 1 respondent or 2.9% with primary education. These results suggest that the data were collected from respondents who possessed sufficient education to engage in discussions related to this study. This is similar to Wamahiu and Isoe, (2020) established that collecting data from sufficient educated respondents enables the researcher to collect relevant information since educated respondents have high thinking and reasoning capacity in discussing issues. It is in this view the researcher collected data from respondents who had sufficient education to discuss the topic under study.

Table 4.1:. Demographic Characteristics

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	15	44.1
Female	19	55.9
Respondents' Age Groups	Frequency	Percent
18-35	12	35.3
36-55	20	58.8
56 and above	2	5.9
Respondents' Education Levels	Frequency	Percent
Primary level	1	2.9
Secondary level	15	44.1
College level	6	17.6
University level	12	35.3
Total	**34**	**100.0**

Source: Field Data, 2024

4.4 Discussion of the Findings

The main aim of this study was to assess the Community Perceptions of Teenage Mothers' Re-Entry Policy in Secondary Schools. To achieve this goal, respondents were presented with a series of questions via questionnaires and interview. Their responses were gauged using interview and a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, indicating from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" with the statements provided. Descriptive statistics were employed as measures to evaluate these perceptions within the community regarding the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in secondary schools.

4.4.1 Community Perceptions on the Implementation of the Re-Entry Policy of Teenage Mothers to School

The study aimed to investigate community perceptions regarding the implementation of the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in schools. To achieve this goal, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with several statements and then they were interviewed. These statements included: allowing impregnated students to continue their studies would negatively influence the behaviour of other female students, readmitting impregnated students to school would help females achieve their educational goals, allowing impregnated students to continue their studies would contradict cultural values, and re-entering impregnated school girls into schools would enable females to have a better future, which is contrary to our culture. The findings of the study are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics for Community Perceptions on the Implementation of the Re-Entry Policy of Teenage Mothers to School

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
To allow the impregnated student to continue with studies is to spoil the behavior of other female student	10 (29.4%)	5 (14.7%)	8 (23.5%)	6 (17.6%)	5 (14.7%)
Readmitting impregnated students to school is to enable females to achieve their education objectives	15 (44.1%)	6 (17.6%)	7 (20.6%)	2 (5.9%)	4 (11.8%)
To allow impregnated students to continue with studies is to break away the cultural values	3 (7.1%)	9 (26.6%)	6 (17.6%)	9 (26.5%)	7 (20.6%)
To re-enter schools the impregnated school girls is to enable females have a better future	12 (35.3%)	12 (35.3%)	3 (8.8%)	4 (11.8%)	3 (8.8%)

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 4.2 illustrates that 15 respondents (44.1%) agreed with the statement that allowing impregnated students to continue their studies would negatively influence the behavior of other female students, while 11 respondents (32.3%) disagreed, and the remaining 8 respondents (23.5%) were neutral. These findings suggest that the community perceives allowing impregnated students to continue their studies as potentially detrimental to the behavior of other female students. These findings were similar to teacher 1 who during interview said

> *"To allow the impregnated student who were expelled from school due to their pregnancies to continue with studies is to spoil the behavior of other female student to engage in sex intercourse as they will see engaging into sex relations will not affect their schooling program"*

These findings align with those of Nkata et al. (2021), who found that while pregnant students were permitted to re-enter schools, this was mandated by law and regulations, leading to dissatisfaction among community members who feared it would negatively influence other students. Dlamni (2016) also supports these findings, noting that in Swaziland, community members perceive teenage mothers' re-entry to school as bringing shame and moral decline to society. Similarly, Adangabe (2021) aligns with these findings as he revealed that the majority of teachers in west India perceived returning teenage mothers to school is to bring failure to these students because teenage mothers have low self-esteem, poor time management, role conflict and poor support from their families and relatives

Furthermore, Table 4.2 reveals that 21 respondents (61.7%) agreed that readmitting impregnated students to school would help females achieve their educational goals,

while 7 respondents (20.6%) were neutral, and 6 respondents (17.6%) disagreeing. These findings suggest that most community members perceive readmitting impregnated students to school as conducive to achieving educational objectives for females. These findings were concurrent with the teenage mother 3 who when she was interviewed on how she thought about the community views on teenage mothers returning to school under the re-entry policy she said

> *"As a community member, she perceived readmitting impregnated students to school as a good thing because this will enable female student who have been impregnated to achieve their educational objectives and hence improve their life standards".*

This aligns with Masemola's (2015) argument that supporting teenage mothers can facilitate their educational goals. Contrasting Ferguson's (2017) view that some community members believe schools are not meant for pregnant teenagers. Cohen, Loeb & Miller (2020) also contrast these findings as they established that school principals in New York have mixed reactions and feelings on the approaches to implementing re-entry policy of teenage mothers. Some principals felt that policies are designed to have a natural course of implementation once rolled out. They assume that they are not directly confronted with the responsibility of ensuring the policy works when it encounters challenges during challenges.

Additionally, Table 4.2 indicates that 16 respondents (41.7%) disagreed with the notion that allowing impregnated students to continue their studies would break cultural values, while 12 respondents (33.7%) agreed, and 6 respondents (17.6%) were neutral. These findings suggest that the community opposes the idea that allowing impregnated students to continue their studies would undermine cultural

values. On the other side these findings were contrary to parent 2 who when she was interviewed about how she thought the re-entry policy affects the social dynamics within schools and communities she said

> *"To me the idea of allowing impregnated students to continue their studies undermines our cultural beliefs. Since I was young I have never seen a daughter with a child going to school to study. It was believed since the old days that if a daughter delivers a child she has to stay at home and take care of her baby"*

The findings obtained from the questionnaires align with Ananda (2019) established that there is no relationship between allowing teenage mothers to resume their studies after delivery and cultural values. Secondary education is an essential link in the preparation of human capital for development and life opportunities. This contrasts with the views of Maluli and Bali (2011), who argued that readmitting teenage mothers contradicts Tanzanian cultural values, and Samati (2014), who found similar perceptions among parents in Malawi.

Lastly, Table 4.2 reveals that 24 respondents (70.6%) agreed that re-entering impregnated school girls into schools would enable females to have a better future, while 7 respondents (20.6%) disagreed, and 3 respondents (8.8%) were neutral. These findings suggest that the community believes re-entering impregnated school girls into schools would lead to a brighter future for females. These findings concur with teenage mother 5 when she was interviewed about the community believes on re-entering impregnated school girls into schools to brighten their future she said

> *"For sure re-entering impregnated school girls into schools would brighten their education future and would enable females to have a*

better future. I think these girls would be very careful with the second chance given to them. The views of some community members that re-entering impregnated school girls into schools is impossible is a wrong view"

This sentiment is supported by Nsalamba & Simpande (2019). Similarly, Muthkwa (2020) aligns with these findings as he established that girls' retention at all educational levels is significantly related to brightening their future. Tarus (2020), however, found contrasting views, with some parents perceiving re-admitting pregnant students as beneficial for long-term social and economic outcomes.

4.4.2 The Impact of Implementation of the Re-Entry Policy of Teenage Mothers To School on African Culture

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of implementing the re-entry policy for teenage mothers into schools on African culture. To accomplish this objective, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with several statements and respond to questions during interview. These statements included: the belief that the re-entry policy leads to economic loss because parents will not receive bride price from girls who were pregnant, the notion that the re-entry policy undermines the African cultural belief that girls are destined for marriage rather than education, the observation that the re-entry policy affects the superiority and status of the culture, particularly regarding the maturity of pregnant girls, and the assertion that the teenage mothers' re-entry policy contributes to moral decay in African culture by condoning sexual activity. The findings of the study are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistics for the Impact of Implementation of the Re-entry Policy of Teenage Mothers to School on African Culture.

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
The re-entry policy of teenage mothers to schools leads to economic loss because parents will not receive bride price from girls who are pregnant	6 (17.6%)	5 (14.7%)	2 (5.9%)	12 (35.3%)	9 (26.5%)
The re-entry policy spoils the African culture that believes girls are born to be married and not to study	5 (14.7%)	1 (2.9%)	1 (2.9%)	14 (41.2%)	13 (38.2%)
The re-entry policy has affected the superiority and status of the culture especially that of a pregnant girl is matured	6 (17.6%)	10 (29.4%)	5 (14.7%)	9 (26.5%)	4 (11.8%)
The teenage mothers' re-entry policy has brought moral decay to African culture because this is to allow others engage in sex intercourse	8 (23.5%)	8 (23.5%)	4 (11.8%)	9 (26.5%)	5 (14.7%)

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 4.3 indicates that 21 respondents (61.8%) disagreed with the notion that the re-entry policy for teenage mothers into schools leads to economic loss because parents will not receive bride price from girls who were pregnant, while 11 respondents (32.3%) agreed, and the remaining 2 respondents (5.9%) were neutral. These findings suggest that the community does not perceive the implementation of the re-entry policy for teenage mothers as causing economic loss due to the absence of

bride price. These findings align with the responses of parent 4 when he was responding to the view that the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to schools leads to economic loss because parents will not receive bride price from girls who are pregnant, he said

> *"This is not true that the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to schools has brought economic loss because parents will not receive bride price from girls who are pregnant. Economic growth of the family does not depend on bride price which is provided once but it depends on the economic activities that a family performs. To me this is an opportunity to females who have lost their hope to be back to school"*

However, this contrasts with the views reported by Mweemba et al. (2019) in Malawi, where some parents believe that when a girl becomes pregnant, it is time for parents to receive bride price as they are considered old enough for marriage. These preferences are rooted in gender norms that prioritize girls' roles as wives and mothers. Similarly, Wekesa (2014) noted in Kenya that pregnant students are seen as potential sources of bride price, and schools admitting teenage mothers are stigmatized as "maternity schools."

Furthermore, Table 4.3 reveals that 27 respondents (79.4%) disagreed that the re-entry policy undermines the African culture's belief that girls are meant for marriage rather than education, while 6 respondents (17.6%) agreed, and 1 respondent (2.9%) was neutral. These findings imply that the re-entry policy does not compromise the African cultural belief regarding girls' roles. This is similar to teacher 3 whose views on the idea that the re-entry policy spoils the African culture that believes girls are born to be married and not to study she said

> *"I think these are the outdated views that girls are born to be married and not to study. The system of life nowadays require both men and women to struggle during the day and bring something at home in the evening. So thinking that girls are there just to be married this is wrong point of view. Education is the right of every individual regardless of the biological makeup"*

However, Mushibwe (2018) found in Zambia that some parents oppose the re-entry policy, fearing it would promote moral decay and challenge the belief that girls are destined for marriage and motherhood. Britwum et al. (2017) also argue that the re-entry policy may lead to immoral behavior among female students due to socio-cultural factors and gendered norms.

Moreover, Table 4.3 indicates that 16 respondents (47.0%) agreed that the re-entry policy has affected the status of the culture, particularly regarding the maturity of pregnant girls, while 13 respondents (38.3%) disagreed, and 5 respondents (14.7%) were neutral. These findings suggest that the re-entry policy has indeed impacted the cultural perception of the maturity of pregnant girls. These findings align with parent 1 who when he was required to give his views on the re-entry policy to affect the superiority and status of the culture especially that of a pregnant girl is matured, he said

> *"On one side it is the fact that the re-entry policy has affected the superiority and status of the culture especially that of a pregnant girl is matured. I say this in the sense that a child cannot be pregnant so if it happens that a girl becomes pregnant she is matured and she deserves to be married"*

This aligns with Ahorlu, Pfeiffer, and Obrist (2015) argue that allowing pregnant students to return to school contradicts cultural norms where pregnancy is seen as a sign of maturity. Similarly, Martinez and Odhiambo (2018) note that some religious leaders view the re-entry policy as conflicting with cultural beliefs about teenage pregnancy.

Additionally, Table 4.3 reveals that 16 respondents (47.0%) agreed that the teenage mothers' re-entry policy has contributed to moral decay in African culture by condoning sexual activity, while 14 respondents (41.2%) disagreed, and 4 respondents (11.8%) were neutral. These findings suggest that the re-entry policy may indeed lead to moral decay in African culture by normalizing teenage pregnancy and premarital sexual activity. Teacher 6 aligns with this views as during interview on the teenage mothers' re-entry policy has contributed to moral decay in African culture by condoning sexual activity, he said

> *"I support the view that the teenage mothers' re-entry policy has contributed to moral decay in African culture. To me to allow the impregnated girls to be back to school is to allow sexual relations to students. Through this policy girl students can engage into sexual intercourse knowing that if they become pregnant, they will come back to school after delivery"*

Baa-Poku (2016) and Aparicio et al. (2014) both align with these findings as they observe that the re-entry policy may encourage immoral behavior among female students, leading to increased sexual activity and violations of ethical principles.

4.4.3 Challenges Facing Teenage Mothers Who Re-Entered Public Secondary Schools in Lindi Municipality

The study aimed to identify challenges faced by teenage mothers who re-enter public secondary schools in implementing the re-entry policy. To achieve this objective, respondents were asked during interview and to indicate their level of agreement with several statements. These statements included: teenage mothers being stigmatized or separated from students who are not mothers, teenage mothers lacking financial support from their family members and partners to afford basic needs for their babies and school expenses, teenage mothers encountering a lack of academic support from teachers due to perceptions that they require more academic assistance, teenage mothers expressing discomfort studying in the same class as non-parent students, and teenage mothers struggling to balance their studies with motherhood responsibilities. The findings of the study are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Descriptive Statistics for Challenges Facing Teenage Mothers Who Re-Entered Public Secondary Schools in Lindi Municipality

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
Teenage mothers are stigmatized or separated from students who are not mothers	16 (47.1%)	13 (38.2%)	2 (5.9%)		3 (8.8%)
Teenage mothers lack financial support from their family member and their partners to enable them afford basic needs for their babies and for school needs	12 (35.3%)	10 (29.4%)	9 (26.5%)	1 (2.9%)	2 (5.9%)
Teenage mother face the challenge of having no academic support from teachers because teachers	6 (17.6%)	11 (32.4%)	9 (26.5%)	2 (5.9%)	6 (17.6%)

think teenage mothers need more academic support					
Teenage mothers are not happy to study in the same class with students who are not parents	11 (32.4%)	15 (44.1%)	2 (5.9%)	3 (8.8%)	3 (8.8%)
Teenage mothers are faced with the challenge of balancing studies and mothering	18 (52.9%)	10 (29.4%)	2 (5.9%)	2 (5.9%)	2 (5.9%)

Source: Field Data (2024)

The findings presented in Table 4.4 indicate that 29 (85.5%) of all respondents agreed with the statement that teenage mothers are stigmatized or separated from students who are not mothers, while 3 (8.8%) disagreed and 2 (5.9%) were neutral. These findings suggest that teenage mothers face the challenge of being stigmatized or separated from their peers who are not mothers. This is similar to teenage mother 2 when she was required to respond to the question demanded her to state the main challenges that teenage mothers face when they return to public secondary schools, she said

> *"There are several challenges that teenage mothers face when they come back to school after delivery. To me the major challenge that I face is to be stigmatized by my fellow students. Some of our fellow students like calling us mothers the situation that sometimes makes me be very disappointed"*

This aligns with the observations of Chiyota (2020) and Enricho et al. (2020), who noted instances of teenage mothers being stigmatized and bullied by their fellow students, reflecting the challenges they encounter in social integration. Ahikireand & Madanda (2011) also aligns with these findings as his study found out that in most

cultural settings, pre-marital pregnancy among girls is stigmatized both in school and in communities mainly on moralistic grounds, without addressing factors that lead to pregnancy among school girls. Most times school careers of many girls are cut short because of pregnancy either by the girls withdrawing themselves from school or through expulsion with little or no chance of re-entry after delivery

Furthermore, Table 4.4 reveals that 22 (64.7%) of all respondents agreed that teenage mothers lack financial support from their family members and partners to afford basic needs for their babies and for school needs, with 9 (26.5%) being neutral and 3 (8.8%) disagreeing. These findings suggest that teenage mothers often do not receive adequate financial support from their families or partners to meet the needs of their babies and cover their educational expenses. This aligns with teacher 5 when he was responding to interview questions during interview session he said

> *"Most of the teenage mothers who have returned to school in implanting the teenage mothers' re-entry policy they do not receive adequate financial and material support from their families or partners to meet the needs of their babies and cover their educational expenses. It is a normal thing sometimes to see them they do not have the class requirements such as exercise books, pens and issues like that"*

This is consistent with the findings of Molapo et al. (2014) and Nkosi and Pretorius (2019), who observed similar financial challenges faced by teenage mothers due to lack of support from their families and partners. Mallanhanse, Alias, & Bidin, (2020) also align with these findings as they established that the lack of support from families and friends to encourage the teenage mother to stay in school and their own immaturity can make it hard for her to continue with her schooling, as she does not

have the motivation from those near and dear to her. By not providing the necessary encouragement, she may feel unable to complete her schooling because she does not have the needed support structure in place

Moreover, the findings indicate that 17 (50.0%) of all respondents agreed that teenage mothers face the challenge of receiving inadequate academic support from teachers, as teachers often perceive them as needing more academic assistance. This is similar to teenage mother 2 who during interview said

> *"I as a teenage mother face a lot of challenges. Some of these changes are caused by my fellow students, others are caused by my family members and others are caused by teachers. On the side of teachers, some of them refute giving me academic support claiming that I need much time to be supported because I have two roles of studying and raising up my child. So much time is needed for me and teachers have scheduled time for executing their duties"*

This resonates with the observations of Chigona and Chetty (2017) and Masemola (2017), who highlighted the reluctance of teachers to provide academic support to pregnant students and teenage mothers, reflecting negative attitudes towards them in educational settings. Bhana & Shefer (2012) are contrary to these findings as they observed that, school and teachers' academic support to teenage mothers is a crucial factor in determining whether a teenage mother is able to continue her education or not. Knowing this, teachers' willingness in Uganda to accommodate and provide academic support to teenage mothers is high.

Additionally, Table 4.4 shows that 26 (76.5%) of all respondents agreed that teenage mothers are not happy to study in the same class with students who are not parents, 4

(11.8%) disagreeing and 2 (5.9%) being neutral. This suggests that teenage mothers may feel uncomfortable studying alongside non-parent students. These findings align with teenage mother 4 who reported during interview that

> *"It is true teenage mothers are not happy to study in the same class with students who are not parents. Sometimes our fellow students who are not parents bully us by intimidating us. They sometimes stigmatize, insult and label us. It is very paining we seem to be as if we do not deserve to be educated simply because we are mothers"*

These responses align with UNICEF (2018) and UNESCO (2017), who advocate for the establishment of special programs or schools to accommodate teenage mothers and provide them with a supportive learning environment. Muganda-Onyando and Omondi (2008), girls who become pregnant while still in school are often expelled despite the existence of the re-entry policy guidelines where such girls are allowed to return to school after delivery, some of them are not happy to be in the same class with non-parent students because of the moral stigma associated with teenage pregnancy. Some head teachers are not kindly enough to give the teenage mothers space in school and are viewed as mixing bad potatoes with good ones and is viewed as likely to have a negative impact on the other girls.

Lastly, the findings reveal that 28 (82.3%) of all respondents agreed that teenage mothers face the challenge of balancing studies and motherhood, 6 (17.6%) disagreeing and 2 (5.9%) being neutral. This indicates that teenage mothers struggle to balance their academic responsibilities with their duties as mothers, which may lead to dropout rates. This is concurrent to teenage mother 5 when she was

interviewed on how teenage mothers balance their time for studies and mothering she said

> *"For sure teenage mothers face the challenge of balancing studies and motherhood. Sometimes it becomes difficult to handle two responsibilities of accomplishing assignments provided by teachers and suckling a child who cries for requiring being fed by her mother. All of the two activities requires the same person to perform at the same time so it is a challenging."*

This is also noted by Zuilkowski et al. (2019) and Nyariro (2018), emphasizing the importance of social and economic support in enabling teenage mothers to effectively manage their education and childcare responsibilities.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study based on the findings of the study revealed and discussed in chapter four

5.2   Summary of the Study

This study aimed to assess the Community Perceptions of Teenage Mothers' Re-Entry Policy in Secondary Schools, focusing on three key aspects: community perceptions regarding the implementation of the re-entry policy, the policy's impact on African culture, and the challenges faced by teenage mothers re-entering public secondary schools in Lindi Municipality.

Regarding the first objective, the community perceived that allowing impregnated students to continue their studies might negatively influence the behavior of other female students. However, they believed that readmitting impregnated students could help females achieve their education objectives without compromising cultural values. Furthermore, they saw re-entering schools as an opportunity for impregnated schoolgirls to have a better future.

Concerning the second objective, the community did not view the implementation of the re-entry policy as leading to economic loss through the loss of bride price. They also disagreed that the policy undermines the traditional belief that girls are meant for marriage rather than education. However, they acknowledged that the policy may

have affected the cultural status, especially considering the maturity of pregnant girls, and brought about moral decay.

Finally, regarding the third objective, teenage mothers faced various challenges upon re-entering schools. They encountered stigma and separation from non-mother students, lacked financial support from family and partners for their and their babies' needs, received inadequate academic support from teachers, felt uncomfortable studying with non-parent students, and struggled to balance their academic and mothering responsibilities.

5.3   Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, several conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, education is considered a fundamental right for every individual in our country, providing opportunities for positive thinking and job creation. Therefore, the government's decision to reintegrate impregnated students into schools is seen as favorable, aligning with the right to education. While the community generally supports the re-entry policy, concerns about potential negative impacts, such as the influence on the behavior of other students, need to be addressed. However, the majority of community members view re-entry as a means for impregnated students to achieve their educational objectives, which is essential for ensuring equal access to education and fostering a better future for females. Contrary to concerns, the re-entry policy is not seen as conflicting with cultural values; rather, education itself is often associated with challenging traditional customs, not the act of impregnated students returning to school.

Secondly, the implementation of the re-entry policy has both positive and negative impacts on African Values. Positively, the community does not perceive the policy as causing economic loss, as it challenges the notion that parents will not receive bride price for pregnant girls returning to school. Additionally, the policy is not seen as undermining cultural beliefs regarding the role of girls in marriage versus education. However, negatively, the policy has affected the perceived status of pregnant girls and brought about moral concerns within the community.

Thirdly, re-entered teenage mothers face various challenges at individual, family, and school levels. At the individual level, they struggle with feelings of discomfort studying alongside non-parent students and balancing their academic responsibilities with motherhood. Financial support from family members and partners is lacking, impacting their ability to meet basic needs for themselves and their babies. At the school level, they face stigma and separation from their peers, as well as a lack of academic support from teachers who may perceive them as needing additional assistance. These challenges highlight the need for comprehensive support systems to ensure the successful reintegration of teenage mothers into the school environment.

5.4   Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and the drawn conclusion, the following recommendations are made.

5.4.1   Recommendations to the Government

In order to address the challenges of maintaining good behavior among students and supporting re-admitted teenage mothers, it is essential for the government to consider

comprehensive mechanisms that encompass both behavioral support and targeted assistance programs.

Firstly, developing a comprehensive behavioral support program is crucial. Implementing positive behavior Interventions and supports can provide a structured framework that encourages positive behavior in schools through consistent reinforcement, clear expectations, and data-driven strategies. Additionally, regular access to counseling services and mentorship programs can offer students the guidance and support they need from trained professionals or senior students. Engaging parents and the community in school activities and behavioral programs can further foster a supportive environment both at home and school.

For re-admitted teenage mothers, tailored educational plans are necessary to address their unique academic and personal needs. Individualized education plans can ensure these students receive the necessary support to succeed. Flexible learning options, such as part-time classes and online courses, can accommodate the needs of teenage mothers who may have childcare responsibilities. Establishing childcare facilities within or near schools provides a safe and convenient option, allowing teenage mothers to focus on their studies while ensuring their children are cared for. Additionally, creating support groups for teenage mothers can offer a platform to share experiences and receive emotional support, while access to counseling services can address any psychological or social challenges they may face. Offering financial assistance and scholarships specifically targeted at re-admitted teenage mothers can help alleviate economic barriers to their continued education.

Policy and advocacy play a pivotal role in ensuring the success of these initiatives. Government policies that support the educational continuity of teenage mothers and promote positive student behavior should be integrated into national education strategies. Launching awareness campaigns can raise the profile of these issues among stakeholders such as educators, parents, and policymakers, highlighting the importance of maintaining positive behavior in schools and supporting re-admitted teenage mothers.

By implementing these comprehensive strategies, the government can create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. This approach not only promotes positive behavior among all students but also provides the necessary support for re-admitted teenage mothers to thrive in their academic pursuits. Such efforts are essential for fostering an educational system that is equitable and supportive of all students, regardless of their personal circumstances.

5.4.2   Recommendations to Key Policy Implementers

Teachers play a critical role in the successful implementation of the re-entry policy for teenage mothers who have chosen to continue their education after giving birth. To ensure that these students receive the support they need and are fully integrated into the school community, several key recommendations should be considered.

Teachers are advised to actively support and facilitate the academic progress of re-admitted teenage mothers. This includes creating an inclusive and welcoming classroom environment that recognizes and respects their unique circumstances. Teachers should be proactive in understanding the specific challenges that teenage mothers may face, such as balancing academic responsibilities with childcare, and

provide accommodations where necessary. This could involve offering additional academic support, such as tutoring or flexible deadlines for assignments, to help them keep up with their studies.

Furthermore, it is recommended that teenage mothers be integrated into regular classes alongside their peers, rather than being isolated or stigmatized. Ensuring that they participate in the same academic and extracurricular activities as their classmates helps to foster a sense of normalcy and belonging. Teachers should emphasize the importance of treating all students equally and with respect, and actively work to prevent any form of discrimination or stigma against teenage mothers.

Professional development and training for teachers on how to support re-admitted teenage mothers can enhance their ability to provide effective assistance. This training can include strategies for creating inclusive lesson plans, addressing the specific needs of teenage mothers, and promoting a supportive classroom culture. Additionally, collaboration with school counselors, social workers, and other support staff can help teachers address any social, emotional, or academic challenges that teenage mothers may encounter.

Building strong relationships with the families of teenage mothers is also crucial. Teachers should engage with parents and caregivers to understand the home environment and to discuss ways to support the student's educational journey. This partnership can provide a comprehensive support system that encourages the teenage mother's continued education and overall well-being. In summary, teachers are advised to create a supportive and inclusive environment for teenage mothers who

return to school after giving birth. By facilitating their academic progress, integrating them into regular classes, and preventing isolation and stigma, teachers can help these students succeed. Professional development, collaboration with support staff, and strong family engagement are essential components of this approach. Implementing these recommendations can ensure that teenage mothers receive the necessary support to continue their education and achieve their academic goals.

Teenage mothers who have made the courageous decision to return to school after giving birth as the key implementers of this policy should be commended and supported in their efforts to continue their education. To maximize their chances of success, several recommendations can be provided to help them navigate their unique challenges and seize the opportunities available to them.

Firstly, it is essential for re-admitted teenage mothers to approach their studies with a positive attitude, embracing the opportunity to learn alongside their non-parent peers. Viewing their return to school as a fresh start and a chance to build a better future for themselves and their children can foster motivation and resilience. Maintaining a positive mindset can help them overcome any feelings of isolation or self-doubt they may encounter. Effective time management is crucial for teenage mothers balancing their academic responsibilities with caring for their babies. They are advised to create a structured schedule that allocates specific times for studying, attending classes, and fulfilling their parenting duties. Utilizing planners, calendars, or digital tools can help them organize their tasks and ensure that both their educational and parental responsibilities are met. Seeking advice from school counselors or mentors on time management strategies can provide additional support. Prioritizing self-care is

another important aspect for teenage mothers. Ensuring they get adequate rest, nutrition, and personal time can help them maintain their physical and mental well-being. It's important for them to recognize the significance of taking care of themselves to be able to effectively care for their children and succeed in their studies.

Building a support network is invaluable. Teenage mothers are encouraged to seek support from family members, friends, and school staff who can offer assistance and encouragement. Engaging with peer support groups, where they can share experiences and advice with other teenage mothers, can also provide emotional support and practical tips. Knowing that they are not alone in their journey can boost their confidence and sense of belonging.

In addition, utilizing available resources is key. Schools often provide various forms of support, such as counseling services, tutoring, and childcare facilities. Teenage mothers should be proactive in seeking out and taking advantage of these resources to help them manage their academic and personal responsibilities effectively. Communicating openly with teachers about their circumstances can also lead to additional accommodations and support tailored to their needs.

Setting realistic goals and celebrating achievements, no matter how small, can help teenage mothers stay motivated and focused. Breaking down larger academic tasks into manageable steps and acknowledging their progress can provide a sense of accomplishment and drive them to continue striving for success.

Lastly, maintaining open communication with their children's caregivers and teachers is important. Keeping everyone informed about their schedule and any changes can ensure that their support network is aligned and prepared to assist them when needed.

In conclusion, teenage mothers who return to school are advised to embrace their educational opportunities with a positive mindset and effectively manage their time between studying and caring for their babies. By prioritizing self-care, building a strong support network, utilizing available resources, setting realistic goals, and maintaining open communication, they can create a balanced and supportive environment that fosters their academic success and personal well-being.

5.4.3 Recommendations to Community Members

Community members, including families and social workers, have a pivotal role in supporting teenage mothers who have decided to return to school after giving birth. By offering financial assistance and other forms of support, the community can help ensure that these young mothers have the resources they need to succeed academically while also caring for their children.

Families and community members are encouraged to offer financial assistance to teenage mothers who have returned to school. This support can be crucial in helping them cover the costs of essential items for both their babies and their education. Financial contributions can be directed towards purchasing baby supplies, such as diapers, formula, and clothing, as well as educational materials, including textbooks, school uniforms, and stationery. This assistance can alleviate the financial burden on teenage mothers, allowing them to focus more on their studies and less on the immediate economic pressures. In addition to direct financial assistance, community

members can also provide in-kind support. Donations of baby items, school supplies, and other necessary resources can make a significant difference in the lives of teenage mothers. Community-driven initiatives, such as organizing fundraisers, supply drives, or creating support networks, can mobilize resources and foster a collective effort to support these young mothers.

Emotional and social support from the community is equally important. Creating a supportive and non-judgmental environment can help teenage mothers feel valued and encouraged. Community members can offer mentorship and guidance, helping these young mothers navigate the challenges they face. By sharing their own experiences and offering advice, mentors can provide valuable insights and emotional support that can boost the confidence and resilience of teenage mothers.

Moreover, local businesses and organizations can play a vital role by offering part-time employment opportunities or internships to teenage mothers. Flexible work arrangements that accommodate their school schedules can provide them with additional income while also gaining work experience. This practical support can enhance their financial stability and contribute to their overall personal and professional development.

Community members can also advocate for policies and programs that support teenage mothers. By working together with local government and educational institutions, they can help develop initiatives that provide comprehensive support for teenage mothers, including childcare services, scholarships, and counseling programs. In conclusion, families and community members are encouraged to offer both financial and in-kind assistance to teenage mothers returning to school. By

helping cover the costs of essential items for their babies and education, and providing emotional, social, and practical support, the community can create a nurturing environment that enables these young mothers to succeed. Collective efforts, including advocacy and the development of supportive programs, can ensure that teenage mothers have the resources and opportunities they need to continue their education and build a brighter future for themselves and their children.

Social workers as part of community members also play a vital role in ensuring the successful reintegration of teenage mothers into the educational system. Their expertise and support are crucial in addressing the unique challenges these young mothers face and in helping them achieve their academic and personal goals. To effectively support teenage mothers returning to school, social workers should consider the following recommendations:

Social workers are encouraged to adopt a holistic approach when supporting re-admitted teenage mothers. This involves addressing not only their educational needs but also their emotional, social, and economic well-being. By understanding the multifaceted challenges these young mothers face, social workers can provide comprehensive support that fosters their overall development and success.

One of the primary roles of social workers is to conduct thorough assessments of the needs and circumstances of teenage mothers. This includes evaluating their academic readiness, emotional health, financial situation, and childcare arrangements. Through these assessments, social workers can develop individualized support plans that address each mother's specific needs and goals. Creating a supportive and non-judgmental environment is crucial. Social workers should build trusting relationships

with teenage mothers, offering a safe space for them to express their concerns and aspirations. By fostering an atmosphere of understanding and empathy, social workers can help these young mothers feel valued and supported.

Advocacy is another key responsibility for social workers. They should advocate for policies and programs that support the re-entry of teenage mothers into the educational system. This includes working with schools, local government, and community organizations to ensure that appropriate resources and accommodations are available. Social workers can also advocate for the rights of teenage mothers, ensuring they are treated with dignity and respect within the school environment.

Facilitating access to resources is a critical aspect of social workers' roles. They should connect teenage mothers with available services, such as counseling, tutoring, financial assistance, and childcare. By helping these young mothers navigate the resources available to them, social workers can reduce barriers to their education and well-being. Providing continuous support and monitoring progress is essential. Social workers should maintain regular contact with teenage mothers, offering ongoing guidance and assistance as they navigate their academic journey. This includes monitoring their academic performance, emotional well-being, and overall progress towards their goals. Regular check-ins and follow-up meetings can help identify any emerging challenges and ensure that the necessary support is provided promptly.

Collaboration with other professionals is also important. Social workers should work closely with teachers, school counselors, healthcare providers, and community organizations to create a coordinated support network for teenage mothers. By

fostering collaboration and communication among these stakeholders, social workers can ensure that comprehensive and consistent support is provided.

Lastly, social workers should engage with the families of teenage mothers. Building strong relationships with the families can enhance the support system available to the young mothers and foster a more stable and supportive home environment. Social workers can provide guidance to families on how to best support their daughters' educational and personal development.

In conclusion, social workers are encouraged to adopt a holistic and empathetic approach in supporting the re-entry of teenage mothers into the educational system. By conducting thorough assessments, creating a supportive environment, advocating for policies and resources, facilitating access to services, providing continuous support, collaborating with other professionals, and engaging with families, social workers can play a pivotal role in helping teenage mothers succeed academically and personally. Their efforts can ensure that these young mothers have the necessary support to balance their educational aspirations with their parenting responsibilities, ultimately contributing to their overall well-being and future success.

5.4.4 Recommendations for Further Research

To build on the findings of this study, it is recommended that similar research be conducted in other areas of the country. Replicating this study beyond the current focus on Lindi can provide a broader perspective and enhance the generalizability of the results. This approach will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand and offer insights that are relevant across different regions.

By extending the research to various geographical locations, researchers can explore whether the sociocultural factors influencing school dropouts among pupils in public schools, as identified in Lindi, are consistent across the country. Such comparative studies can reveal regional variations and commonalities, thereby contributing to a holistic understanding of the factors affecting school attendance and dropout rates.

Conducting similar studies in diverse settings will also help to identify specific regional challenges and opportunities. Each area may have unique sociocultural dynamics, economic conditions, and educational environments that influence school dropouts. Understanding these local contexts can inform the development of tailored interventions and policies that address the specific needs of different communities.

Furthermore, expanding the research to include a wider range of participants, such as students, parents, teachers, and community leaders from various regions, will enrich the data and provide a more comprehensive perspective. This inclusive approach can help capture diverse viewpoints and experiences, leading to more robust and representative findings.

To facilitate this broader research effort, collaboration among researchers, educational institutions, and government agencies is essential. Establishing a coordinated research network can promote the sharing of methodologies, resources, and findings, thereby enhancing the quality and impact of the research. Additionally, securing funding and support from educational authorities and non-governmental organizations can ensure the sustainability and scalability of these studies. In addition to geographical replication, future research should also consider longitudinal studies that track changes over time. Longitudinal research can provide valuable

insights into the long-term effects of interventions and policies aimed at reducing school dropouts. It can also help to identify trends and shifts in sociocultural factors that may influence educational outcomes. Moreover, incorporating qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, can complement quantitative data and provide richer, more detailed insights into the experiences and perspectives of individuals. Qualitative research can uncover underlying motivations, attitudes, and beliefs that contribute to school dropouts, offering a deeper understanding of the complex interplay of factors involved.

In conclusion, it is recommended that this study be replicated in other areas of the country to gauge the perspectives of individuals beyond those in Lindi. By doing so, researchers can establish a more universal understanding of the sociocultural factors influencing school dropouts across different regions. This expanded research effort, supported by collaboration, funding, and the integration of qualitative and longitudinal approaches, will contribute to the development of effective, context-specific strategies to improve school attendance and educational outcomes nationwide.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DATA COLLECTION

Dear respondent, my name is Juma Rajab a student of The Open University of Tanzania undertaking Master Degree of Social Works. Currently I am conducting a research titled 'Community Perceptions on Teenage Mothers' Re-Entry Policy in Secondary Schools'. The participation to this study is voluntary and names of respondents will not be used in reporting the results of the study. All the information provided by the respondent will be strictly confidential and there will be no direct benefit for the respondent that will accrue from the study.

Instructions I: please answer the following questions by selecting relevant number in a given box in front.

SECTION 1: Demographic profile of respondents

1. Sex   1   Male

                     2   Female

2. Respondent's age group

    (i) 18-35

    (ii) (ii) 36-55

    (iii)(iii) 56-Above

3. Respondent's level of education

    (i) Primary school   **(ii) Secondary school**

(ii) College   **(iv)   University**

SECTION II: SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1 THE COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RE-ENTRY POLICY OF TEENAGE MOTHERS TO SCHOOL

Please tick according to your level of agreement or disagreement with the statements below.

Instructions: Give your opinion on whether you (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree by putting a tick (V) at the appropriate statement

	Items	**SD**	**D**	**N**	**A**	**SA**
1	Communities perceive to allow the impregnated student to continue with studies is to spoil the behavior of other female student to engage in sex intercourse					
2	Communities perceive readmitting impregnated students to school is to enable females to achieve their education objectives					
3	Communities perceive to allow impregnated students to continue with studies is to break away the cultural values					
4	Communities perceive to re-enter schools the impregnated school girls is to enable females have a better future the thing which is contrary to our culture.					

SECTION III SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2 THE IMPACT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RE-ENTRY POLICY OF TEENAGE MOTHERS TO SCHOOL ON AFRICAN CULTURE

	Items	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	The re-entry policy of teenage mothers to schools leads to economic loss because parents will not receive bride price from girls who are pregnant					
2	The re-entry policy spoils the African culture that believes girls are born to be married and not to study					
3	The re-entry policy has affected the superiority and status of the culture especially that of a pregnant girl is matured					
4	The teenage mothers' re-entry policy has brought moral decay to African culture because this is to allow others engage in sex intercourse					

SECTION IV SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3 CHALLENGES FACING TEENAGE MOTHERS WHO RE-ENTERED PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LINDI MUNICIPALITY

	Items	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Teenage mothers are stigmatized or separated from students who are not mothers					
2	Teenage mothers lack financial support from their family member and their partners to enable them afford					

	basic needs for their babies and for school needs					
3	Teenage mother face the challenge of having no academic support from teachers because teachers think teenage mothers need more academic support					
4	Teenage mothers are not happy to study in the same class with students who are not parents					
5	Teenage mothers are faced with the challenge of balancing studies and mothering					

Thank You For Your Cooperation

APPENDIX 11 INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS, PARENTS AND TEENAGE MOTHERS

1. What is your general opinion on the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in public schools?

2. How do you think the community views teenage mothers returning to school under the re-entry policy?

3. Do you feel that the policy helps in reducing the stigma attached to teenage mothers in your community? Why or why not?

4. How do you think the re-entry policy affects the social dynamics within schools and communities?

5. Do you believe that the community provides enough support for teenage mothers to successfully re-enter school? What more could be done?

6. How do you think the re-entry policy of teenage mothers aligns with or challenges traditional African cultural values?

7. In your opinion, does the policy promote or hinder the preservation of African family structures and cultural norms?

8. Do you think the policy encourages empowerment for young women, or does it go against traditional gender roles in African society?

9. How do community leaders or elders in your area feel about the re-entry of teenage mothers into school? Do they view it positively or negatively?

10. What are the cultural benefits or drawbacks of having teenage mothers return to school in your community?

11. What are the main challenges that teenage mothers face when they return to public secondary schools?

12. How do teenage mothers manage the balance between schoolwork and their responsibilities as mothers?

13. In your experience, are there enough resources or support systems to help teenage mothers succeed academically once they return to school?

14. Do teenage mothers face any discrimination from their peers or teachers upon returning to school? How do they cope with this?

15. What specific challenges do teenage mothers face after re-entering school?

THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA

Ref. No OUT/PG202186376

30th April, 2024

Municipal Director,
Lindi Municipal Council,
P.O Box 1070,
LINDI.

Dear Municipal Director,

RE: RESEARCH CLEARANCE FOR MR.RAJAB A JUMA, REG NO: PG202186376

2.   The Open University of Tanzania was established by an Act of Parliament No. 17 of 1992, which became operational on the 1st March 1993 by public notice No.55 in the official Gazette. The Act was however replaced by the Open University of Tanzania Charter of 2005, which became operational on 1st January 2007. In line with the Charter, the Open University of Tanzania mission is to generate and apply knowledge through research.

3.   To facilitate and to simplify research process therefore, the act empowers the Vice Chancellor of the Open University of Tanzania to issue research clearance, on behalf of the Government of Tanzania and Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology, to both its staff and students who are doing research in Tanzania. With this brief background, the purpose of this letter is to introduce to you **Mr. Rajabu A Juma, Reg. No: PG202186376)**, pursuing **Master of Social Work (MSW)**. We here by grant this clearance to conduct a research titled **"Community Perceptions on Teenage**

Mothers' re-entry Policy in Secondary Schools. A Case Study of Lindi Municipality, Lindi Region". He will collect his data at your area from 2nd May to 30th May 2024.

4.   In case you need any further information, kindly do not hesitate to contact the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) of the Open University of Tanzania, P.O.Box 23409, Dar es Salaam. Tel: 022-2-2668820.We lastly thank you in advance for your assumed cooperation and facilitation of this research academic activity.   .

Yours sincerely,
THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA

Prof.Gwahula Raphael Kimamala

For: **VICE CHANCELLOR**

THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
PRESIDENT'S OFFICE
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

TEL NO:- 023-220-2098
FAX NO. 023-220-2502
Email: ras.lindi@tamisemi.go.tz

Regional Commissioner's Office
9. Mtuleni Road,
P.O. BOX 1054
65180 LINDI CBD,
LINDI.

In reply please quote:
Ref. No: EA. 144/296/01/

7th May, 2024

The Municipal Director,
P.O. BOX 1070,
LINDI.

RE: REQUEST FOR RESEARCH CLEARANCE

Refer to the heading above.

2.   The purpose of this letter is to introduce to you Mr. Rajab A. Juma who is a bonafide student of The Open University of Tanzania who is at the moment required to conduct research activities as part of their study program.

3.   Therefore I request you to grant any help that may enable to achieve his Research objective specifically the permission to meet and talk to the leaders and any other staff in your office in connection with his research.

4.   The tittle of the research is **"Community Perceptions on Teenage Motehrs' re-entry Policy in Secondary Schools. A Case Study off Lindi Municipality – Lindi Region"**. The period of research is from 2nd May, 2024 to 30th May, 2024.

5.   Thank you for your cooperation.

Nathalis/L. Linuma
FOR: REGIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY

C.c: District Administrative Secretary,
       P.O. Box. 1020,
       LINDI.

" "   Vice Chancellor,
       The Open University of Tanzania,
       P.O. Box 23409,
       DAR ES SALAAM.

       Mr. Rajab A. Juma,
       The Open University of Tanzania,
       P.O. Box 23409,
       DAR ES SALAAM.

JAMHURI YA MUUNGANO WA TANZANIA

OFISI YA RAIS

TAWALA ZA MIKOA NA SERIKALI ZA MITAA

HALMASHAURI YA MANISPAA YA LINDI

Kumb Na. LMC/A.40/29/VOL.II/201   09/05/2024

Rajabu A. Juma,
The open University of Tanzania
P.O. BOX 23409
DAR ES SAALAM.

YAH: KIBALI CHA KUFANYA UTAFITI

Tafadhali rejea kichwa cha habari hapo juu, pamoja na barua yenye Kumb Na. EA.144/296/01 ya tarehe   07th Mei, 2024..

2.   Napenda kukujulisha kuwa Kibali cha kufanya Utafiti wa Kitaaluma katika Manispaa ya Lindi kimetolewa kwa Bw. Rajabu A. Juma mwanafunzi wa Chuo Kikuu cha Dar es salaam kuanzia tarehe 2nd Mei, 2024 hadi 30 Mei, 2024. Aidha eneo mahsusi la utafiti wa Kitaaluma ni "**Community Perceptions on Teenage Motehrs' re-entry Policy in Secondary Schools. A Case Study off Lindi Municipality – Lindi Region**".

3.   Nakutakia kazi njema.

Dr. Stanford Mwakatage
KAIMU MKURUGENZI WA MANISPAA
LINDI.
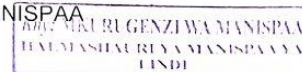
Nakala: Katibu Tawala Wilaya,
S.L.P. 1020
LINDI

"   Afisa Elimu Sekondari
Halmashauri ya Manispaa   -   (Tafadhali mpatieni ushirikiano)
LINDI

Ofisi ya Mkurugenzi, Halmashauri ya Manispaa ya Lindi, S.L.P 1070 Lindi, Simu: +255 023-220-2164, Nukushi: +255 023-220-2116, Barua pepe: info@lindimc.go.tz, Tovuti

ﻝ

MUUNGANO WA TANZANIA
OFISI YA RAIS
Tawala za Mikoa na Serikali za Mitaa
Halmashauri ya Manispaa ya Lindi

Kumb Na. LMC/EDU/R.10/7/202   10/5/2024

WAKUU WA SHULE
SHULE ZA SEKONDARI LINDI, MKONGE, NA MITWERO.
S.L.P 1070
LINDI

YAH: KIBALI CHA KUFANYA UTAFITI KUHUSU "COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS ON TEENAGE MOTHER'S RE-ENTRY POLICY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS. A CASE STUDY OF LINDI MUNICIPALITY-LINDI REGIONAL"

Husika na mada tajwa hapo juu.

2. Napenda kumtambulisha kwako Ndg. Rajabu A. Juma, Mwanachuo wa Chuo Kikuu cha Dar es salaam anaefanya utafiti kuhusu **"Community Perceptions on Teenage Mother's Re-Entry Policy in Secondary Schools. A Case Study of Lindi Municipality-Lindi Regional"**. Kibali hiki cha utafiti kimetolewa kuanzia tarehe 2nd Mei, 2024 hadi 30 Mei, 2024

3. Kwa barua hii naomba umpatie ushirikiano ili aweze kufanikisha utafiti wake wa Kitaaluma ndani ya muda

4. Nakutakia kazi njema

....
Rehema M. Nahale

Kny: Mkurugenzi wa Manispaa

Lindi

Nakala: Katibu Tawala Wilaya
S.L.P 1070
LINDI

Mkurugenzi wa Manispaa
S.L.P 1070
LINDI.

Ofisi ya Mkurugenzi, Halmashauri ya Manispaa ya Lindi, S.L.P 1070 Lindi, Simu: +255 023-220-2164, Nukushi: +255 023-220-2116, Barua pepe: info@lindimc.go.tz, Tovuti: www.lindimc.go.tz

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS ON TENAGE MOTHERS' RE-ENTRY POLICY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS A CASE STUDY OF LINDI MUNICIPALITY, LINDI REGION

Rajabu A. Juma

Rajabummahakaha@gmail.com
Dr. Mariana Makuu
Mariana.makuu@out.ac.tz
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Dr. Straton Ruhinda
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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the Community Perceptions of Teenage Mothers' Re-Entry Policy in Secondary Schools. The study was guided by three specific objectives which were to explore the community perceptions on the implementation of the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to school, determine the impact of implementation of the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to school on African culture and identify challenges facing teenage mothers who re-entered public secondary schools in Lindi Municipality. The study was guided by Liberal Feminism Theory. A descriptive design was employed. Questionnaires were used to collect data from 34 respondents. A pilot study was carried out to 10 participants to ensure the validity and reliability of research tools. The collected data were analyzed narratively and descriptively whereby frequencies and means were used to draw conclusions. Findings revealed that the community perceived that to allow the impregnated student to continue with studies is to spoil the behavior of other female student, to enable females to achieve

their education objectives, to allow impregnated students to continue with studies has no relation with breaking away the cultural values and to re-enter schools the impregnated school girls is to enable females have a better future. It was also revealed that the community did not perceive that the implementation of the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to school leads to economic loss as parents will not receive bride price from girls who were pregnant, the re-entry policy does not spoil the African culture that believe girls are born to be married and not to study, the re-entry policy has affected the superiority and status of the culture especially that of a pregnant girl is matured and the teenage mothers' re-entry policy has brought moral decay. Finally, the study revealed that teenage mothers were faced by the challenge of being stigmatized or separated from students who were not mothers, not financially supported by neither their family members nor their partners, having no academic support from teachers because teachers think teenage mothers need more academic support, being not happy to study in the same class with students who were not parents and finally teenage mothers faced the challenge of balancing studies and mothering. The study recommends the government to think on the mechanisms that will be used to maintain students' good behavior, teachers to receive and assist academically the teenage mothers who have decided to resume their studies after delivery, to mix the teenage mothers in the same class with other students, not to stigmatize and separate teenage mothers with other students, families and community members to provide financial support to the re-admitted teenage mothers, the re-admitted teenage mothers to be happy to study in the same class with students who are not parents and balance their time of studying and taking care of their babies properly

INTRODUCTION

Teenage pregnancy is a, worldwide prevailing issue that makes policymakers reform policies in different countries for the sake of enabling teenage girls to acquire their human rights including the right to education. (Chiyota, 2020) reveals the extent of this phenomenon as he stated globally, thirteen million female students are estimated to give birth annually and more than 90% come from developing countries Tanzania with no exception.

To rescue teenage girls from the negligence of their right to education, governments have made interventions in their policies for the purpose of ensuring that girls achieve their education goals. (Jentzel, 2020) states that governments have reformed government policies to return teenage mothers to school after delivery after recognizing that student mothers' school dropout is high in the world

Developed countries like Britain adopted the teenage mothers' re-entry policy through its British Education Act of 1944 to promote the right to education for all. British started to sign human rights contracts that promoted the right to education whereby teenage mothers were allowed to continue with schools (Imbosa et al., 2022).

The United States of America (USA) also adopted the teenage mother's re-entry policy many years ago through which teenage mothers were allowed to attend schools by giving them time to feed their children and also a place was prepared for them to be counseled (UNESCO, 2021).

India is not behind a school re-entry policy, it has adopted this policy aiming at re-admitting teenage mothers to school after maternity leave. India has done well in implement the school re-entry policy due to targeted support offered by most learning institutions to teenage mothers during pregnancy and after childbirth (Prakash, Beattie, Javalkar, Bhattacharjee, Ramanaik, Thalinja, & Isac, 2019)

In developing countries like Cameroon, the teenage mothers' re-entry policy has already been adopted through which teenage mothers have the right to negotiate the duration of their parenthood leave with their school management. Zimbabwe has also adopted the re-entry policy to help pregnant child after observing that girl child is being deprived her right to education and this was after realizing that in 2018 alone, roughly 21.5 % girl children dropped out classes due to early pregnancy (Moyo, 2020). In the same way, Kenya's government adopted the re-entry policy by allowing impregnated female students to be re-admitted to schools after giving birth (Mutua et al., 2019)

Tanzania adopted the re-entry policy in 2010 for the purpose of giving a second chance to impregnated female students to resume their studies after delivery. On November 24, 2021, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology through its Minister announced that girls who dropped out of school because of pregnancy could return to school immediately, (Global Development the Guardian). This announcement allowed the impregnated female student to go back to school within two years after delivery. Formally, the impregnated female student was forced to drop out of school. This study therefore intends to evaluate the community

perceptions on the re-entry of teenage mothers after delivery in the formal schooling system in Tanzania using Lindi Municipality as a case study.

Statement of the Problem

Teenage motherhood is a prevalent problem in Tanzania especially in rural areas of the country. One of the most common effects of teenage motherhood is school dropout which leads to the loss of education opportunities for female students. It is approximated that over 380,000 teenage girls become pregnant and drop out of school every year (UNFPA, 2017). In African countries Tanzania with no exception, a teenage girl who falls pregnant while studying is often expelled from school for parenting roles (Mokwena et al, 2016). The teenage mothers' re-entry policy allows the teenage mother student who has delivered to be readmitted to school to continue with studies. Tanzania is among the Sub-Saharan countries that have adopted the re-entry policy that allows impregnated school girls to be re-admitted to school after delivery (UNESCO, 2019).

Allowing impregnated female students to continue with their studies is to disturb cultural values. Cultural values are based on the belief that one has to be married off once she falls pregnant and someone who is pregnant becomes a woman. (Moyo, 2020) Pregnancy is a source of superiority especially for mothers because it reflects the maturity of their daughters and increases their standing in the community (Mushibwe, 2018). Morally, the impregnated female student to be allowed to continue with her studies is to pollute other students by negatively influencing other students because culturally mothers are meant to stay at home and take care of their

babies (Salvi, 2019). This study therefore needs to evaluate how much these perceptions have been affected by the re-entry program for teenage mother students

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to evaluate the Community Perceptions of Teenage Mothers' Re-Entry Policy in Secondary Schools.

The specific objectives of the study ware:

1. To explore the community perceptions on the implementation of the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to school

2. To determine the impact of implementation of the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to school on African culture.

3. To identify challenges facing teenage mothers who re-entered public secondary schools in Lindi Municipality

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Liberal Feminism Theory (1987)

In exploring the complex intersection of community perceptions and re-entry policies for teenage mothers, this research study is firmly grounded in the principles of Liberal Feminism, originally articulated by Joan Acker in 1987 (Acker, 1987). Liberal feminism advocates for gender equality through legal and political reforms that prioritize individual rights, autonomy, and equal opportunities for women. This theoretical framework provides a lens through which to analyze how societal norms and policies influence the experiences of teenage mothers returning to education and society after childbirth.

Acker's foundational work in liberal feminism asserts that every individual, regardless of gender, should have the freedom to make choices about their own life path (Acker, 1987). For teenage mothers, this principle is particularly pertinent as they navigate societal expectations and challenges. Often stigmatized and marginalized, teenage mothers face barriers such as lack of support, educational disadvantages, and social exclusion. The re-entry policies in place, or the lack thereof, significantly impact their ability to pursue education, careers, and economic independence.

Central to liberal feminist thought is the concept of agency and autonomy. Teenage mothers should have the agency to decide their future paths, including whether and how to re-enter education and participate fully in society. By examining how re-entry policies either empower or constrain teenage mothers, this study seeks to uncover whether current policies align with feminist goals of promoting women's autonomy and equal opportunities (Rossiter & Hunter, 1998).

Moreover, the framework highlights the importance of equality of opportunity. Liberal feminism challenges the structural inequalities that perpetuate gender disparities, advocating for policies that level the playing field for women in education, employment, and other spheres of life (Tong, 2009). By employing qualitative and quantitative research methods to evaluate community perceptions towards re-entry policies for teenage mothers, this study aims to evaluate whether these policies contribute to greater gender equality or reinforce existing social norms and prejudices.

The hypotheses proposed in this study reflect the theoretical underpinnings of liberal feminism applied to the context of teenage motherhood and re-entry policies. Hypothesis 1 suggests that communities influenced by liberal feminist principles will be more likely to support re-entry policies that foster educational opportunities and social integration for teenage mothers (Allen, 2006). Hypothesis 2 posits that variations in community perceptions will exist based on socio-economic factors, cultural norms, and geographic location, influencing the acceptance and support levels for teenage mothers.

Quantitative research methods, such as surveys and statistical analysis, are employed to gather and analyze data on community attitudes and perceptions. By quantifying these perspectives, the study aims to provide empirical evidence on how different communities perceive and respond to teenage motherhood and related policies.

The implications of this research extend beyond theoretical discourse to practical policy recommendations and community engagement strategies. By identifying gaps and barriers in current re-entry policies through quantitative analysis, the study aims to inform the development of more inclusive and supportive policies aligned with liberal feminist principles (Smith & Jones, 2010). Furthermore, community education and awareness initiatives are proposed to challenge stereotypes and promote a more empathetic and supportive environment for teenage mothers (Wilson, 2015).

In conclusion, this theoretical framework, rooted in Acker's (1987) liberal feminist principles and supported by relevant literature, provides a structured approach to investigate community perceptions on re-entry policies for teenage mothers. By

emphasizing agency, autonomy, and equality of opportunity through quantitative research methods, the study seeks to contribute to broader discussions on gender equality and social justice, advocating for policies that empower teenage mothers and promote their full participation in society.

Empirical Review

Community perceptions on the implementation of the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to school

Kurevakwesu et al, (2023) conducted a study in Zimbabwe to examine parents' perceptions of re-entry, and the socio-cultural and economic factors responsible for their perceptions in Cowdray Park, Bulawayo. The findings of their study revealed that parents hold negative perceptions of reentry. Cultural and religious beliefs and fear of family humiliation were some of the sociocultural factors influencing parents' perceptions. Moreover, the study revealed that fears of economic loss and the chances of a better future for girls were some of the economic factors influencing parents' perceptions. The study suggested that community sensitization and an explicit reentry policy document are needed if parents' perceptions are to change

A study conducted by Chewe (2019) in Zambia on perceptions of teachers, parents, and female students towards the school re-entry policy disclosed that respondents had varied perceptions of teenage mothers' re-entry policy. Some respondents perceived that allowing the impregnated student to continue with studies is to allow another female student to start sex intercourse believing that if they become pregnant, they will be allowed to continue with their studies. Others perceived to expel the impregnated female students as the denial of their right to education. The

study recommended the need for debate and discussion on teenage mothers' re-entry policy.

Kawala, (2021) conducted a study that sought to explore stakeholders' perceptions of teen mothers' re-entry policy and practices in secondary schools in Malongo, Sub-County, Mayuge District. The study involved education officials, headteachers, teachers, and female teenage mothers. The study revealed a positive perception of the government's decision regarding the re-entry policy of impregnated female students to be readmitted to secondary schools

Manion, (2011) conducted a study in the Gambia titled girls' education as a means or end of development. The study aimed to explore parents' perceptions on the re-entry of pregnant students to school. Findings of the study established that the re-entry of pregnant girls to school was seen as the breaking away of the cultural values. The participants viewed the re-entry policy aimed to promote immorality in schools. It is contrary to the cultural values a female student who has fallen pregnant to be allowed to continue with studies.

Kilewo, (2018) conducted a study in Dodoma Tanzania on perceptions of education stakeholders on the education of school girls after pregnancy in secondary schools in Tanzania: The study revealed that retention of impregnated girls to school is a sign of indiscipline. Likewise, the study found different socio-cultural factors influencing the expulsion of pregnant school girls including the presence of school rules and regulations, avoiding destruction of school reputations as well as fear of influencing immoral behavior (early sexual practices) to the rest of the girls in these schools

Impact of implementation of the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to school on African culture.

A study conducted by Kurevakwesu et al, (2023) in Zimbabwe to examine parents' perceptions of reentry, and the sociocultural and economic factors responsible for their perceptions in Cowdray Park, Bulawayo disclosed that the re-entry policy is against the African culture as it affects the African culture of the parents to receive cattle from the boy's family because culturally, marrying off daughters builds family wealth. The implementation of this policy, has made parents to no longer receive cattle as the girls who are the source of men to pay for the cattle will be required to go to school for their studies and this will affect the economy of the family

Booth, (2022) conducted a study in East Africa on emerging issues for girls' education in East Africa. His findings revealed that the re-entry policy has spoiled the African culture in the sense that, the African culture believes that girls are born to be married, and once they fall pregnant, it is a clear sign that they have graduated into adults to be married. With this belief, teenage mothers are regarded as not adults but are regarded as children because schools are for children. Culturally, the implementation of this policy has affected the superiority and standing especially that of women that they are matured.

Mwemba et al., (2019) conducted a study in Gambia on stakeholder's perceptions on teen mothers who re-entered school: The findings of their study revealed that teenage mothers' re-entry policy has damaged the African culture of childbearing/rearing and this is associated with the belief that when a young girl is aged 13 years, and her

breasts begin to grow, she is ready to get married and begin childbearing and boys are encouraged to receive an education, as they are the future providers for their families. Through the implementation of this policy, this belief is going to be damaged if the impregnated teenage student is going to be readmitted to school

A study conducted by Mushibwe, (2018) in Zambia disclosed that, the teenage mothers' re-entry policy brought moral decay to African culture, the impregnated female student to be allowed to continue with her studies is to pollute other students by negatively influencing other students because culturally mothers are meant to stay at home and take care of their babies and do home activities

Challenges facing teenage mothers who re-entered public secondary schools

Mufalo and Kabeta, (2019) conducted a study to find out the challenges of school re-entry among student mothers and mitigation strategies instituted by stakeholders in Kenya. The findings of the study revealed that student mothers faced many challenges both at school and in the community. They were isolated at school and some of them were not financially assisted by their family members because of poverty. The study recommended that schools, parents, the Ministry of General Education, and other stakeholders should assist these student mothers and enhance the mitigation measures to address challenges faced by student mothers both at school and in the community in order to improve their performance.

A study conducted by Onyango, Kioli, and Nyambedha (2015) in Kenya on challenges of school re-entry among teenage mothers revealed that social isolation and stigmatization were the challenges faced by student mothers in implementing

teenage mothers' re-entry policy. The study recommended teenage mothers be at their own school to avoid the situation of being stigmatized and isolated

Barfi, Kuranchie, and Owusu-Addo, (2022) conducted a study in Ghanaians' schools. The study investigated the implementation of teenage mothers to re-enter school. The study disclosed that teenage mothers experienced emotional challenges such as frustration, sorrow, annoyance, and moodiness caused being labeled by other students and community members because of being a student mother.

A study conducted by Doriye, Muneja, and Ilomo, (2020) in Babati town Tanzania aimed to identify the challenges that female students who were readmitted to schools to implement a re-entry policy in Tanzania, disclosed that the majority of teachers think that the previous behaviors of female re-entered students, such as academic performance and discipline, might influence the decision about the destiny of other girl students. The study recommended that teenage mothers be separated from other students in their studies.

Mkumbugo, Shayo, and Mloka, (2020) conducted a study in Tanga municipality Tanzania to determine the moral challenges of handling teenage mothers in Tanga municipality. The findings of the study showed that the re-entered teenage mothers were not happy to study in the same class as students who were not mothers. It was recommended that the government of Tanzania should increase education funding in building new schools in order to accommodate student mothers in their schools to make this policy relevant

METHODOLOGY

The study embraced a positivist philosophy, which prioritizes the systematic collection, organization, and evaluation of quantitative and qualitative data. This approach was chosen to rigorously evaluate and generalize community perceptions concerning the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in secondary schools. By employing a deductive approach, the research aimed to generate statistical insights that could be broadly applicable, facilitating a comprehensive assessment of societal attitudes.

Positivism in mixed methods research holds significant relevance due to its emphasis on empirical and narrative evidence measurement. Mixed methods allow for the precise quantification and narration of variables and the establishment of relationships through statistical and narrative analysis (Smith & Jones, 2020). This approach enables researchers to identify patterns and trends within large datasets, offering insights that can inform policy decisions and interventions.

Saunders et al. (2019) advocate for the compatibility of quantitative and qualitative data with deductive reasoning. This alignment underscores the methodological rigor employed in the study, ensuring that findings are based on systematic observations and measurable outcomes. Quantitative and qualitative data, through their structured format and numerical representation, facilitate comparisons across different groups or contexts, enhancing the study's ability to draw reliable conclusions about community perceptions.

A descriptive research design was employed because this design had inherent capacity to meticulously detail and document events or individual experiences, thereby capturing the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon under investigation. By providing a comprehensive portrayal, the descriptive approach facilitates a nuanced exploration of community perceptions concerning the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in secondary schools.

The study targeted a population of 212 secondary school teachers, 62 parents whose daughters were impregnated and 62 teenage mothers who were in Lindi Municipality.

Two sampling techniques were employed in this study, purposive and simple random techniques. Purposive sampling technique was used to select teenage mothers and parents whose daughters were impregnated basing on researcher's judgment that they had desirable characteristics. Simple random sampling technique was employed to obtain a sample of secondary school teachers. With this method a researcher randomly selected 22 teacher.

The study comprised of 34 respondents. The respondents included 22 secondary school teachers, 6 teenage mothers and 6 parents.

The study used questionnaire and interviews for primary data collection and documentary review to collect secondary data. A questionnaire with closed-ended questions and interviews were used to collect data to all 34 respondents. The

questionnaire were prepared in the form of Likert-scale which were used to collect data from all 34 respondents.

The researcher read various documents like research reports conducted in various areas, journals and media which were pertinent to this study. The documents were thoroughly reviewed by the researcher for secondary data.

Data analysis

The collected data were subjected to narrative analysis. Initially, the data were processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 to obtain frequencies and percentages, which were later subjected to narrative analysis. Quantitative data which were in numeric form, such as frequencies and percentages, were utilized to draw conclusions, establish relationships or comparisons between variables, and interpret the data, while narrative analysis focused on textual data. Mugenda, & Mugenda, (2008) to report the data interpretation by Likert Scale, the researcher used "Collapsing Response" method. This was done by adding the 'strongly disagree' percentage responses with the 'disagree' responses (SD +D), similarly, the 'strongly agree' with the 'agree' responses (SA +A)

Validity of Research Instruments

Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure, as described by Kothari (2019). It represents the research tool's capacity to measure its intended target. In this study, the validity of the data was enhanced through a test and retest procedure. This involved administering the pilot questionnaires to 10 respondents and observing whether they aligned with the study's objectives.

Reliability of Research Instruments

According to Kothari (2019), reliability of an instrument refers to the extent of consistency in measuring a variable or the consistency in the results or data obtained from repeated trials. In this study, a pilot study involving 10 respondents, who were not part of the final sample, was conducted. The data collected during the pilot phase were assessed for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha reliability test. The instruments were deemed sufficiently reliable if they yielded a value lower than 0.7, which is the recommended threshold.

Ethical Considerations.

Creswell (2018) highlighted that ethical considerations entail obtaining participants' informed consent and ensuring privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. The researcher upheld confidentiality regarding respondents' responses and ensured anonymity by not collecting or disclosing any personal identifiers such as names or ID numbers. Participants were informed of the research's purpose before completing the questionnaire, and they were not compelled to participate if they were unwilling.

FINDINGS

Demographic Characteristics

The study collected data for analysis from 34 respondents among them 15 (44.1%) were males and 19 (55.9%) were females. The majority of these respondents 20 equivalent to (58.8%) were in the age group of 36-55 years, 12 equivalent to (35.3%) were in the age group of 18-35 years, and very few 2 equivalent to (5.9%) were in the age group of 56 and above years. This implies that the study involved respondents of different age groups but the dominant group was 36-55 years who are matured enough to reveal the community perceptions on the implementation of teenage mothers' re-entry policy.

The study was also interested to identify the education levels of the respondents and the findings depicted that most of respondents 15 equivalent to (44.1%) had secondary education, 12 equivalent to (35.3 %) had university level of education, 6 equivalent to (17.6%) had college education and 1 equivalent to (2.9%) had primary level of education. These findings imply that the researcher collected data from respondents who were educated enough to reason on the incidences related to this study.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	15	44.1
Female	19	55.9
Respondents' Age Groups	**Frequency**	**Percent**
18-35	12	35.3
36-55	20	58.8
56 and above	2	5.9
Respondents' Education Levels	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Primary level	1	2.9
Secondary level	15	44.1
College level	6	17.6
University level	12	35.3
Total	**34**	**100.0**

Source: Field Data, 2024

Findings of the Study

The general objective of this study was to evaluate Community Perceptions of Teenage Mothers' Re-Entry Policy in Secondary Schools. In order to attain this objective, respondents of the study were asked several questions using questionnaires. The responses were measured by using Likert-scale 1-5 which were strongly agree to strongly disagree on the provided statements. Descriptive statistics were used as indicators to evaluate Community Perceptions of Teenage Mothers' Re-Entry Policy in Secondary Schools.

Community perceptions on the implementation of the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to school

The study aimed to investigate community perceptions regarding the implementation of the re-entry policy for teenage mothers in schools. To achieve this goal, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with several statements and then they were interviewed. These statements included: allowing impregnated students to continue their studies would negatively influence the behaviour of other female students, readmitting impregnated students to school would help females achieve their educational goals, allowing impregnated students to continue their studies would contradict cultural values, and re-entering impregnated school girls into schools would enable females to have a better future, which is contrary to our culture. The findings of the study are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Community perceptions on the implementation of the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to school

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
To allow the impregnated student to continue with studies is to spoil the behavior of other female student	10 (29.4%)	5 (14.7%)	8 (23.5%)	6 (17.6%)	5 (14.7%)
Readmitting impregnated students to school is to enable females to achieve their education objectives	15 (44.1%)	6 (17.6%)	7 (20.6%)	2 (5.9%)	4 (11.8%)
To allow impregnated students to continue with studies is to break away the cultural values	3 (7.1%)	9 (26.6%)	6 (17.6%)	9 (26.5%)	7 (20.6%)
To re-enter schools the impregnated school girls is to enable females have a better future	12 (35.3%)	12 (35.3%)	3 (8.8%)	4 (11.8%)	3 (8.8%)

Source: Field Data (2024).

Table 4.2 illustrates that 15 respondents (44.1%) agreed with the statement that allowing impregnated students to continue their studies would negatively influence

the behavior of other female students, while 11 respondents (32.3%) disagreed, and the remaining 8 respondents (23.5%) were neutral. These findings suggest that the community perceives allowing impregnated students to continue their studies as potentially detrimental to the behavior of other female students. These findings were similar to teacher 1 who during interview said

> *"To allow the impregnated student who were expelled from school due to their pregnancies to continue with studies is to spoil the behavior of other female student to engage in sex intercourse as they will see engaging into sex relations will not affect their schooling program"*

These findings align with those of Nkata et al. (2021), who found that while pregnant students were permitted to re-enter schools, this was mandated by law and regulations, leading to dissatisfaction among community members who feared it would negatively influence other students. Dlamni (2016) also supports these findings, noting that in Swaziland, community members perceive teenage mothers' re-entry to school as bringing shame and moral decline to society. Similarly, Adangabe (2021) aligns with these findings as he revealed that the majority of teachers in west India perceived returning teenage mothers to school is to bring failure to these students because teenage mothers have low self-esteem, poor time management, role conflict and poor support from their families and relatives

Furthermore, Table 4.2 reveals that 21 respondents (61.7%) agreed that readmitting impregnated students to school would help females achieve their educational goals, while 7 respondents (20.6%) were neutral, and 6 respondents (17.6%) disagreeing. These findings suggest that most community members perceive readmitting impregnated students to school as conducive to achieving educational objectives for females. These findings were concurrent with the teenage mother 3 who when she was interviewed on how she thought about the community views on teenage mothers returning to school under the re-entry policy she said

> *"As a community member, she perceived readmitting impregnated students to school as a good thing because this will enable female student who have been impregnated to achieve their educational objectives and hence improve their life standards".*

This aligns with Masemola's (2015) argument that supporting teenage mothers can facilitate their educational goals. Contrasting Ferguson's (2017) view that some community members believe schools are not meant for pregnant teenagers. Cohen, Loeb & Miller (2020) also contrast these findings as they established that school principals in New York have mixed reactions and feelings on the approaches to implementing re-entry policy of teenage mothers. Some principals felt that policies are designed to have a natural course of implementation once rolled out. They assume that they are not directly confronted with the responsibility of ensuring the policy works when it encounters challenges during challenges.

Additionally, Table 4.2 indicates that 16 respondents (41.7%) disagreed with the notion that allowing impregnated students to continue their studies would break cultural values, while 12 respondents (33.7%) agreed, and 6 respondents (17.6%)

were neutral. These findings suggest that the community opposes the idea that allowing impregnated students to continue their studies would undermine cultural values. On the other side these findings were contrary to parent 2 who when she was interviewed about how she thought the re-entry policy affects the social dynamics within schools and communities she said

> *"To me the idea of allowing impregnated students to continue their studies undermines our cultural beliefs. Since I was young I have never seen a daughter with a child going to school to study. It was believed since the old days that if a daughter delivers a child she has to stay at home and take care of her baby"*

The findings obtained from the questionnaires align with Ananda (2019) established that there is no relationship between allowing teenage mothers to resume their studies after delivery and cultural values. Secondary education is an essential link in the preparation of human capital for development and life opportunities. This contrasts with the views of Maluli and Bali (2011), who argued that readmitting teenage mothers contradicts Tanzanian cultural values, and Samati (2014), who found similar perceptions among parents in Malawi.

Lastly, Table 4.2 reveals that 24 respondents (70.6%) agreed that re-entering impregnated school girls into schools would enable females to have a better future, while 7 respondents (20.6%) disagreed, and 3 respondents (8.8%) were neutral. These findings suggest that the community believes re-entering impregnated school girls into schools would lead to a brighter future for females. These findings concur with teenage mother 5 when she was interviewed about the community believes on re-entering impregnated school girls into schools to brighten their future she said

> *"For sure re-entering impregnated school girls into schools would brighten their education future and would enable females to have a better future. I think these girls would be very careful with the second chance given to them. The views of some community members that re-entering impregnated school girls into schools is impossible is a wrong view"*

This sentiment is supported by Nsalamba & Simpande (2019). Similarly, Muthkwa (2020) aligns with these findings as he established that girls' retention at all educational levels is significantly related to brightening their future. Tarus (2020), however, found contrasting views, with some parents perceiving re-admitting pregnant students as beneficial for long-term social and economic outcomes.

The impact of implementation of the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to school on African culture.

The purpose of this study was also to assess the impact of implementing the re-entry policy for teenage mothers into schools on African culture. To accomplish this objective, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with several

statements and respond to questions during interview. These statements included: the belief that the re-entry policy leads to economic loss because parents will not receive bride price from girls who were pregnant, the notion that the re-entry policy undermines the African cultural belief that girls are destined for marriage rather than education, the observation that the re-entry policy affects the superiority and status of the culture, particularly regarding the maturity of pregnant girls, and the assertion that the teenage mothers' re-entry policy contributes to moral decay in African culture by condoning sexual activity. The findings of the study are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for the impact of implementation of the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to school on African culture.

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
The re-entry policy of teenage mothers to schools leads to economic loss because parents will not receive bride price from girls who are pregnant	6 (17.6%)	5 (14.7%)	2 (5.9%)	12 (35.3%)	9 (26.5%)
The re-entry policy spoils the African culture that believes girls are born to be married and not to study	5 (14.7%)	1 (2.9%)	1 (2.9%)	14 (41.2%)	13 (38.2%)
The re-entry policy has affected the superiority and status of the culture especially that of a pregnant girl is matured	6 (17.6%)	10 (29.4%)	5 (14.7%)	9 (26.5%)	4 (11.8%)
The teenage mothers' re-entry policy has brought moral decay to African culture because this is to allow others engage in sex intercourse	8 (23.5%)	8 (23.5%)	4 (11.8%)	9 (26.5%)	5 (14.7%)

Source: Field Data (2024).

Table 4.3 indicates that 21 respondents (61.8%) disagreed with the notion that the re-entry policy for teenage mothers into schools leads to economic loss because parents will not receive bride price from girls who were pregnant, while 11 respondents (32.3%) agreed, and the remaining 2 respondents (5.9%) were neutral. These findings suggest that the community does not perceive the implementation of the re-entry policy for teenage mothers as causing economic loss due to the absence of bride price. These findings align with the responses of parent 4 when he was responding to the view that the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to schools leads to economic loss because parents will not receive bride price from girls who are pregnant, he said

> *"This is not true that the re-entry policy of teenage mothers to schools has brought economic loss because parents will not receive bride price from girls who are pregnant. Economic growth of the family does not depend on bride price which is provided once but it depends on the economic activities that a*

family performs. To me this is an opportunity to females who have lost their hope to be back to school"

However, this contrasts with the views reported by Mweemba et al. (2019) in Malawi, where some parents believe that when a girl becomes pregnant, it is time for parents to receive bride price as they are considered old enough for marriage. These preferences are rooted in gender norms that prioritize girls' roles as wives and mothers. Similarly, Wekesa (2014) noted in Kenya that pregnant students are seen as potential sources of bride price, and schools admitting teenage mothers are stigmatized as "maternity schools."

Furthermore, Table 4.3 reveals that 27 respondents (79.4%) disagreed that the re-entry policy undermines the African culture's belief that girls are meant for marriage rather than education, while 6 respondents (17.6%) agreed, and 1 respondent (2.9%) was neutral. These findings imply that the re-entry policy does not compromise the African cultural belief regarding girls' roles. This is similar to teacher 3 whose views on the idea that the re-entry policy spoils the African culture that believes girls are born to be married and not to study she said

"I think these are the outdated views that girls are born to be married and not to study. The system of life nowadays require both men and women to struggle during the day and bring something at home in the evening. So thinking that girls are there just to be married this is wrong point of view. Education is the right of every individual regardless of the biological makeup"

However, Mushibwe (2018) found in Zambia that some parents oppose the re-entry policy, fearing it would promote moral decay and challenge the belief that girls are destined for marriage and motherhood. Britwum et al. (2017) also argue that the re-entry policy may lead to immoral behavior among female students due to socio-cultural factors and gendered norms.

Moreover, Table 4.3 indicates that 16 respondents (47.0%) agreed that the re-entry policy has affected the status of the culture, particularly regarding the maturity of pregnant girls, while 13 respondents (38.3%) disagreed, and 5 respondents (14.7%) were neutral. These findings suggest that the re-entry policy has indeed impacted the cultural perception of the maturity of pregnant girls. These findings align with parent 1 who when he was required to give his views on the re-entry policy to affect the superiority and status of the culture especially that of a pregnant girl is matured, he said

"On one side it is the fact that the re-entry policy has affected the superiority and status of the culture especially that of a pregnant girl is matured. I say this in the sense that a child cannot be pregnant so if it happens that a girl becomes pregnant she is matured and she deserves to be married"

This aligns with Ahorlu, Pfeiffer, and Obrist (2015) argue that allowing pregnant students to return to school contradicts cultural norms where pregnancy is seen as a sign of maturity. Similarly, Martinez and Odhiambo (2018) note that some religious

leaders view the re-entry policy as conflicting with cultural beliefs about teenage pregnancy.

Additionally, Table 4.3 reveals that 16 respondents (47.0%) agreed that the teenage mothers' re-entry policy has contributed to moral decay in African culture by condoning sexual activity, while 14 respondents (41.2%) disagreed, and 4 respondents (11.8%) were neutral. These findings suggest that the re-entry policy may indeed lead to moral decay in African culture by normalizing teenage pregnancy and premarital sexual activity. Teacher 6 aligns with this views as during interview on the teenage mothers' re-entry policy has contributed to moral decay in African culture by condoning sexual activity, he said

> *"I support the view that the teenage mothers' re-entry policy has contributed to moral decay in African culture. To me to allow the impregnated girls to be back to school is to allow sexual relations to students. Through this policy girl students can engage into sexual intercourse knowing that if they become pregnant, they will come back to school after delivery"*

Baa-Poku (2016) and Aparicio et al. (2014) both align with these findings as they observe that the re-entry policy may encourage immoral behavior among female students, leading to increased sexual activity and violations of ethical principles.

Challenges facing teenage mothers who re-entered public secondary schools in

Lindi Municipality

The study aimed to identify challenges faced by teenage mothers who re-enter public secondary schools in implementing the re-entry policy. To achieve this objective, respondents were asked during interview and to indicate their level of agreement with several statements. These statements included: teenage mothers being stigmatized or separated from students who are not mothers, teenage mothers lacking financial support from their family members and partners to afford basic needs for their babies and school expenses, teenage mothers encountering a lack of academic support from teachers due to perceptions that they require more academic assistance, teenage mothers expressing discomfort studying in the same class as non-parent students, and teenage mothers struggling to balance their studies with motherhood responsibilities. The findings of the study are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics for Challenges facing teenage mothers who re-entered public secondary schools in Lindi Municipality

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
Teenage mothers are stigmatized or separated from students who are not mothers	16 (47.1%)	13 (38.2%)	2 (5.9%)		3 (8.8%)
Teenage mothers lack financial support from their family member and their partners to enable them afford basic needs for their babies and for school needs	12 (35.3%)	10 (29.4%)	9 (26.5%)	1 (2.9%)	2 (5.9%)
Teenage mother face the challenge of having no academic support from teachers because teachers think teenage mothers need more academic support	6 (17.6%)	11 (32.4%)	9 (26.5%)	2 (5.9%)	6 (17.6%)
Teenage mothers are not happy to study in the same class with students who are not parents	11 (32.4%)	15 (44.1%)	2 (5.9%)	3 (8.8%)	3 (8.8%)
Teenage mothers are faced with the challenge of balancing studies and mothering	18 (52.9%)	10 (29.4%)	2 (5.9%)	2 (5.9%)	2 (5.9%)

Source: Field Data (2024).

The findings presented in Table 4.4 indicate that 29 (85.5%) of all respondents agreed with the statement that teenage mothers are stigmatized or separated from students who are not mothers, while 3 (8.8%) disagreed and 2 (5.9%) were neutral. These findings suggest that teenage mothers face the challenge of being stigmatized or separated from their peers who are not mothers. This is similar to teenage mother 2 when she was required to respond to the question demanded her to state the main challenges that teenage mothers face when they return to public secondary schools, she said

"There are several challenges that teenage mothers face when they come back to school after delivery. To me the major challenge that I face is to be stigmatized by my fellow students. Some of our fellow students like calling us mothers the situation that sometimes makes me be very disappointed"

This aligns with the observations of Chiyota (2020) and Enricho et al. (2020), who noted instances of teenage mothers being stigmatized and bullied by their fellow students, reflecting the challenges they encounter in social integration. Ahikireand & Madanda (2011) also aligns with these findings as his study found out that in most cultural settings, pre-marital pregnancy among girls is stigmatized both in school and

in communities mainly on moralistic grounds, without addressing factors that lead to pregnancy among school girls. Most times school careers of many girls are cut short because of pregnancy either by the girls withdrawing themselves from school or through expulsion with little or no chance of re-entry after delivery

Furthermore, Table 4.4 reveals that 22 (64.7%) of all respondents agreed that teenage mothers lack financial support from their family members and partners to afford basic needs for their babies and for school needs, with 9 (26.5%) being neutral and 3 (8.8%) disagreeing. These findings suggest that teenage mothers often do not receive adequate financial support from their families or partners to meet the needs of their babies and cover their educational expenses. This aligns with teacher 5 when he was responding to interview questions during interview session he said

"Most of the teenage mothers who have returned to school in implanting the teenage mothers' re-entry policy they do not receive adequate financial and material support from their families or partners to meet the needs of their babies and cover their educational expenses. It is a normal thing sometimes to see them they do not have the class requirements such as exercise books, pens and issues like that"

This is consistent with the findings of Molapo et al. (2014) and Nkosi and Pretorius (2019), who observed similar financial challenges faced by teenage mothers due to lack of support from their families and partners. Mallanhanse, Alias, & Bidin, (2020) also align with these findings as they established that the lack of support from families and friends to encourage the teenage mother to stay in school and their own immaturity can make it hard for her to continue with her schooling, as she does not have the motivation from those near and dear to her. By not providing the necessary encouragement, she may feel unable to complete her schooling because she does not have the needed support structure in place

Moreover, the findings indicate that 17 (50.0%) of all respondents agreed that teenage mothers face the challenge of receiving inadequate academic support from teachers, as teachers often perceive them as needing more academic assistance. This is similar to teenage mother 2 who during interview said

> *"I as a teenage mother face a lot of challenges. Some of these changes are caused by my fellow students, others are caused by my family members and others are caused by teachers. On the side of teachers, some of them refute giving me academic support claiming that I need much time to be supported because I have two roles of studying and raising up my child. So much time is needed for me and teachers have scheduled time for executing their duties"*

This resonates with the observations of Chigona and Chetty (2017) and Masemola (2017), who highlighted the reluctance of teachers to provide academic support to pregnant students and teenage mothers, reflecting negative attitudes towards them in educational settings. Bhana & Shefer (2012) are contrary to these findings as they observed that, school and teachers' academic support to teenage mothers is a crucial factor in determining whether a teenage mother is able to continue her education or

not. Knowing this, teachers' willingness in Uganda to accommodate and provide academic support to teenage mothers is high.

Additionally, Table 4.4 shows that 26 (76.5%) of all respondents agreed that teenage mothers are not happy to study in the same class with students who are not parents, 4 (11.8%) disagreeing and 2 (5.9%) being neutral. This suggests that teenage mothers may feel uncomfortable studying alongside non-parent students. These findings align with teenage mother 4 who reported during interview that

> *"It is true teenage mothers are not happy to study in the same class with students who are not parents. Sometimes our fellow students who are not parents bully us by intimidating us. They sometimes stigmatize, insult and label us. It is very paining we seem to be as if we do not deserve to be educated simply because we are mothers"*

These responses align with UNICEF (2018) and UNESCO (2017), who advocate for the establishment of special programs or schools to accommodate teenage mothers and provide them with a supportive learning environment. Muganda-Onyando and Omondi (2008), girls who become pregnant while still in school are often expelled despite the existence of the re-entry policy guidelines where such girls are allowed to return to school after delivery, some of them are not happy to be in the same class with non-parent students because of the moral stigma associated with teenage pregnancy. Some head teachers are not kindly enough to give the teenage mothers space in school and are viewed as mixing bad potatoes with good ones and is viewed as likely to have a negative impact on the other girls.

Lastly, the findings reveal that 28 (82.3%) of all respondents agreed that teenage mothers face the challenge of balancing studies and motherhood, 6 (17.6%) disagreeing and 2 (5.9%) being neutral. This indicates that teenage mothers struggle to balance their academic responsibilities with their duties as mothers, which may lead to dropout rates. This is concurrent to teenage mother 5 when she was interviewed on how teenage mothers balance their time for studies and mothering she said

"For sure teenage mothers face the challenge of balancing studies and motherhood. Sometimes it becomes difficult to handle two responsibilities of accomplishing assignments provided by teachers and suckling a child who cries for requiring being fed by her mother. All of the two activities requires the same person to perform at the same time so it is a challenging."

This is also noted by Zuilkowski et al. (2019) and Nyariro (2018), emphasizing the importance of social and economic support in enabling teenage mothers to effectively manage their education and childcare responsibilities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, several conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, education is considered a fundamental right for every individual in our country, providing opportunities for positive thinking and job creation. Therefore, the government's decision to reintegrate impregnated students into schools is seen as favorable, aligning with the right to education. While the community generally supports the re-entry policy, concerns about potential negative impacts, such as the influence on the behavior of other students, need to be addressed. However, the majority of community members view re-entry as a means for impregnated students to achieve their educational objectives, which is essential for ensuring equal access to education and fostering a better future for females. Contrary to concerns, the re-entry policy is not seen as conflicting with cultural values; rather, education itself is often associated with challenging traditional customs, not the act of impregnated students returning to school.

Secondly, the implementation of the re-entry policy has both positive and negative impacts on African Values. Positively, the community does not perceive the policy as causing economic loss, as it challenges the notion that parents will not receive bride price for pregnant girls returning to school. Additionally, the policy is not seen as undermining cultural beliefs regarding the role of girls in marriage versus education. However, negatively, the policy has affected the perceived status of pregnant girls and brought about moral concerns within the community.

Thirdly, re-entered teenage mothers face various challenges at individual, family, and school levels. At the individual level, they struggle with feelings of discomfort studying alongside non-parent students and balancing their academic responsibilities with motherhood. Financial support from family members and partners is lacking, impacting their ability to meet basic needs for themselves and their babies. At the school level, they face stigma and separation from their peers, as well as a lack of academic support from teachers who may perceive them as needing additional assistance. These challenges highlight the need for comprehensive support systems to ensure the successful reintegration of teenage mothers into the school environment.

Recommendations

In order to address the challenges of maintaining good behavior among students and supporting re-admitted teenage mothers, it is essential for the government to consider comprehensive mechanisms that encompass both behavioral support and targeted assistance programs through developing a comprehensive behavioral support program. Implementing positive behavior Interventions and supports can provide a structured framework that encourages positive behavior in schools through consistent reinforcement, clear expectations, and data-driven strategies. Additionally, regular access to counseling services and mentorship programs can offer students the

guidance and support they need from trained professionals or senior students. Engaging parents and the community in school activities and behavioral programs can further foster a supportive environment both at home and school.

For re-admitted teenage mothers, tailored educational plans are necessary to address their unique academic and personal needs. Individualized education plans can ensure these students receive the necessary support to succeed. Flexible learning options, such as part-time classes and online courses, can accommodate the needs of teenage mothers who may have childcare responsibilities. Establishing childcare facilities within or near schools provides a safe and convenient option, allowing teenage mothers to focus on their studies while ensuring their children are cared for. Additionally, creating support groups for teenage mothers can offer a platform to share experiences and receive emotional support, while access to counseling services can address any psychological or social challenges they may face. Offering financial assistance and scholarships specifically targeted at re-admitted teenage mothers can help alleviate economic barriers to their continued education.

Policy and advocacy play a pivotal role in ensuring the success of these initiatives. Government policies that support the educational continuity of teenage mothers and promote positive student behavior should be integrated into national education strategies. Launching awareness campaigns can raise the profile of these issues among stakeholders such as educators, parents, and policymakers, highlighting the importance of maintaining positive behavior in schools and supporting re-admitted teenage mothers.

By implementing these comprehensive strategies, the government can create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. This approach not only promotes positive behavior among all students but also provides the necessary support for re-admitted teenage mothers to thrive in their academic pursuits. Such efforts are essential for fostering an educational system that is equitable and supportive of all students, regardless of their personal circumstances.

Teachers are recommended to create a supportive and inclusive environment for teenage mothers who return to school after giving birth. By facilitating their academic progress, integrating them into regular classes, and preventing isolation and stigma, teachers can help these students succeed. Professional development, collaboration with support staff, and strong family engagement are essential components of this approach. Implementing these recommendations can ensure that teenage mothers receive the necessary support to continue their education and achieve their academic goals.

Teenage mothers who return to school are recommended to embrace their educational opportunities with a positive mindset and effectively manage their time between studying and caring for their babies. By prioritizing self-care, building a strong support network, utilizing available resources, setting realistic goals, and maintaining open communication, they can create a balanced and supportive environment that fosters their academic success and personal well-being.

Families and community members are recommended to offer both financial and in-kind assistance to teenage mothers returning to school. By helping cover the costs of essential items for their babies and education, and providing emotional, social, and practical support, the community can create a nurturing environment that enables these young mothers to succeed. Collective efforts, including advocacy and the development of supportive programs, can ensure that teenage mothers have the resources and opportunities they need to continue their education and build a brighter future for themselves and their children.

Finally, social workers are recommended to adopt a holistic and empathetic approach in supporting the re-entry of teenage mothers into the educational system. By conducting thorough assessments, creating a supportive environment, advocating for policies and resources, facilitating access to services, providing continuous support, collaborating with other professionals, and engaging with families, social workers can play a pivotal role in helping teenage mothers succeed academically and personally. Their efforts can ensure that these young mothers have the necessary support to balance their educational aspirations with their parenting responsibilities, ultimately contributing to their overall well-being and future success.

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